



WCHA WEEKEND PREVIEW: NCAA REGIONALS (MARCH 27-29)

News and notes for the upcoming weekend of WCHA hockey

Opening Face-Off

- **Mavericks and Huskies are Going Dancing:** Minnesota State and Michigan Tech, the two teams who finished 1-2 in the league's regular season and met in the Final Five championship game, will continue their seasons by representing the WCHA in the 2015 NCAA Division 1 Men's Ice Hockey Championship.
- **Olé, Olé, Olé!:** Minnesota State earned the tournament's top overall seed, finishing atop the PairWise rankings. The Mavericks, who own an NCAA-best .782 winning percentage (29-7-3), will face RIT (Atlantic Hockey automatic bid) at 3 p.m. CT / 4 p.m. ET Saturday afternoon (ESPNU) in the opening round of the Midwest Regional at the Compton Family Ice Arena in South Bend, Ind. Nebraska Omaha and Harvard round out the Midwest field, with the regional final slated for March 29 at 6:30 p.m. CT / 7:30 p.m. ET.
- **Top Dawgs?:** The nation's other 29-win team, Michigan Tech (29-9-2), earned an at-large bid and the No. 2 seed for the West Regional. Tech will meet St. Cloud State (NCHC at-large) at 3:30 p.m. CT / 4:30 p.m. ET Friday afternoon (ESPN3) in an all-Huskies first round game at Scheels Arena in Fargo, N.D. North Dakota and Quinnipiac are the other West teams, with the regional final slated for March 28 at 8 p.m. CT / 9 p.m. ET.
- **Winning Hockey:** Heading into the tournament, the WCHA has an NCAA-best three of the nation's top 10 winning percentages. The Mavericks (.782, 29-7-3) and Huskies (.750, 29-9-2) are 1-2, while Bowling Green is tied for seventh at .654 (23-11-5). Despite their stellar record, the Falcons were the first team left out of the NCAA tournament - falling a microscopic .0002 points behind Providence.
- **Historically Good:** Minnesota State (21-4-3, .804) and Michigan Tech (21-5-2, .786) posted the third- and fourth-best conference winning percentages, respectively, in WCHA history for a 28-game league season (24 such seasons).
- **Hot at the Right Time?:** Minnesota State enters the NCAA tournament on a five-game winning streak, with three of those wins clinching the MacNaughton Cup, a Final Five berth and the Broadmoor Trophy. Michigan Tech is on a 13-2-1 run over its last 16 contests.
- **BCS Busters:** For 11-consecutive years, a school that plays below D-I in sports other than hockey has made the Frozen Four. Minnesota State and Michigan Tech (along with RIT, UMD and SCSU) will look to continue that trend in 2015.
- **Award Watch:** Michigan Tech senior forward **Tanner Kero** is a top-10 finalist for both the Hobey Baker and Senior CLASS Award, while junior goaltender **Jamie Phillips** is among five finalists for the Mike Richter Award.

NCAA Tournament History

- **Minnesota State:** The Mavericks are making their third-straight trip to the NCAA tournament (fourth in program history; also in 2003), having advanced in each season of head coach **Mike Hastings'** tenure. Minnesota State will be looking for the first NCAA tournament victory of its D-I era (0-3).
- **Michigan Tech:** The Huskies are back in the NCAA tournament for the first time since 1981 - a team that featured current head coach **Mel Pearson** as a player. Michigan Tech advanced to at least the national semifinals in each of its previous 10 appearances (1956, 1960, 1962, 1965, 1969, 1970, 1974, 1975, 1976 and 1981), including winning national championships in 1962, 1965 and 1975. The Huskies are 13-9-0 (.591) all-time in NCAA tournament play.
- **WCHA:** Including three by Michigan Tech, the WCHA has produced a record 37 national championships.

NCAA TOURNAMENT

Minnesota State (29-7-3) vs. RIT (19-14-5)

MIDWEST REGIONAL – Compton Family Ice Arena; South Bend, Ind.

Saturday, March 28 at 3 p.m. CT / 4 p.m. ET (ESPNU / WatchESPN)

- Minnesota State, the tournament's top overall seed (and No. 1 in the opinion polls), will face Midwest Regional fourth seed RIT in an opening round contest in South Bend, Ind.
- The Mavericks, who won the first MacNaughton Cup in program history, captured the WCHA's automatic bid by successfully defending their Broadmoor Trophy title at the 2015 Final Five.
- RIT earned Atlantic Hockey's automatic bid after defeating Mercyhurst in the AHA tournament.
- The Tigers enter the tournament having won seven straight games, while Minnesota State is on a five-game winning streak.
- Minnesota State is 2-0-0 against RIT in the D-1 era, 3-3-0 overall (including a loss in the 1986 NCAA DIII third place game).
- Mavericks' freshman F **Brad McClure** tallied five goals and an assist over two games at the Final Five, earning tournament MVP and All-Tournament honors. The rookie has now netted the game-winning goal in three straight postseason games, racking up eight points (6g, 2a).
- Junior G **Stephon Williams**, who has started the last 19 games in a row, now stands 25-5-3 with a 1.64 goals against average and .926 save percentage. He is second in the country for GAA and third for wins (also third on MSU's single-season list).
- Junior F **Bryce Gervais** has scored 14 times in the last 26 games and leads the Mavericks (second nationally) with 27 goals. He has also played in 121 consecutive contests.
- Senior F **Matt Leitner** is tied for the national lead with 22 power-play points (matching Boston University's Jack Eichel), while also ranking in the top 10 for: assists (t-7th with 32), face-off wins (t-8th with 466) and face-off percentage (10th at .589).
- As a team, the Mavericks are tied for the nation's lead in wins (29) and goals scored (144), while leading the country in winning percentage (.782), power-play goals (48), shot margin (+451), fewest shots on goal allowed per game (21.7) and shots on goal margin per game (+11.6).

Michigan Tech (29-9-2) vs. St. Cloud State (19-18-1)

WEST REGIONAL – Scheels Arena; Fargo, N.D.

Friday, March 27 at 3:30 p.m. CT / 4:30 p.m. ET (ESPNU / WatchESPN)

- Nationally fifth-ranked Michigan Tech, which is tied for tops in the country with 29 wins, earned an at-large bid to the NCAA Tournament and was tabbed the second seed for the West Regional. The Huskies will meet regional third seed (No. 13 in the polls) St. Cloud State (NCHC at-large) in an opening round contest in Fargo, N.D.
- Michigan Tech and St. Cloud State, former WCHA rivals, will meet for the first time in the NCAA tournament. Tech trails the all-time series, 28-55-5.
- Tech sophomore F **Tyler Heinonen** has a point in five of his last six games, tallying nine overall during the stretch (6g, 3a). He has scored the game-winning goal in two of MTU's three postseason victories, including against Bowling Green in the Final Five.
- Senior F **Tanner Kero** was named a finalist for the 2015 Hobey Baker Award, given annually to college hockey's top player. His 45 points overall (19 goals and 26 assists) entering the NCAA tournament are tied for 12th-most nationally, while his seven game-winning goals rank third.
- Junior G **Jamie Phillips** has been named a finalist for the 2015 Mike Richter Award, honoring the most outstanding goaltender in NCAA men's hockey. Entering Friday, Phillips leads the country in wins (28), while ranking second for shutouts (tied, 6) and minutes played (2349:07), and third for save pct. (.935), goals against average (1.71) and winning pct. (.763).
- Michigan Tech has improved by 15 wins this season, matching Boston University for the top single-season turnaround in the country.
- The Huskies have the most 100-point scorers of any team in the NCAA tournament with four (Kero, **Blake Pietila**, **Alex Petan** and **David Johnstone**). MTU also leads the country with a +71 goal margin and +1.77 goal margin per game.

About the 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). For more information, visit wcha.com.

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