



PRESS RELEASE



Contact: Todd Bell, Marketing & Communications Manager / O: 952-681-7668 / C: 972-825-6686 / Email: tbell@wcha.com
Web: wcha.com / Twitter: [@wcha_mhockey](https://twitter.com/wcha_mhockey) / IG: [@wcha_mhockey](https://www.instagram.com/wcha_mhockey) / FB: facebook.com/wchamenshockey / Watch on FloHockey.tv

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WCHA TOURNAMENT CENTRAL

LAKE SUPERIOR STATE AND NORTHERN MICHIGAN TO MEET IN WCHA CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Lakers and Wildcats to square off Saturday in first WCHA postseason encounter

MANKATO, Minn. – March 19, 2021 – The WCHA Championship is down to its final two teams as No. 2 seed Lake Superior State and No. 6 seed Northern Michigan scored convincing victories on Friday to set up a showdown for the Jeff Sauer Trophy on Saturday evening in Mankato, Minn.

The Wildcats opened the day with a resounding 5-1 win over top seed Minnesota State, scoring four times in the second period and blocking 26 shots to thwart the Maverick attack. Lake Superior State skated off with a 4-1 win in the nightcap as **Hampus Eriksson** assisted on two goals and scored once to lead the Lakers to the victory and secure the program's 1,000th win.

The two Upper Peninsula rivals met four times in the 2020-21 regular season, twice in non-conference action along with a two-game league set. Lake Superior State won three of the four matchups with two of their victories and NMU's lone triumph coming in overtime. This will be the first WCHA postseason meeting between the two teams.

Northern Michigan will be playing for its fourth WCHA postseason championship [1989, 1991, 1992] in six appearances in the league title game [1989, 1991, 1992, 1993, 2018]. This will be Lake Superior State's first appearance in the WCHA championship game.

Saturday's championship game will begin at 7:07 p.m. CT and will stream live on FloHockey.tv.

WCHA Semifinal 1: No. 6 Northern Michigan 5, No. 1 Minnesota State 1

WCHA Scoring Champion **André Ghanous** scored twice and freshman **Rico DiMatteo** stopped 28 shots to lead No. 6 seed Northern Michigan to a 5-1 win over top-seeded Minnesota State in the opening semifinal of the WCHA Championship on Friday at the Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center in Mankato, Minn.

Northern Michigan struck first as Ghanous pulled the puck out of a scramble in front of the Minnesota State net and fired his eighth goal of the season over the shoulder of WCHA Goaltending Champion **Dryden McKay** for 1-0 lead just 1:16 into the contest. The Wildcats nearly added a second goal in the final seconds of the frame on a point-blank shot from Nardi just to the left of the MSU net, but McKay was able to turn it away with a pad save as time ran out on the period.

The second period was a repeat of the first with NMU finding the back of the net early again as **Alex Frye** backhanded in a blocked shot from the slot just 24 seconds into the period to extend the Wildcat lead to 2-0. Northern upped the lead to 3-0 midway through the period when a Nardi wrist shot from just inside the blueline made it over McKay's shoulder at 8:53 of the period.

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The lead grew to 4-0 a little over two minutes later when **AJ Vanderbeck** found the back of the net off of a feed from Frye on a 2-on-1 at 11:05. **Ryan Edquist** replaced McKay in net following the goal but the NMU onslaught continued as Ghantous fired his second goal of the game at 12:57 for a 5-0 lead.

Minnesota State got on the scoreboard early in the third period on a power-play goal from **Reggie Lutz** at 2:49 of the period following a slashing call on NMU's **David Keefer**.

But the Mavericks were unable to close the gap further as DiMatteo turned away 28-of-29 MSU shots to earn the win.

WCHA Semifinal 2: No. 2 Lake Superior State 4, No. 4 Bemidji State 1

Hampus Eriksson had a hand in three goals and **Mareks Mitens** turned away 26 shots as second-seeded Lake Superior State took down No. 4 seed Bemidji State, 4-1, in the WCHA semifinals on Friday evening.

Lake Superior State opened the scoring at 13:28 of the first period when **Brandon Puricelli** pounced on a rebound in front of the Bemidji net and banged home his seventh goal of the season to put the Lakers up 1-0.

After a back-and-forth second period that saw the Lakers kill off a pair of penalties, Lake Superior State added two late goals in the frame to go up 3-0 at the second intermission. A **Jacob Bengtsson** shot from the blueline off a feed from Eriksson found its way past Beaver goaltender **Zach Driscoll** at 15:31 of the frame before Eriksson scored on a feed from **Yuki Miura** off of a Bemidji State turnover at 18:14.

Lukas Kaelble pushed the Laker lead to 4-0 early in the third period on an assist from Eriksson at 4:14. Bemidji State ended Mitens' shutout bid with a power-play goal from captain **Ethan Somoza** at 16:36.

Bemidji State went to an extra attacker following the Somoza goal but was unable to cut into the Laker lead as Mitens finished with 26 saves on 27 Beaver shots.

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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