



The NCAA championship brackets were determined over the weekend and with the tourney beginning this Friday in Bridgeport and Minneapolis, allow me to shed some light on the goalies being displayed in this year's Frozen Four. There are a number of big-time goalies preparing for the battle that leads to Washington, D.C. and some of them have legitimate NHL prospect value.

Air Force Junior Andrew Volkening was the force behind the Falcons winning a third-straight Atlantic Hockey title. DU's Marc Cheverie was sensational leading the Pioneers to the #1 seed in the Minneapolis bracket. Boston University's freshman phenom Kieran Millan has been the most poised goalie down the stretch and UMD's Alex Stalock has out-done them all by allowing just one goal in three games over championship weekend.

Sure enough, the Frozen Four is the most significant two weeks of the NCAA season because it turns boys into men and acts as a perfect platform for NHL scouts to see what's out there.

Teams and players are judged heavily by how they compete in the NCAA tournament, so the present and the future are both on the line for these kids.

Countless goalies have played the best hockey of their lives in the NCAA tourney and every year seems to result in more of them claiming some type of job at the AHL or NHL level. This past weekend was the divisional championships and they happened to be another delightful goalie scouting experience, so check out some of the accolades and insight for the top-flight prospects in this year's tournament!

Alex Stalock – JR – Minnesota Duluth – San Jose Sharks - #112 in 2005

It is tough to argue with a statistic like allowing just one goal in the three most important games of the season, but that's exactly what Stalock did over the weekend. He was absolutely on fire, shutting out the Denver Pioneers 4-0 and North Dakota 3-0 en route to the WCHA championship and Final Five tournament MVP trophies.

Another note about Stalock – he averaged 28.35 shots against over the course of the regular season but still managed a .927 save percentage. He has only allowed three goals in five games, starting off with a pair of wins against Colorado College a week before the Final Five started. Three games in three nights and only one goal against? That just screams potential at the NHL level.

Marc Cheverie – SO – Denver – Florida Panthers – #193 in 2006

Cheverie led DU to a 3-0 shutout against the Wisconsin Badgers on Friday night at the Xcel Energy Center with a picture-perfect 42-save effort. It was by far his best game of the season, in the biggest game of his life. The pressure was monumental because Denver had a perfect WCHA Final Five record at that facility on the line, while the Badgers had never lost a Final Five game to Denver. Something had to give and it certainly wasn't the native of Cole Harbour.

Marc averaged 29.5 shots against in 39 games this season and still posted a .923 save percentage and 2.29 GAA, so his numbers were very similar to Stalock's. I know I mentioned Cheverie a few weeks ago and told you about his excellent upside, so don't let it come as a surprise that the sophomore is already an NHL draftee. He has raw talent and loads of potential, making this year's NCAA tourney a major step in his development.

Jordan Pearce – SR – Notre Dame – Undrafted

Jordan was 30-5-3 this year with a .934 save percentage and 1.61 GAA. He was a rock for the Fighting Irish over the weekend and is currently on a remarkable streak in which he has only allowed two goals in 371 minutes. It is tough to believe he hasn't been drafted yet, but that could change depending on how he plays in the big tourney.

As a senior, however, you know he will be laying it all on the line. Because of his and Notre Dame captain ***ERIK*** Condra's leadership, I take the Fighting Irish to win it all this year. Therefore I foresee Pearce getting drafted by an NHL team and getting an opportunity to possibly compete at the AHL level.

Zane Kalemba – JR – Princeton – Undrafted

With a .935 save percentage and 1.73 GAA, Zane displayed some of the best lateral movement in the NCAA this season and led Princeton to a berth in the tourney thanks to some massive saves in a 2-2 tie against St. Lawrence. He is not a name that is mentioned often, but he's capable of making the big saves at right times. This weekend will say a lot about his potential, as he will be up against Stalock and the Bulldogs on Friday night in Minneapolis combined with a vicious crowd all foaming at the mouth for a big UMD win.

Kieran Millan – FR – Boston University – Undrafted

We have to give this freshman some love – he played like anything but a rookie down the stretch. He was poised, solid, confident and unwavering over the weekend for the top-seeded Boston Terriers, making 34 saves in a 1-0 shutout over Lowell to clinch the Hockey East Championship. He made a miraculous last-second save to preserve the shutout and was named the tournament MVP, proving that he has tremendous upside if he continues to improve over the next few seasons.

Andrew Volkening – JR – Air Force – Undrafted

There's a reason why the Falcons just won their third-straight Atlantic Hockey championship – head coach Frank Serratore and a second solid season from Volkening. And even though he posted slightly higher averages than the rest of the top NCAA goalies, he displayed more leadership than expected and recorded a great and kept the high flying Falcons from nose-diving at any point in the season.