



WCHA WEEKEND PREVIEW: FIRST-ROUND PLAYOFFS (FEB. 28-MARCH 1)

News and notes for the upcoming weekend of WCHA hockey

Opening Face-Off

- **NCAA-Best Four in the Top 10:** The WCHA concluded the regular season with an NCAA-best four teams (tied with the ECAC) in both the USCHO.com and *USA Today/USA Hockey Magazine* polls: No. 2 Minnesota, No. 3 Wisconsin, No. 8 North Dakota and No. 9 Minnesota Duluth.
- **Three in the PairWise:** With just two weeks remaining until the NCAA Tournament field is selected, Minnesota (second), Wisconsin (third) and Minnesota Duluth (eighth) give the WCHA a trio of schools in the top eight of the latest PairWise rankings. North Dakota is just outside in the ninth spot, while Ohio State (t-12th) and Bemidji State (t-14th) round out the WCHA representation.
- **Winning Hockey:** Showcasing the league's impressive depth, the WCHA has an NCAA-best six of the nation's top 15 winning percentages (tied with the ECAC): Minnesota (2nd at .886, 29-2-4), Wisconsin (4th at .765, 24-6-4), Minnesota Duluth (t-9th at .632, 19-10-5), North Dakota (t-9th at .632, 20-11-3), Bemidji State (t-14th at .544, 18-15-1) and Ohio State (t-12th at .544, 17-14-3).
- **Better than Ever:** For the first time in the league's 16 seasons, the WCHA has six teams that have posted at least 17 wins: Minnesota (29), Wisconsin (24), North Dakota (20), Minnesota Duluth (19), Bemidji State (18) and Ohio State (17). The possibility remains for the WCHA to have a quartet of 20-win teams, which would mark the fifth occurrence in league annals.
- **Hot at the Right Time:** Entering the WCHA postseason, Minnesota is 22-1-2 in its last 25 games. North Dakota is 10-1-1 in its last 12 contests and has the nation's fourth-best record since Nov. 21 at 16-4-3 (.773). Wisconsin is 7-2-2 in its last 11 outings, while Minnesota Duluth is coming off a season-ending sweep.
- **Three-Peat:** After compiling 72 points on the strength of a 22-2-4-2 league record, Minnesota secured its third straight WCHA regular season championship (ninth overall).
- **First-Year Successes:** Under the leadership of first-year head coach **Jim Scanlan**, Bemidji State set a program record for most WCHA victories (13) and has a chance to add to its school standard for overall wins (18). With first-year bench boss **Eric Rud** at the helm, St. Cloud State doubled its overall win total from a year ago (8, up from 4).
- **Humanitarian Award Finalists:** Two WCHA student-athletes - Wisconsin's **Brittany Ammerman** and Minnesota Duluth's **Zoe Hickel** - are among the five finalists for the 2015 Hockey Humanitarian Award.
- **See You at the Rink:** Wisconsin (LaBahn Arena), Minnesota (Ridder Arena), North Dakota (Ralph Engelstad Arena) and Minnesota Duluth (AMSOIL Arena) finished the regular season 1-4 in national attendance, with the Badgers and Gophers tying for top honors.

All seeds listed in parenthesis; * - denotes game played if necessary

WCHA

(8) Minnesota State at (1) Minnesota

Ridder Arena; Minneapolis, Minn.

Friday, Feb. 27 (7:07 p.m. CT); Saturday, Feb. 28 (4:07 p.m. CT); Sunday, March 1 (4:07 p.m. CT)*

- Minnesota, which captured its third consecutive WCHA regular season title, hosts eighth-seed Minnesota State this weekend at Ridder Arena. The Gophers are 14-1-3 at home this season.
- The Gophers are 69-3-3 all-time against the Mavericks, including a 4-0 mark this season (by scores of 5-1 and 4-0 in November and 7-3 and 7-1 in January).
- Minnesota has three Patty Kazmaier Award top-10 finalists in junior forward **Hannah Brandt**, sophomore forward **Dani Cameranesi** and senior defenseman **Rachel Ramsey**.
- Brandt won the WCHA's regular season scoring title with 50 points (21g, 29a) in 27 games.
- The Gophers have won five-straight games and are 22-1-2 in their last 25 games. Minnesota owns the nation's second-ranked offense (4.46 gpg) and No. 4 defense (1.20 gpg).
- Minnesota State freshman F **Nicole Schammel** ranks 17th among all NCAA rookies with a team-high 21 points (11g, 10a).
- Mavericks senior G **Erin Krichiver** ranks second in the country with 934 saves.

(7) St. Cloud State at (2) Wisconsin

LaBahn Arena; Madison, Wisc.

Friday, Feb. 27 (7:07 p.m. CT); Saturday, Feb. 28 (7:07 p.m. CT); Sunday, March 1 (7:07 p.m. CT)*

- Second-seed Wisconsin hosts seven-seed St. Cloud State in a rematch of last weekend's regular season finale. The Badgers are 10-4-2 at home this season.
- The two teams split last weekend, with the Huskies' Friday-night victory snapping a 22-game losing streak in the series. Wisconsin lead the all-time series 60-8-2, including a 33-3-0 mark in Madison. The Badgers went 3-1-0 against SCSU this season, with a trio of shutouts.
- UW leads the nation in penalty killing (.962 conversion rate) and has scored as many shorthanded goals (4) as it has given up on opponents power-plays (4). The Badgers are also tied for the national lead in scoring defense, allowing just 1.12 goals per game.
- A big reason for the Badgers' success on both the penalty kill and on the defensive end is sophomore G **Ann-Renée Desbiens**, who ranks second in the country with 13 shutouts. She is also second among NCAA netminders with a 1.15 GAA and sixth with a .941 save percentage.
- Badgers' F **Annie Pankowski** leads all NCAA freshmen in scoring with an average of 1.12 points per contest (13th among all players). She has scored nine goals in her past nine games.
- SCSU senior G **Julie Friend** stopped 52-of-53 shots in a 2-1 victory last Friday night in Madison. Junior F **Molly Illikainen** leads the Huskies with nine goals, nine assists and 18 points.

(6) Ohio State at (3) North Dakota

Ralph Engelstad Arena; Grand Forks, N.D.

Friday, Feb. 27 (2:07 p.m. CT); Saturday, Feb. 28 (2:07 p.m. CT); Sunday, March 1 at (2:07 p.m. CT)*

- Third-seed North Dakota hosts sixth-seed Ohio State at Ralph Engelstad Arena, as the teams will meet for the first time in the WCHA playoffs. UND is 11-5-2 at home this season.
- UND is 10-1-1 in its last 12 games is 16-4-3 (.773) since Nov. 21. UND finished 3-0-1 against OSU.
- UND is led by junior G **Shelby Amsley-Benzie**, who leads the nation with a .955 save percentage and is tied for second with a 1.15 GAA. Since Jan. 1, she leads the nation in save percentage (.974), GAA (0.61) and shutouts (8).
- Amsley-Benzie's enters the playoffs with a program-record scoreless streak of 267:11.
- All of UND's 19 skaters and one goaltender have recorded a point this season, including 16 goal-scorers. Senior F **Josefine Jakobsen**, who leads the team with 15 goals, is on a six-game point streak (5g, 2a). The run ties her career-high, first set between Nov. 18 and Dec. 8, 2012.
- Both OSU goalies – freshman **Kassidy Sauve** (19th, .923) and redshirt junior **Stacy Danczak** (20th,

.923) – rank in the top-20 nationally for save percentage.

- OSU has a balanced scoring attack, with 21 players recording a point. Senior F **Taylor Kuehl** leads the Buckeyes with 24 points on 10 goals and 14 assists.

(5) Bemidji State at (4) Minnesota Duluth

AMSOIL Arena; Duluth, Minn.

Friday, Feb. 27 at 2:07 p.m. CT; Saturday, Feb. 28 at 1:07 p.m. CT;

Sunday, March 1 at 2:07 p.m. CT (if necessary)

- Fourth-seed Minnesota Duluth, which has home ice for the WCHA playoffs for the 16th consecutive season, hosts fifth-seed Bemidji State at AMSOIL Arena. The Bulldogs are 11-5-2 at home this season.
- UMD and BSU split their regular season series, with each team going 1-1 in the other's building. The Bulldogs lead the all-time series 61-6-2.
- The Bulldogs captured the fourth seed by virtue of a final-weekend sweep over Ohio State. The brooming was UMD's seventh of the season – most since the 2010-11 campaign.
- UMD sophomore goaltender **Kayla Black** set a school single-season record with nine shutouts this season, and enters the playoffs ranked eighth nationally with a .935 save percentage.
- Bulldogs' senior F **Zoe Hickel** leads the team with 18 goals and 31 points in 33 games, and enters the playoffs with 92 career points (45g, 47a).
- Under first-year head coach **Jim Scanlan**, Bemidji State finished the regular season with school records for overall wins (18) and WCHA victories (13). The Beavers tied a program record by obtaining the fifth seed for the playoffs.
- BSU sophomore G **Brittini Mowat** ranks third nationally with a .943 save percentage and 10th with a 1.70 GAA.
- Junior F **Stephanie Anderson**, who will be on the US National Team for the 2015 IIHF World Championships, scored a goal in both games earlier this month at AMSOIL Arena.

2015 WCHA FINAL FACE-OFF

Tickets for the premiere league championship in women's college hockey - the WCHA FINAL FACE-OFF - are on sale now. The 2015 WCHA FINAL FACE-OFF, which will determine the league's playoff champion and recipient of its automatic berth to the NCAA Tournament, will be held March 7 and 8 at Ralph Engelstad Arena in Grand Forks, N.D. All-tournament packages or single-session tickets can be purchased at the Ralph Engelstad Arena box office, Ticketmaster Ticket Centers, by calling 800-745-3000 or online at ticketmaster.com.

About Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA)

The women's Western Collegiate Hockey Association has won a record 14 national championships in 15 years since its inception in 1999, while producing six Patty Kazmaier Award winners, 70 All-Americans and numerous Olympic and international team members. The eight-team Division I conference consists of: Bemidji State University (Beavers), the University of Minnesota (Golden Gophers), the University of Minnesota Duluth (Bulldogs), Minnesota State University (Mavericks), the University of North Dakota, Ohio State University (Buckeyes), St. Cloud State University (Huskies) and the University of Wisconsin (Badgers).

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