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## THREE WCHA STUDENT-ATHLETES NOMINATED FOR 2017 NCAA WOMAN OF THE YEAR

*North Dakota's Halli Krzyzaniak, Minnesota Duluth's Lara Stalder and  
Minnesota's Lee Stecklein among 543 national nominees*

EDINA, Minn. – June 28, 2017 – Three student-athletes from the women's Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA) are among the record 543 female college athletes nominated by member schools for the 2017 NCAA Woman of the Year award: **Halli Krzyzaniak** (North Dakota), **Lara Stalder** (Minnesota Duluth) and **Lee Stecklein** (Minnesota). Eight ice hockey players were nominated nationwide, including five from the Division 1 ranks.

Established in 1991 and now in its 27<sup>th</sup> year, the NCAA Woman of the Year award honors graduating female college athletes who have exhausted their eligibility and distinguished themselves in academics, athletics, service and leadership throughout their collegiate careers.

"We are incredibly proud of Halli, Lara and Lee for all of their wonderful – and ongoing – accomplishments," said WCHA Vice President and Women's League Commissioner **Katie Million**. "All three are tremendous hockey players, who have the opportunity to continue playing for their home countries. More importantly, they are amazing people, true leaders and champions whose positive impact stretches far beyond the ice. The WCHA family looks forward to watching and supporting all their future endeavors!"

More about the WCHA nominees:

### **Halli Krzyzaniak, University of North Dakota (Neepawa, Manitoba)**

One of college hockey's top defensemen, a burgeoning star on the international scene with Canada's National Women's Team, a dedicated student with a 3.92 grade-point-average, and an engaged community member both in Grand Forks and her native Manitoba, Krzyzaniak was named recipient of the prestigious 2017 WCHA Postgraduate Scholarship.

Twice voted by her peers to wear the captain's "C," Krzyzaniak was a three-time All-WCHA defenseman. She played in 139 career games, tallying 58 points on 14 goals and 44 assists. Most importantly, the blue-liner compiled a career plus-54 rating, helping UND to a 76-52-18 mark, four-straight berths in the WCHA Final Face-Off and a trio of season-ending, national top-10 rankings. She also became a fixture for Hockey Canada during this time, participating in the last two World Championships and 4 Nations Cup tournaments. Recently, the Neepawa, Manitoba native was named to Canada's 28-player 2017-18 centralization roster, moving one step closer to fulfilling a dream of representing her country in the 2018 Winter Olympics.

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A 2017 CoSIDA Academic All-District® honoree, Krzyzaniak is a three-time WCHA Scholar-Athlete Award recipient and was a member of the WCHA All-Academic Team three years running. She compiled a near-perfect GPA and graduated this spring with a bachelor's degree in UND's Honors program, while completing dual minors in chemistry and communication. Following preparation for the 2018 Olympics, Krzyzaniak plans on obtaining a master's degree, with the goal of attending medical school following her hockey career. Ultimately, she intends to become a surgeon specializing in orthopedics.

**Lara Stalder, University of Minnesota Duluth (Luzern, Switzerland)**

Stalder, long one of the top playmakers in college hockey, was a top-three finalist for the 2017 Patty Kazmaier Memorial Award during a sensational senior campaign. This past season, the nation's top scorer (by points per game) helped Minnesota Duluth return to the NCAA tournament for the first time since 2011, finish No. 5 in the national rankings and compile its best WCHA finish since 2010-11 – all while continuing to excel in the classroom and community.

The native of Luzern, Switzerland led the NCAA as a senior by averaging 1.60 points per game, capping a tremendous career that saw her post 148 points in 134 contests (54 goals and 94 assists). Her 2016-17 campaign featured 23 goals (tied for fifth in the NCAA), 33 assists (tied for sixth) and 56 points (tied for fourth) in 35 games, along with a terrific plus-44 rating (tied for second). To top it all off, the 2014 Olympic bronze medalist missed a pair of WCHA games while helping her native Swiss qualify for the 2018 Winter Olympics.

Away from AMSOIL Arena, Stalder maintained a 3.80 grade-point average in the University of Minnesota Duluth's prestigious Labovitz School of Business and Economics. A two-time WCHA Scholar-Athlete Award recipient and three-time WCHA All-Academic Team member, she is one of a select number in the school's ReMAP project that is engaged in analyses of various business in the Duluth area.

**Lee Stecklein, University of Minnesota (Roseville, Minn.)**

Stecklein graduated this spring as one of the most decorated and accomplished student-athletes in WCHA history, on and off the ice. A three-time NCAA national champion, she was thrice an AHCA/CCM All-American and All-WCHA First-Team selection; additionally, while earning a double major in entrepreneurial management and marketing from the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Business, Stecklein was a three-time WCHA Scholar-Athlete Award recipient and three-time WCHA All-Academic Team member.

A native of Roseville, Minn., Stecklein was a three-time captain for the Gophers, while Minnesota advanced to the Frozen Four in each of her four years as an active member of the team (winning three national titles). She wrapped up her career ranked seventh on Minnesota's all-time defenseman scoring list, compiling 93 points in 157 games (20 goals and 73 assists).

Stecklein's contributions to the University of Minnesota and the surrounding community go far beyond her success on the ice. She totaled over 150 volunteer hours during her Gopher career, including significant time spent mentoring and working with area youth and visiting the University of Minnesota Masonic Children's Hospital. Stecklein was named Minnesota's female recipient of the 2017 Big Ten Medal of Honor, an annual award given to a student-athlete who had "attained the greatest proficiency in athletics and scholastic work." She was a finalist for the 2017 Hockey Humanitarian award as well. In addition to her WCHA academic honors, Stecklein was also a two-time CoSIDA Academic All-America At-Large selection.

A 2014 Olympic silver medalist, Stecklein was the youngest member of Team USA at the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia. She is now continuing her hockey career as a member of the U.S.

Women's National Team training for the 2018 Winter Olympic Games.

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### **2017 NCAA Woman of the Year Process**

The NCAA encourages member schools to honor their top graduating female student-athletes each year by submitting their names for consideration for the Woman of the Year award.

Next, conferences (the home multi-sport conferences for the three WCHA nominees) will select up to two conference nominees each from the pool of school nominees. The Woman of the Year selection committee, made up of representatives from the NCAA membership, will then choose the top 30 honorees — 10 from each division.

From the top 30, the selection committee determines the top three honorees from each division and announces the nine finalists in September. The NCAA Committee on Women's Athletics then chooses the 2017 NCAA Woman of the Year from those nine.

The top 30 honorees will be recognized and the 2017 NCAA Woman of the Year will be announced at the annual award ceremony Oct. 22 in Indianapolis.

For more information, please see the official [NCAA press release](#).

### ***About the Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA)***

The women's Western Collegiate Hockey Association has won a record 16 national championships in 18 years since its inception in 1999, while producing seven Patty Kazmaier Award winners, 95 All-Americans and numerous Olympic and international team members. The seven-team 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, visit [www.wcha.com](http://www.wcha.com).

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