



PROVIDENCE BRUINS

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### P-BRUINS HELP BOSTON OVERCOME EARLY SEASON INJURY TROUBLE

The goal of any AHL team is not only to develop an NHL organization’s prospects, but also have players ready when injuries arise. Minor league depth is key to maintaining success over the course of a grueling season, and the Providence Bruins provided that for Boston. The start of the year saw numerous injuries to the Bruins defense, but the depth and talent Providence sent up helped them weather the storm and put them in position to compete for the Cup.

Boston’s woes started before they even dropped the puck opening night, as Torey Krug suffered an ankle injury in the preseason. The team survived temporarily without him, but on October 18 Charlie McAvoy suffered a concussion and Kevan Miller hurt his hand. Now down three of their top defensemen, Boston called upon a pair of rookies to make their NHL debuts. Urho Vaakanainen was recalled on October 20 and Jeremy Lauzon was promoted five days later. Both played well and helped the Bruins to a pair of victories, but Vaakanainen was forced to leave his second career game with a concussion of his own. Lauzon stepped into the bottom pairing, averaging 12 minutes of ice time per game while using his size and physicality to shut down the opposition.

Krug returned October 30 after missing 11 games, and once he showed that he was fully healed the team sent Lauzon back to Providence. His AHL stay was not long as his services were needed again due to yet another injury on the blueline. Brandon Carlo suffered an upper body injury November 10, and Lauzon was recalled the next day. The bad luck continued for Boston, as on November 14 Zdeno Chara injured his MCL and would be out for over a month.

With four regular defensemen hurt, things did not look promising and the team was in danger of creating an early hole in the standings. Two more Providence rookies were summoned as Boston recalled Jakub Zboril and Connor Clifton to make their NHL debuts November 16. Zboril saw about 11 minutes of ice time per game while Clifton averaged 19 minutes. Lauzon impressed enough to see his minutes bumped up to 23 per game, a number he averaged until Miller came back November 21 after 13 games missed. Miller’s return led to Zboril going back to the P-Bruins, but Boston kept Clifton and Lauzon up. The organization already saw what Lauzon could do at the NHL level, but Clifton put his name on everyone’s radar with his aggressive and physical style of play.

Just four games into his return, a throat injury to Miller again had him on the sidelines. Back to four defensemen ailing, Lauzon and Clifton continued filling in admirably and helped Boston stay afloat. Amazingly in the three games Boston was without Chara, McAvoy, Carlo and Miller, they went 2-0-1 thanks to the help of Providence’s blueliners. During the early part of the season with at least one P-Bruins defender playing, Boston was 8-6-2 and were in position to make the postseason.

Slowly but surely, Boston finally got healthy in December. Carlo returned to action December 1 after missing nine games while McAvoy came back after a 20-game absence December 6. Clifton was sent back to Providence once McAvoy was activated, and after serving as a healthy scratch for seven games Lauzon was assigned back to the AHL December 18. Chara and Miller each came back on December 27, and from there Boston went on to be the dominant team everyone thought they could be. They finished with the second most points in the Eastern Conference and were able to comfortably head into the postseason. None of that would be possible without the efforts of the Providence coaching staff and players, who helped Boston get through a near-impossible situation by having their players ready to perform at the NHL level.

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The Providence Bruins are the American Hockey League affiliate of the NHL’s Boston Bruins, playing their home games at the Dunkin’ Donuts Center in Providence, RI. Spanning more than 25 years, the Boston/Providence affiliation is one of the longest and most successful player development partnerships in professional hockey history.

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