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WCHA ANNOUNCES 2017-18 COMPOSITE SCHEDULE

College hockey's premier conference unveils 84-game league slate, nonconference tests and revised postseason structure prior to the 2018 Final Face-Off

EDINA, Minn. – June 8, 2017 – For the first time since the 2003-04 campaign, the founding seven members of the women's Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA) will play a 24-game league schedule next season, while the top seed for the league's postseason tournament will receive a quarterfinal-round bye and advance directly to the 2018 Final Face-Off. The 84-game league slate – which once again promises to be among the toughest and most exciting in women's college hockey – along with an intriguing nonconference schedule and the return of the WCHA Final Face-Off playoff championship to Ridder Arena, highlight the 2017-18 WCHA composite schedule.

The composite schedule for the league's 19th season of competition, as announced today by WCHA Vice President and Women's League Commissioner **Katie Million**, outlines weekend dates and opponents for each of the league's seven member institutions. Exact game days and times, which will follow the :07 and :37 format for league games and nonconference home contests, will be finalized and announced at a later date.

"On behalf of the WCHA Women's League and its member institutions, I am proud to announce our 2017-18 schedule," said Million. "Each and every year, it is our collective goal to provide our teams and fans – the best in college hockey – with a special experience. As we saw with a 2016-17 season that featured a trio of top-five and NCAA tournament teams, several programs on the rise and highly-competitive hockey in every rink, every night, the WCHA delivers an exceptional product.

"We are also excited for our non-conference schedule, along with the unique opportunity to play Olympic-year exhibition contests against the Korean National Team and our friends with the Minnesota Whitecaps.

"We invite our fans to come watch these exceptional student-athletes and programs, and we look forward to joining them in WCHA arenas beginning this fall!"

Nonconference Schedule

With additional weekends available, WCHA member institutions will face off against 16 nonconference opponents for a total of 54 games. These matchups include 12 games against four 2017 NCAA tournament participants, along with two in-season tournaments (Windjammer Classic in Vermont and a four-team showcase in Washington, D.C.); and, games against all six College Hockey America schools, four ECAC Hockey programs and six Hockey East opponents.

Among the highlights:

- Bemidji State will face an early road test, traveling to Potsdam, N.Y. for a two-game series at defending national champion Clarkson the weekend of Oct. 6-8.

- That same Oct. 6-8 weekend, Minnesota Duluth has a two-game series at 2017 Frozen Four participant Boston College, while St. Cloud State will visit Colgate.
- Three WCHA teams will participate in tournaments over the Thanksgiving weekend of Nov. 24-26, with Minnesota Duluth at the Windjammer Classic and Minnesota State joining Wisconsin in the Washington, D.C area. The Bulldogs will play a Colgate team that won 22 games last year in the semifinals, before facing either RIT or host Vermont the following day. The Mavericks and Badgers will take turns playing perennial Hockey East powers Boston University and Northeastern at the Kettler Capitals Iceplex in Arlington, Va.
- Ohio State has a home-and-home with Robert Morris, a 24-win team that finished eighth in the final 2016-17 polls and represented CHA in the NCAA tournament. The Buckeyes visit Pennsylvania the weekend of Nov. 24-26, before hosting the Colonials Jan. 12-14.
- Minnesota will welcome Vermont to Ridder Arena for a series the weekend of Jan. 12-14.
- Wisconsin's 10-game nonconference slate also includes a Nov. 10-12 series at 2017 NCAA tournament participant Cornell.

Additionally, there will be three designated nonconference games between WCHA opponents in 2017-18, highlighted by Bemidji State playing Minnesota Duluth on Nov. 6 in the annual U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame Game. St. Cloud State will host the Beavers on Nov. 22, while the Huskies will travel to Minnesota to play the Gophers on Jan. 9.

A full breakdown of nonconference opponents, by institution:

- Bemidji State – vs. Syracuse, at Clarkson, vs. Minnesota Duluth (U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame Game), at St. Cloud State (single game), vs. RIT, vs. Mercyhurst
- Minnesota – vs. Merrimack, at Mercyhurst, at Lindenwood, vs. St. Cloud State (single-game, vs. Vermont
- Minnesota Duluth – vs. Penn State, at Boston College, vs. Bemidji State (U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame Game), at Windjammer Classic (vs. Colgate, vs. Vermont or RIT)
- Minnesota State – at/vs. Lindenwood, vs. Robert Morris, at D.C. Tournament (vs. Boston University and Northeastern)
- Ohio State – at RPI, at/vs. Robert Morris, at Mercyhurst, vs. Penn State
- St. Cloud State – vs. Connecticut, at Colgate, vs. Bemidji State (single game), at Minnesota (single game)
- Wisconsin – vs. Lindenwood, vs. Mercyhurst, at Syracuse, at Cornell, at D.C. Tournament (vs. Northeastern and Boston University)

League Play

The always ultra-competitive league slate will feature a 24-game schedule in 2017-18, comprised of two series (one home and one away) against each of the other six WCHA institutions. The chase for the regular season title begins the weekend of Oct 6-8, when Minnesota hosts Ohio State. A total of 17 weekends will feature at least one WCHA matchup, including 11 with a full possible allotment of three league sets (Oct. 13-15, Oct 20-22, Oct. 27-29, Nov. 3-5, Nov. 17-19, Dec. 1-3, Jan. 19-21, Jan. 26-28, Feb. 2-4, Feb. 9-11 and Feb. 16-18).

Among the highlights:

- Wisconsin begins its pursuit of a third-straight WCHA championship with a road series at Minnesota State the weekend of Oct. 13-15.
- Minnesota and Minnesota Duluth, who engaged in an epic, double-overtime 2017 WCHA Final Face-Off contest before a thrilling NCAA tournament game one week later, reprise their rivalry Oct. 20-22 at AMSOIL Arena and Dec. 8-10 at Ridder Arena.

- The Bulldogs and Badgers, the 2017 WCHA Final Face-Off championship game opponents, play Dec. 1-3 in Duluth and Feb. 9-10 in Madison.
- The annual “Border Battle” between Minnesota and Wisconsin is revived with an Oct. 27-29 series at Ridder Arena, before the foes close the regular season Feb. 16-18 at LaBahn Arena.
- Northern Minnesota rivals Bemidji State and Minnesota Duluth, who have met in WCHA tournament play two of the last three years, face off Oct. 27-29 in Bemidji (immediately preceding the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame Game) and again Jan. 12-14 in Duluth.
- After taking the second-seeded Gophers to three games in a 2017 WCHA quarterfinal-round series, the Beavers play Minnesota the weekends of Oct. 13-15 (at BSU) and Dec. 1-3 (at Minnesota).
- Ohio State, which fended off St. Cloud State and Bemidji State for a surprising fifth-place league finish in 2016-17, closes the regular season by hosting the Beavers. The Buckeyes play in Bemidji Nov. 17-19, while facing the Huskies the weekends of Oct. 20-22 (at SCSU) and Dec. 1-3 (at OSU).
- Minnesota State and St. Cloud State, two intra-state rivals on the rise, face off Oct. 27-29 in Mankato and Jan. 5-7 in St. Cloud.

2018 WCHA Playoffs and Final Face-Off

All seven teams advance to the 2018 WCHA Playoffs, seeded by finish in the final regular season standings. As a reward for emerging as either WCHA champion or co-champion following the league’s 84-game gauntlet, the top-seeded team will earn a bye for the quarterfinal round and will advance directly to the Final Face-Off playoff championship. The remaining six teams will play best-of-three, quarterfinal round series, hosted by the Nos. 2-4 seeds, the weekend of Feb. 23-25. Those three winners will advance to join the top seed at the 2018 WCHA Final Face-Off. College hockey’s top conference championship weekend is set for March 3 and 4 at Ridder Arena in Minneapolis.

Exhibitions

Prior to the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea, five WCHA institutions will have the opportunity to play the host country in exhibition contests. The Korean National Team will play at Wisconsin (Sept. 16), Bemidji State (Sept. 20), St. Cloud State (Sept. 22), Minnesota (Sept. 24), Minnesota State (Jan. 18). Additionally, with a total of nine exhibition games, Minnesota Duluth, Minnesota State and St. Cloud State will continue the WCHA’s long-standing relationship with the Minnesota Whitecaps, an elite women’s hockey team made up of post-collegiate players.

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.

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