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FIVE PLAYERS WITH WCHA TIES SELECTED DURING 2017 CWHL DRAFT
Bemidji State, Minnesota, Minnesota Duluth and North Dakota see alumnae chosen by Canadian Women's Hockey League franchises

EDINA, Minn. – Aug. 21, 2017 – Five players with ties to the Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA) Women's League – including two who skated during the 2016-17 season, along with a forward with Team USA experience, a pro hockey veteran and one of the sport's all-time great goaltenders – will have the opportunity to continue their careers after being chosen in the Aug. 20 Canadian Women's Hockey League (CWHL) Draft.

Former Minnesota goaltender **Noora Rätty**, a two-time national champion who holds the NCAA record with 114 wins and is second with 43 shutouts, again made history as the first draft choice of CWHL expansion team, Kunlun Red Star. The Finnish superstar, three-time Olympian and 2010 bronze medalist (Vancouver Games) was Red Star's first-round selection (sixth pick overall), joining the CWHL for the first time after a storied career in Finland's top leagues. In 2014, Rätty became the first Finnish woman and the second woman ever to play in a Finnish men's league.

Stephanie Anderson, a Bemidji State alumna, a two-time Four Nations Cup champion (2015 and 2016) and a IIHF Women's World Championship gold medalist with Team USA (2015), was also tabbed by Kunlun Red Star with the team's fourth-round choice (27th pick overall). The forward was a two-time assistant captain with the Beavers, while helping BSU to a program-record 22 wins in 2015-16.

The third WCHA alumna headed to Kunlun Red Star is former Minnesota Duluth forward **Zoe Hickel** (fifth round; 34th pick overall). An All-WCHA performer during her Bulldogs career, she spent the past two seasons in the National Women's Hockey League (NWHL), winning the inaugural Isobel Cup with the Boston Pride in 2016. Hickel, a veteran of the U.S. Women's National Team, has captured one Four Nations Cup title (2015) and a pair of gold medals at the IIHF Women's Worlds (2015 and 2016).

Two players who concluded their collegiate career this past season were also drafted: North Dakota forward **Kayla Gardner** and Minnesota Duluth forward **Ashleigh Brykaliuk**. Gardner, who was a fifth-round selection of the Calgary Inferno (33rd pick overall), set career highs in 2016-17 with 38 games played, six goals, nine assists and 15 points. Brykaliuk, a two-time All-WCHA selection and the co-captain for UMD's 25-win team in 2016-17, departs the WCHA with 145 career points (62g-83a). She was the sixth-round pick (42nd selection overall) of the Vanke Rays, another of the CWHL's two expansion teams based in China.

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“This is an exciting time for the CWHL and women’s hockey, as our sport continues to expand its global influence,” said WCHA Vice President and Women’s League Commissioner Katie Million. “We are proud that WCHA players continue to have an impact at the sport’s highest levels. Having five players selected in the CWHL draft speaks volumes to the world-class talent and dedication of WCHA student-athletes and coaches. We look forward to watching our WCHA alumnae compete during the upcoming CWHL season!”

About the Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA)

The Women’s League of the Western Collegiate Hockey Association has won a record 16 national championships in 18 years since its inception in 1999 (including 15 of a possible 17 NCAA titles), while producing seven Patty Kazmaier Award winners, 95 All-Americans and numerous Olympic and national 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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