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BEMIDJI STATE'S MICHAEL BITZER NAMED HOBEY BAKER TOP-10 FINALIST ***2016-17 WCHA Player of the Year one of two goaltenders among finalists***

EDINA, Minn. – March 15, 2017 – Continuing to receive accolades for his stellar junior season, Bemidji State goaltender **Michael Bitzer** has been named a top-10 finalist for the 2017 Hobey Baker Memorial Award. The 2016-17 men's Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA) Player of the Year is one of two goaltenders among the top candidates for the award honoring college hockey's top player.

Bitzer was the backbone for Bemidji State's 22-victory, MacNaughton Cup-winning campaign, logging more minutes in net (2355:22) than any other goalie in the country. Even with the heavy workload, he led the nation with a 1.71 overall goals-against average and six shutouts. The WCHA goaltending champion and first-team all-league performer set the all-time WCHA record with a sparkling 1.40 GAA in his 27 league games. 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.

Off the ice, the exercise science major is a two-time WCHA Scholar-Athlete Award recipient and All-Academic Team member. Bitzer also volunteers as a gardener at a local food shelf, while assisting in youth hockey efforts throughout the region.

The ten finalists were selected by voting from all 60 Division I college hockey head coaches and by online fan balloting. Next, the 27-member Selection Committee and an additional round of fan balloting through the Hobey website at www.hobeybaker.com from March 16-26 will determine this year's Hobey Baker winner. Criteria for the award include: displaying outstanding skills in all phases of the game, strength of character on and off the ice, sportsmanship and scholastic achievements.

The Hobey Hat Trick (three finalists) will be announced on March 30, 2017 and the Hobey Baker Award winner will be announced Friday, April 7, 2017 from Chicago, IL during the NCAA Frozen Four. The award announcement will take place at the Aon Grand Ballroom at Navy Pier. The announcement will be televised live on the NHL Network and can be followed on the Hobey Baker website at 6:00 p.m. ET.

Bitzer's selection continues the WCHA's longstanding tradition of excellence with the Hobey Baker Memorial Award. The league has had a top-10 finalist each year, while producing 16 winners since the Hobey Baker was first awarded in 1981.

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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 65th 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.

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