Faith rewards BC’s Collins

By John Connolly

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Boston College left winger Chris Collins’ magical 2005-2006 season had its roots decades ago when his grandfather, Dugan Collins, built a backyard rink at the family’s Pittsford, N.Y., home so Collins’ dad, Glenn, and uncles, Mike and Bruce, could learn to skate.

Glenn Collins, who later played at Rochester Institute of Technology, continued that tradition with his own family, erecting a rink in the backyard after moving to Fairport, N.Y., so Chris and younger brother, Greg (a freshman at the University of New Hampshire), could enjoy similar benefits.

Those formative years provided the springboard for a senior campaign that has elevated Collins to the nation’s college hockey elite. Heading into tomorrow night’s Beanpot tournament championship game against Boston University, the 21-year-old left winger has notched 24 goals (five shy of his entire career total entering the season) and 20 assists. He has a Division 1-leading five shorthanded goals in addition to seven power-play goals.

It’s modicum of justice for a player who had his share of tough luck over the course of his first three years. It might be said that Collins never met a goalpost he didn’t like. That trend began to change late last season when he tallied an insurance goal in a 3-1 Hockey East championship game victory over UNH, and then connected twice against North Dakota in a 6-3 NCAA quarterfinal loss.

His 47 points this year enabled Collins to become the 64th BC skater with 100 career points (53 goals, 53 assists).

You can practically hear the confidence building.

“For sure, the last two years I’ve had tons of chances,” the speedy 5-foot-8, 189-pounder said. “I had four or five chances a game, breakaways. It got to a point where I was like, ‘I know I can score goals at this level. I know I can be a big scorer here.’ It just wasn’t happening. I didn’t really know why.”

Collins said the late-season success against UNH and North Dakota did wonders for his psyche.

“Those two games were huge for me,” he said. “This year the puck bounced for me right away, so I’ve had the confidence right from the start. I call home and my father just laughs. It’s been such a dream season. It’s an incredible feeling.”

BC coach Jerry York has enjoyed watching Collins blossom into a bona fide lamp-lighter.

“He has just enjoyed a big senior year, what you hope for,” York said. “He’s been a real contributor ever since his freshman year but he’s always been overshadowed by the Eaves brothers (Patrick and Ben), Tony Voce. This year, he’s shown poise with the puck and his shot has become a little quicker, more accurate. He works hard and it’s great to see him get rewarded.”

Even through the tough times when he wasn’t scoring, Collins’ never wavered.

“You can’t let it get to you,” he said. “The more you tighten up, you grip your stick tighter, that’s when everything else can fall apart. The biggest thing I tried to do is go out there and play every shift, work hard, finish checks, get shots to the net. Don’t worry about the shifts in the past, worry about the next one. I think the way I play I get a lot of chances so if I miss one chance a few minutes ago I know I’ll get another one.”

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