



PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**WCHA PARTNERS WITH HEADWAY FOUNDATION FOR
CONCUSSION AWARENESS WEEKEND FEB. 1-3**
*All WCHA Men's and Women's League teams will again
help promote the "New Tough Campaign"*

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – Jan. 28, 2019 – The Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA) is proud to partner with the Headway Foundation for a Concussion Awareness Weekend during WCHA play Feb. 1-3. Over the weekend, which aims to provide a platform for players to unite in creating a positive mental shift in athletes' approach to concussions, all WCHA Men's and Women's League student-athletes will be wearing Headway stickers on their helmets to promote the "New Tough Campaign."

The WCHA is joining with student-athletes from ECAC Hockey and the National Collegiate Hockey Conference (NCHC) on this initiative.

"The WCHA continues to make student-athlete well-being and safety its ultimate priority," said Bill Robertson, WCHA president and Men's League commissioner, and Katie Million, WCHA vice president and Women's League commissioner in a joint statement. "Men's and women's hockey players are among the toughest of athletes but it is critical that our student-athletes understand this does NOT mean risking serious head trauma and brain injury. Regardless of the sport, student-athletes need to be supported and recognized for having the strength to recognize and report possible concussion symptoms. We want to thank the Headway Foundation and the student-athletes of the WCHA, ECAC Hockey and NCHC and Big Ten for once again embodying the "New Tough" spirit and leading the way on this important initiative."

Student-athletes from the WCHA's 10 Men's League schools and seven Women's League teams will be participating in a variety of ways. In addition to wearing helmet stickers, players are encouraged to make the Headway Foundation "New Tough Pact," a commitment to: Report possible concussion symptoms and stay patient during recovery; encourage brain-injured teammates to seek help and offer support while they heal; and, play the game within its rules (avoiding illegal hits from behind, and to the back). Teams are also encouraged to share their support and help raise awareness via social media.

"We are thrilled to see the growth and participation of so many collegiate hockey teams during our third annual Concussion Awareness Weekend, said Paige Decker, co-founder of the Headway Foundation and former Yale hockey player. The sheer number of athletes rallying behind this weekend is a testament to the progress being made about the proper ways to handle concussions in sports, and we are grateful to be involved with the movement. This event is really about promoting a safer sports culture surrounding concussions. As athletes who have experienced long-term post-concussion symptoms, we understand how important it is to handle this injury properly. This includes everything from prevention and timely symptom reporting to proper treatment, support and recovery. We understand that removal from play when a concussion is suspected is often the mentally tougher but necessary thing to do, and we want to facilitative a productive dialogue around this subject."

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"Oftentimes making a comeback and playing through injury is glorified in sports," added Josephine Pucci, co-founder of the Headway Foundation, former Harvard hockey player and 2014 Olympic silver medalist, "but with New Tough, we are acknowledging that sometimes dealing with concussions in the right way is the harder thing to do, and it requires a strong mental toughness during much uncertainty,"

The three WCHA Men's League series the weekend of Feb. 1-3 are: Lake Superior State at Ferris State, Bowling Green at Northern Michigan and Alabama Huntsville at Minnesota State. The WCHA Women's League will feature Ohio State at St. Cloud State, Wisconsin at Bemidji State and Minnesota Duluth at Minnesota, while Minnesota State will host the Minnesota Whitecaps in an exhibition game.

Additionally, fans will be able to pledge a donation that will go directly to support the New Tough Campaign. To pledge, visit: <http://headwayfoundation.com/donate/>

WCHA "New Tough Campaign" Team Leaders

Men's League: Max Coatta (Minnesota State), Madison Dunn (Alabama Huntsville), Dillon Eichstadt (Bemidji State), Josh Kestner (Alaska Anchorage), Ryker Killins (Ferris State), Jordan Muzzillo (Alaska), Collin Saccoman (Lake Superior State); Dylan Steman (Michigan Tech).

Women's League: Lauren Bench (Bemidji State), Corbin Boyd (Minnesota State), Sydney Brodt (Minnesota Duluth), Maddie Rolfes (Wisconsin), Tatum Skaggs (Ohio State), Taylor Williamson (Minnesota).

About the New Tough Campaign

The center for Disease Control Reports that Approximately 69% of student-athletes neglect to report possible concussion symptoms. New Tough is a campaign that addresses this by refraining and broadening an athlete's definition of toughness. It challenges athletes to handle concussion properly by encouraging symptom reporting, offering avenues for teammates to support each other and promoting safe play. Read more here: www.headwayfoundation.com/newtough.

About the Headway Foundation

Headway Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit addressing sports concussions. It was founded by three former ECAC Hockey student-athletes who endured concussions during collegiate play - Paige Decker (Yale Women's Hockey '14), Josephine Pucci (Harvard Women's Hockey '15 and Sochi Olympian) and Danny Otto (Yale Men's Hockey '12). To contact the Headway Foundation, you can visit their Web site at www.headwayfoundation.com or send an email to info@headwayfoundation.com.

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, will proudly mark its 67th season of men's competition in 2018-19. 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).

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About the Western Collegiate Hockey Association Women's League

The Women's League of the Western Collegiate Hockey Association is celebrating 20 Years of Excellence during 2018-19 anniversary season. The nation's premier women's hockey conference, WCHA member institutions have won a record 16 national championships since the league's inception in 1999 (including 15 of a possible 18 NCAA titles), while producing seven Patty Kazmaier Memorial Award winners, 98 All-Americans and numerous Olympic and national team members. The seven-team, NCAA Division 1 conference consists of: Bemidji State University (Beavers), the University of Minnesota (Golden Gophers), the University of Minnesota Duluth (Bulldogs), Minnesota State University (Mavericks), Ohio State University (Buckeyes), St. Cloud State University (Huskies) and the University of Wisconsin (Badgers).

For more information on both leagues, visit wcha.com.

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