

**WESTERN
COLLEGIATE
HOCKEY
ASSOCIATION**
• FOUNDED 1999 •

Suite C
Minnesota State Univ., Mankato at Edina
7700 France Avenue South, Suite 360
Edina, MN 55435
952 818-8869

Women's Commissioner

Aaron Kemp
o 952 818-8869 • akemp@wcha.com

Associate Commissioner

Alyssa Bennett
o 952 818-8871 • m 651 261-3867
abennett@wcha.com

Associate Commissioner for Public Relations

Matt Hodson
o 952 818-8872 • 612 801-2808
mhodson@wcha.com

Women's Public Relations Director

Bill Brophy
m 303 330-5468 • bbrophy@wcha.com

Supervisor of Officials

Greg Shepherd
651 330-5131 • m 303 478-3696
gshepherdwcha@gmail.com

**HOME OF A RECORD
14 WOMEN'S NATIONAL
CHAMPIONSHIP TEAMS
SINCE 1999**

2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005,
2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011,
2012, 2013

**WOMEN'S MEMBER
TEAMS**

Bemidji State University
University of Minnesota
University of Minnesota Duluth
Minnesota State University
University of North Dakota
Ohio State University
St. Cloud State University
University of Wisconsin

**2015 WCHA
FINAL FACE-OFF
CHAMPIONSHIP**

March 7-8, 2015
Ralph Engelstad Arena
Grand Forks, ND

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September 23, 2014/For Immediate Release

**Coaches Pick Defending Champ Minnesota as
WCHA Favorite in 2014-15**

*Gophers, Wisconsin and Minnesota Duluth picked to finish atop league;
Minnesota's Hannah Brandt and Badgers' Annie Pankowski tabbed as preseason award favorites*

EDINA, Minn. – The coaches from the women's Western Collegiate Hockey Association stayed with a familiar choice for the 2014-15 season: Once again, the University of Minnesota is the preseason pick to win the championship of a league that has 14 Division I women's national championships in its 15 years of existence.

Minnesota has advanced to the NCAA championship game in each of the last three seasons and won two titles. The Gophers, who also won the WCHA FINAL FACE-OFF playoff championship the last three seasons and are the two-time defending WCHA regular season champions, collected six first place votes and 48 points in the annual poll of the league's eight head coaches.

Wisconsin, another NCAA Frozen Four team last season, placed second in the coaches' poll with 44 points and two first place votes. Minnesota Duluth (34 points) edged out a third national top-ten team from a year ago, North Dakota (33 points), for third place in the coaches' poll.

Ohio State, with 26 points, was selected to finish in fifth place, while Minnesota State was tabbed for sixth. Bemidji State was picked as the seventh place finisher, just ahead of St. Cloud State.

Minnesota junior forward Hannah Brandt, the WCHA Player of the Year last season, was the coaches' unanimous preseason choice for the same honors in 2014-15. Wisconsin freshman forward Annie Pankowski is the head coaches' preseason choice as WCHA Rookie of the Year.

2014-15 WCHA Head Coaches' Preseason Poll

Rank	Team (1st place votes)	Points
1	Minnesota (6)	48
2	Wisconsin (2)	44
3	Minnesota Duluth	34
4	North Dakota	33
5	Ohio State	26
6	Minnesota State	17
7	Bemidji State	13
8	St. Cloud State	9

(note: coaches could not vote for their own teams in the poll and points were awarded on a 7-6-5-4-3-2-1 system)

WCHA Preseason Player of the Year (votes)

Hannah Brandt, Jr., F, Minnesota (8)

WCHA Preseason Rookie of the Year (votes)

Annie Pankowski, F, Wisconsin (6); Baylee Wellhausen, F, Wisconsin and Cara Piazza, F, Minnesota (1)

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The WCHA opens its 16th season of women's hockey with three non-conference series on Sept. 26-27 when Minnesota Duluth visits Connecticut; Bemidji State, with new coach Jim Scanlan behind the bench, travels to Robert Morris; and Wisconsin plays at Lindenwood. That same weekend, St. Cloud State, under new coach Eric Rud, hosts an exhibition game against the Toronto Junior Aeros Sept. 26 and North Dakota faces Toronto Sept. 27 in Grand Forks, N.D. On Sept. 28, Ohio State faces Western Ontario for an exhibition contest in Columbus, Ohio.

The 112-game conference slate, comprised of 28 games for each of the WCHA's eight teams (four games – two home and two away – against each of other seven members), gets underway during the weekend of Oct. 3-4 when Wisconsin visits Minnesota Duluth.

The 2015 WCHA Final Face-Off Championship returns to the University of North Dakota's Ralph Engelstad Arena the weekend of March 7-8, 2015.

For more information on the WCHA, visit www.wcha.com.

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