

Women's Hockey Team Earns No. 3 Seed In NCAA Tournament



Ohio State's women's hockey team has earned an at-large bid to the 2021 NCAA Tournament following a 12-6 season and a top five finish. The Buckeyes are slotted as the No. 3 seed, behind top-seeded Northeastern and No. 2 Wisconsin. They'll square off in the first round with the No. 6 seed, Boston College, on March 16.

The announcement of the bracket came almost immediately after Ohio State fell in the WCHA championship game against the Badgers in overtime, 3-2. The two schools have become very familiar this season, splitting both regular season two-game series'. Because of Wisconsin's title game victory, the Badgers own both the season series 3-2 and the total series score, 13-8, though that lead comes entirely from a 5-0 victory on Nov. 28. Every other game between these two has been decided by a single goal, twice in overtime.

"We battled. There were no excuses, it's playoff hockey," said head coach Nadine Muzerall. "You sell out and do everything you can and need to do. We did that. We had an opportunity to get the puck out twice - it bounced over a stick and then hit off a skate badly that kept it in. It's unfortunate but Wisconsin capitalized on that."

Ohio State and Wisconsin are joined by Minnesota Duluth (No. 5) as WCHA representatives in the field. This is the third time in four seasons that Muzerall has led the Buckeyes to the final field of eight teams and the highest seeding yet for Ohio State under her guidance. In 2018, the Buckeyes upset Boston College to advance to the Frozen Four and looked primed for another run as the No. 5 seed and an automatic qualifier in 2020 before the season was shut down due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Despite the difficult loss in the conference finals, Ohio State has kept its eyes on the prize as a top five team throughout much of the season, and that didn't change in the aftermath of the overtime defeat.

"I told the team that this does not dictate who you are and what your season resembles," said Muzerall. "I feel very confident that we'll get another shot and a lot of people won't have that opportunity. So we have another shot to get some hardware next week."

Boston College holds a 14-5 record entering the matchup as an at-large bid and one of two Hockey East teams, along with Northeastern. It lost in the first round of the Hockey East tournament against UConn but rode a 10-1 end to the regular season that featured a victory over the top-ranked Huskies and No. 10 Providence to a top 10 ranking that braced it against the loss.