



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MTU'S PIETILA, BSU'S BITZER AND G. FITZGERALD NAMED WCHA PLAYERS OF THE WEEK FOR GAMES OF JAN. 23-24, 2015

EDINA, Minn. – Jan. 26, 2015 – After leading their teams to perfect weekends, including a pair of upsets over top-10 teams to hoist the North Star College Cup, the men's Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA) Players of the Week for games of Jan. 23-24, 2015 are: Michigan Tech senior forward **Blake Pietila** (Offensive Player of the Week), Bemidji State freshman goaltender **Michael Bitzer** (Defensive Player of the Week) and Bemidji State freshman forward **Gerry Fitzgerald** (Rookie of the Week).

WCHA Offensive Player of the Week

Blake Pietila, Sr., F, Michigan Tech (Brighton, Mich.)

Pietila had three points, including Friday's overtime game-winner, in Michigan Tech's WCHA sweep of visiting Alaska. The senior from Brighton, Mich. helped jump-start the Huskies' comeback from a 3-1 deficit by assisting on MTU's first third-period goal, then netted the game-winning score 2:46 into the extra stanza. His second period, power-play strike Saturday tied the contest 2-2 en route to a 3-2 MTU victory. The New Jersey Devils' draft pick has a goal in three straight games (four goals and an assist), and now has 10 goals and nine assists overall this season.

Also nominated: Bryce Gervais, Jr., F, Minnesota State; Stephen Perfetto, Sr., F, Lake Superior State

WCHA Defensive Player of the Week

Michael Bitzer, Fr., G, Bemidji State (Moorhead, Minn.)

Bitzer earned tournament Most Valuable Player honors after backstopping Bemidji State to a pair of wins and the North Star College Cup championship at the Xcel Energy Center. The freshman from Moorhead, Minn. allowed just one goal in 120 minutes of play against a pair of top-10 opponents, stopping 54-of-55 shots faced for a .982 save percentage. Bitzer collected a career-high 28 saves in a 4-0 shutout over No. 7 Minnesota Duluth in the opener, before posting 26 saves in the 3-1, Championship Game victory over No. 1 Minnesota State.

Also nominated: Jon Jutzi, Jr., D, Minnesota State

– MORE –

WCHA Rookie of the Week

Gerry Fitzgerald, F, Bemidji State (Port Alberni, British Columbia)

Fitzgerald collected two points and finished with a +3 rating, helping Bemidji State to victories over the No. 7 and No. 1 teams in country at the North Star College Cup. The rookie from Port Alberni, British Columbia assisted his brother, Leo, on a goal early in the second period of a 4-0 win over Minnesota Duluth on Friday, then scored the game-winning goal – the second of his collegiate career – in Saturday's 3-1, Championship Game triumph over top-ranked Minnesota State.

Also nominated: Gordon Defiel, G, Lake Superior State; Joel L'Esperance, F, Michigan Tech

About Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA)

The Western Collegiate Hockey Association, among the most historic, tradition-rich and successful conferences in all of collegiate athletics, proudly marks its 63rd season of men's competition in 2014-15. Covering five time zones and more than 4,200 miles, the 10-team Division 1 conference consists of the University of Alabama in Huntsville (Chargers), the University of Alaska Anchorage (Seawolves), the University of Alaska (Nanooks), Bemidji State University (Beavers), Bowling Green State University (Falcons), Ferris State University (Bulldogs), Lake Superior State University (Lakers), Michigan Technological University (Huskies), Minnesota State University (Mavericks) and Northern Michigan University (Wildcats).

MEDIA CONTACT

Matt Hodson

Associate Commissioner for Public Relations

E: mhodson@wcha.com

O: 952.818.8872

M: 612.801.2808

MORE INFORMATION

Website: wcha.com

Twitter: [@wcha_mhockey](https://twitter.com/wcha_mhockey)

Facebook: facebook.com/wchahockey

WCHA.tv: wcha.com/men/tv.php

– WCHA –