Arts & Life

Quinnipiac men's ice hockey highlighted in ESPN college hockey pre-show

By COOPER WOODWARD
Associate Sports Editor

March means a few things in the sports world. Conference tournaments are underway for winter sports, league champions are crowned and, of course, madness. While NCAA men's and women's basketball gets a majority of the eyes, there is one more tournament that often flies under the radar, men's and women's hockey.

The men's tournament began March 26, with the University of Michigan, North Dakota, Denver and Wisconsin making the Frozen Four, which starts next week in Las Vegas.

ESPN anchors Jeremy Schaap and John Buccigross previewed the upcoming tournament on "Game on: Journey to the NCAA Championship" which aired March 25 on ESPN 2. While they briefly touched on the matchups, a majority of the show centered around the storylines, for which Quinnipiac men's ice hockey had two.

The first went through the rise of Quinnipiac's program from Division III to Division I national champions and how three-decade veteran head coach Rand Pecknold guided the team to hockey immortality.

The segment began with Pecknold's start as a Bobcat and how he was offered a contract of $7,000, practicing with his team at midnight and moonlighting as a Greek mythology teacher at a local high school.

After touching briefly on the teams' 2013 and 2016 national championship appearances, the program turned to arguably one of the biggest decisions Pecknold has ever made, pulling goaltender Yaniv Perets with two and a half minutes on the clock and down a goal against Minnesota in the 2023 Frozen Four.

If you know the story, you know what happens next. Forward Colin Graf '24 finds the back of the net and the game is headed to overtime, where forward Jacob Quillan '24 buries the puck past goaltender Justin Close '23 to win Quinnipiac its first ever national championship.

"That was the culmination of so much hard work," Associate Vice President for Facilities Operations "Tenth Second Podcast" host Keith Woodward said. "It was every single emotion that came upon his face. Because he finally accomplished it."

All of this, while Pecknold walked the audience through the locker room in between the end of regulation and overtime.

"It still chokes me up," Pecknold said.

The Bobcats have looked to capture that magic ever since, falling in the prior two tournaments to Boston College in the regional final and UConn in the regional semifinal. In its seventh straight tournament appearance, Quinnipiac fell in the regional final to North Dakota on March 28. But leading that postseason push was the nation's leader in points and the subject of the second Quinnipiac related segment, freshman forward Ethan Wyttenbach.

"For Ethan, the game of hockey is much more than a game," Schaap said. "It's a calling."

Like most player stories, the segment started at Wyttenbach's roots in Long Island, N.Y., and how Quinnipiac's latest star started his love for hockey. At the root of that love is his family and his father, Andrew.

"He didn't wanna force it, but when he saw how much I loved the game, he wanted me on skates as soon as possible," Ethan said.

While you know Ethan's highlight reel goals and the 58 points, the casual viewer doesn't know a lot about Andrew's sacrifice of leaving his nine to five job in New York City to own and operate a sports complex, home to, of course, a hockey rink.

The episode further explains how that luxury has helped Ethan develop all the way from the Eastern Junior Elite Prospect League with the Long Island Gulls, to the NCAA and the ECAC with Quinnipiac.



ILLUSTRATION BY KATERINA PARIZKOVA

With a sport that doesn't attract as many viewers as some of its predecessors, it's important for shows like this to exist to draw new eyes on the tournament.

Overall, the show achieves its purpose and serves it well. It informs the casual fan about the biggest stories surrounding this year's NCAA Tournament teams, while approaching them with different angles that keep the die-hards locked in and entertained.

Bob Iger's impact on the Walt Disney Company will last a lifetime

By CLAIRE FRANKLAND
Sports Editor

It's always shocking when CEOs of corporate giants announce their step back from their respective conglomerate, for better or for worse.

March 18 marked a transitional day for the Walt Disney Company, as after nearly two decades, former CEO Robert Iger officially transferred power over to former chairman of Disney Experiences, Josh D'Amaro.

Iger, who served two tenures of 17 years as CEO of Disney, led the company through some of its most transformational years, marked by global expansion, innovative storytelling and massive acquisitions.

GLOBAL EXPANSION

One of the most notable achievements in the theme parks of Iger's was the expansion into China with Shanghai Disneyland Park.

The park officially opened on June 16, 2016, marking the first Disney destination in Mainland China, as Disney had opened Hong Kong Disneyland in 2005 under former CEO Michael Eisner.

The immersive theme park featured six themed lands (Mickey Avenue, Gardens of Imagination, Fantasyland, Treasure Cove, Adventure Isle and Tomorrowland). Today, the park has seen the addition of two more immersive lands – Toy Story Land and Zootopia – with the announcement of a land themed towards Spider-Man announced in 2024.

With Shanghai's Disneyland being the most recently opened Disney theme park, Iger went into the project with the mission of making it unique.

"I didn't want to build Disneyland in China," Iger told USA TODAY. "I wanted to build China's Disneyland for a number of reasons. From the very beginning, I wanted to act like we were respectful, invited guests in China."

Iger goes on to discuss how he envisioned blending elements of Chinese culture into the theme park, in order to respect the rich culture of the country. With many individuals believing that Disney's expansion into Europe was an attempt to "Americanize" the continent, like when the company expanded into Paris in 1992, Iger looked to fight that idea.

"One way to show respect was to infuse this place with elements of the familiar, with elements of Chinese culture. Not only could [Chinese visitors] relate to it, but they could be proud of it and could have a sense of ownership," Iger said to USA TODAY. "I thought that was important."

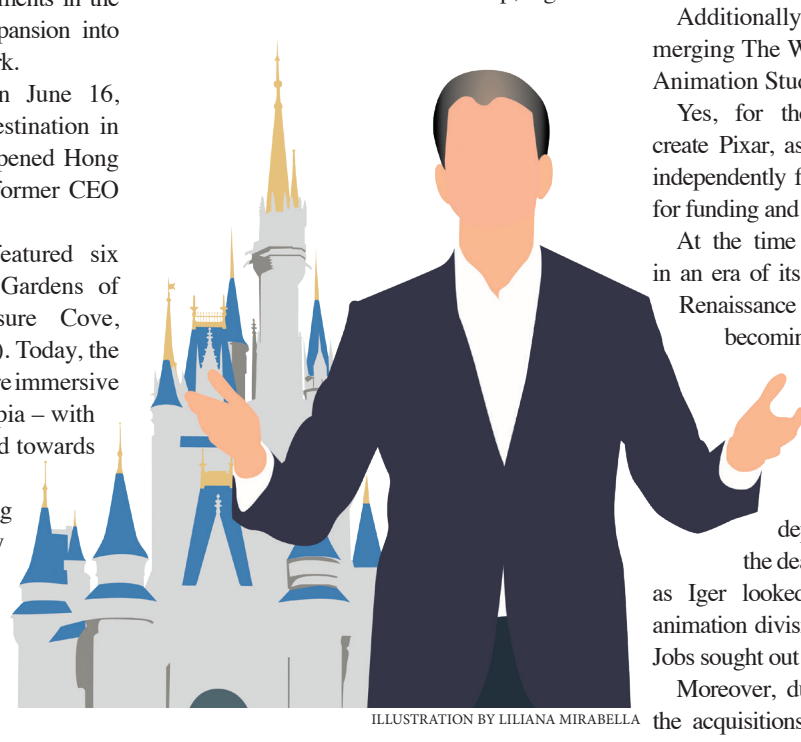

ILLUSTRATION BY LILIANA MIRABELLA

MASSIVE ACQUISITIONS

As the Walt Disney Company has grown and developed over the years into a corporate superpower in the corporate empire, the company has seen its fair share of acquisitions under Iger's oversight.

Finalized on March 20, 2019, one of Iger's largest acquisitions in history came at 21st Century Fox – where an initial value of $52.4 billion turned into $71.3 billion as Disney battled with Comcast.

While the acquisition included a 73% stake in National Geographic Partners and a 30% stake in Hulu, Iger's main objective was to acquire the network with plans of developing Disney's first streaming service – becoming Disney+.

Additionally, Iger was responsible for merging The Walt Disney Company and Pixar Animation Studios.

Yes, for those unaware, Disney did not create Pixar, as the company actually operated independently for 20 years but relied on Disney for funding and distribution.

At the time of the acquisition, Disney was in an era of its filmmaking known as the Post-Renaissance Era, characterized by films not becoming widely popular or well-liked. Obviously, these people have never seen "Bolt" and "Lilo and Stitch," but that's a discussion for another day.

To help revive their animation department, Iger went through with the deal to acquire Pixar for $7.4 billion, as Iger looked to strengthen the company's animation division, while then Pixar CEO Steve Jobs sought out a stable distribution partner.

Moreover, during Iger's tenure, he finalized the acquisitions of Marvel and Lucasfilm, two franchises that have become integral parts of Disney's continued success, both in the films and TV shows and in its theme parks.

INNOVATIVE STORYTELLING

Another great achievement during Iger's tenure came at the launch of Disney's first streaming platform: Disney+.

The streaming platform launched on Nov. 12, 2019, bringing Disney's beloved and deep roster of films and TV shows to audiences across the globe.

Not only did the streaming platform showcase work of the Walt Disney Studios and Disney Television Studios, but it also featured content from Disney's flagship brands, including Pixar, Marvel, National Geographic, ESPN and Star Wars.

This innovative way of showcasing Disney's work, along with the work of its partnerships and acquisitions, has proven integral to the company's continued success.

The company previously offered the Disney Movie Club, a subscription-style service where members would have VHS tapes, DVDs and Blu-rays shipped to their home, offering exclusives or classic films. However, with streaming changing the way people consume content, the company needed to fit the norm of today.

According to Statista, the streaming platform, as of late 2025, had roughly 131 million subscribers, much higher than its goal of reaching 60 to 90 million that year.

With Iger's 17-year run at the company finally finishing its chapter, it's crucial to look back on the accomplishments of the man.

The man who strived to grow the company and make every day slightly more magical than the day before.