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## **WCHA ANNOUNCES 2016-17 END-OF-YEAR AWARDS** ***League Player, Defensive Player, Rookie and Coach of the Year honored***

EDINA, Minn. – March 14, 2017 – Following a regular season that crowned a first-time league champion, and as part of an ongoing 2016-17 campaign that has produced four, 20-win teams, the men’s Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA) today recognizes and applauds four of its standout performances.

Below are the 2016-17 WCHA Player, Defensive Player, Rookie and Coach of the Year honorees, as announced by WCHA President and Men’s League Commissioner **Bill Robertson**.

### **WCHA Player of the Year: Michael Bitzer, Jr., G, Bemidji State (Moorhead, Minn.)**

Bitzer backstopped Bemidji State to the program’s first MacNaughton Cup as WCHA regular season champion, solidifying his place as one of the nation’s top goaltenders with an exceptional junior campaign – one of the best-ever by a league netminder. The Moorhead, Minn. native set the all-time WCHA record with a sparkling 1.40 goals-against average in his 27 league games, while also pacing the circuit with a .940 save percentage (second in league history), 20 wins (tied for seventh), a .778 winning percentage, five shutouts (tied for third) and 1625:40 in net.

The first-team All-WCHA goaltender ended his season with a 1.71 overall goals-against average, currently best in the nation, while he tied his own Bemidji State single-season record with six shutouts (also tops as of now in the NCAA). Bitzer finished with a 22-14-3 record, becoming the first BSU goalie with 22 wins in a season since Steve O’Shea (22-12-1) in 1986-87. He was in the net for every Beaver victory in 2016-17, as the team won its most league games of its seven WCHA campaigns and posted its most overall triumphs since 2009-10.

Bitzer becomes the first goaltender to be named WCHA Player of the Year under the league’s current configuration, while this marks the 10<sup>th</sup> time in league history a netminder has earned the award.

### **WCHA Defensive Player of the Year: Daniel Brickley, So., D, Minnesota State (Sandy, Utah)**

Brickley was the top two-way player in the WCHA, pacing league defensemen with 19 assists, 26 points and 14 power-play points in just 22 league contests, while ranking second with 55 blocked shots. The first-team All-WCHA performer nearly became the first blue-liner in 20 years to lead the league in scoring, falling just four points shy – despite missing six games due to injury.

The sophomore from Sandy, Utah wrapped up his campaign with eight goals, 23 assists and 31 points – currently tied for the eighth-most nationally among defensemen (second for underclassmen). Brickley also added 72 blocked shots and a plus-9 rating, helping Minnesota State to a 22-win season and a trip to the WCHA semifinals.

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### **WCHA Rookie of the Year: Marc Michaelis, Fr., F, Minnesota State (Mannheim, Germany)**

Michaelis put together one of the most impressive rookie campaigns in Minnesota State history, leading the team with 36 points – the second-most by a Maverick freshman in the program’s Division I history. A first-team All-WCHA and WCHA All-Rookie Team selection, he scored 14 goals and collected 22 assists in 39 games, amassing what is currently the fourth-most points by a NCAA freshman. The Hockey Commissioners’ Association Division I National Rookie of the Month for December, Michaelis tallied at least one point in 24 contests overall.

The native of Mannheim, Germany ranked second in the WCHA scoring race with 28 points in 28 league games, just two points shy of becoming the third freshman in conference history – and first in 46 years – to win a scoring title. Michaelis also paced WCHA rookies in goals (13), points, goals-per-game (0.46), points-per-game (1.00), power-play goals (6), power-play points (13), short-handed goals (2) and hat tricks (1).

### **WCHA Coach of the Year: Tom Serratore, Bemidji State**

Serratore guided Bemidji State to its first MacNaughton Cup as WCHA regular season champions, capping the Beavers’ best campaign in its seven years in the league. He led BSU to a 20-6-2-2 mark and 64 points in WCHA play, outdistancing second-place Michigan Tech by 10 points. Bemidji State swept its opening weekend of WCHA play and was undefeated in its first 13 league contests (12-0-1); meaning that, aside from a bye week on the opening weekend of league games (Oct. 1-2), the Beavers held at least a share of first place after every WCHA weekend in which it competed.

Serratore wrapped up his 16<sup>th</sup> season at the helm of his alma mater by taking Bemidji State to the semifinal round of the 2017 WCHA Playoffs and a 22-16-3 overall mark, the program’s most wins since finishing 23-10-4 in 2009-10. This is the sixth time Serratore has been honored as a league’s top bench boss, as he also garnered College Hockey America (CHA) Coach of the Year accolades in 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009 and 2010.

### **About the 2016-17 WCHA Awards**

League member team head coaches vote for the WCHA individual awards, while winners are determined by total votes received. WCHA Outstanding Student-Athlete of the Year, which will be announced later this week, is selected by the institutional faculty athletics representatives.

### ***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, is proudly marking its 65<sup>th</sup> season of men’s competition in 2016-17. 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](http://wcha.com).

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