



PRESS RELEASE



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CALDER HAT TRICK LEADS LAKE SUPERIOR STATE TO 6-3 WIN IN WCHA CHAMPIONSHIP GAME *Victory sends the Lakers to the NCAA tournament for the first time since 1996*

MANKATO, Minn. – March 20, 2021 – Dustin Manz scored 1:20 into the game and **Ashton Calder** chalked up a hat trick as Lake Superior State jumped out to a 4-0 second period lead en route to a 6-3 victory over Northern Michigan in the WCHA Championship Game on Saturday night in Mankato, Minn.

With the win, the Lakers clinched their first WCHA postseason title and earned the league's automatic berth in the NCAA Division I Men's Ice Hockey Championship. Lake State will learn its first round opponent when the full NCAA field is announced on Sunday evening.

"In our neck of the woods and across college hockey, this is a very storied program," Lake Superior State head coach **Damon Whitten** said following the game. "My first few years were tough years. We asked our recruits to believe in our vision and what we wanted to accomplish and get back to hanging banners in Taffy Abel [Arena]. To see that come to fruition tonight is pretty special. I don't think there is a more proud moment as a coach than to see what these players have put in to hoist that trophy over their heads."

The Lakers struck early as Manz jammed home his second goal of the season just 1:20 into the contest. The score was the quickest in a WCHA title game since 2010 and staked LSSU to a very early 1-0 lead. The lead grew to 2-0 at 12:02 of the period when **Brandon Puricelli** tipped a feed through the crease from Manz past NMU's **Rico DiMatteo**.

The Lakers continued to put pressure on the NMU defense in the second period as **Jacob Nordqvist** and Calder found the back of the net three minutes apart in the middle of the frame for a 4-0 Lake State lead.

But Northern Michigan broke through in the final minute of the period on a power-play goal from **André Ghantous**. The tally was the third of the weekend for the WCHA Scoring Champion and his fifth point of the postseason and cut the Laker lead to 4-1 heading to the third period.

NMU trimmed the lead further on a goal from **AJ Vanderbeck** just 3:05 into the final frame, but Calder again hit paydirt on a shorthanded goal with less than nine minutes left to push the lead back to three at 5-2.

NMU continued to battle as **David Keefer** cut the Laker lead to 5-3 at 15:52 to give the Wildcats some life late. Northern Michigan went with an extra attacker following the score, but Calder iced the game with an empty-net goal at 17:24 for the first hat trick in a WCHA championship game since 2015 and put the Lakers in the NCAA tournament for the first time since the 1995-96 season.

Calder took home WCHA Championship Most Outstanding Player honors for his efforts on Saturday. Laker netminder **Mareks Mitens** earned First Star honors after stopping 25-of-28 NMU shots while teammate **Brandon Puricelli** picked up the Second Star with a goal and an assist on the evening. Northern Michigan's **André Ghantous** received Third Star honors.

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2021 WCHA Postseason Tournament, presented by SPIRE Credit Union

The WCHA will crown a playoff champion at the WCHA Postseason Tournament, presented by [SPIRE Credit Union](#). The tournament winner will receive an automatic bid to the 2021 NCAA Division I Men's Ice Hockey Championship.

Jeff Sauer WCHA Championship Trophy, presented by Anderson's Pure Maple Syrup

The winner of the 2021 WCHA Postseason tournament will once again receive the Jeff Sauer WCHA Championship Trophy, presented by [Anderson's Pure Maple Syrup](#).

About the Western Collegiate Hockey Association Men's League

The Western Collegiate Hockey Association, among the most historic, tradition-rich and successful conferences in all of collegiate athletics, is marking its 69th season of men's competition in 2020-21. The 10-team NCAA Division I 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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