PENN STATE ICE HOCKEY

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Icers Look to Make History at Inaugural ESCHL Playoffs

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. – The No. 2 ranked Penn State Icers will participate this weekend in their first conference playoff in over a decade, as they travel to Annapolis, Md. for the inaugural ESCHL playoffs. The tournament, hosted by Navy, will be held Friday through Sunday at the McMullen Ice Arena.

Penn State (29-3-4, 18-2-0 ESCHL) had been independently affiliated since the 1994-95 season until joining the ESCHL this season. The last time the Icers played in a league playoff, the 1994 tournament held by the now-defunct ACHL, they came away with the title—but managed only a fifth-place finish at that year's ACHA National Tournament.

The Icers are coming off a disappointing road weekend that saw them fall to No. 5 Delaware by scores of 5-3 and 5-1, losses that ended their unbeaten ESCHL run. It was the second time this season that they were swept, as they also failed to win in a weekend series against Illinois in mid-October. The losses snapped a seven-game winning streak and ended a stretch of nearly four months in which the Icers lost just twice in 27 games.

Still, an 18-2-0 record in conference play was good enough to win the ESCHL's regular season championship. As a result, Penn State will have the first seed in the tournament and "home ice advantage;" although the games will be held at a neutral site, they will have the benefits of lighter packing—needing only their home white jerseys—and the final line change during stoppages in play.

They also receive a first round bye, and will not play until Saturday at 3 or 6 p.m. The Icers will get the winner of Friday's contest between Drexel and Navy.

If successful, they will then play the winner of the other semifinal between No. 7 Rhode Island and Delaware. The league championship game, if necessary, will be held at 1 p.m. on Sunday.

The Icers return home on Feb. 22 for their final regular season game of the season, a Friday night showdown with No. 16 SUNY-Stony Brook. It is also Senior Night, as seven Icers will be playing their final games at the Ice Pavilion.

For more information, visit www.pennstatehockey.com, or the Penn State Team Sports Ice Hockey blog at community.centredaily.com.