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COACHES PICK MINNESOTA AS PRESEASON WCHA FAVORITE

Gophers edge out Wisconsin, while Minnesota Duluth and Ohio State each picked third; Buckeyes' Kassidy Sauve selected as preseason WCHA Player of the Year and Minnesota's Grace Zumwinkle tabbed preseason Rookie of the Year.

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. – Sept. 12, 2017 – The coaches from the Women's League of the Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA) have picked the University of Minnesota to dethrone Wisconsin and win the regular season title of a league that has 16 national championships in its 18 years of existence.

2017-18 WCHA Head Coaches' Preseason Poll

Rank	Team (1st Place Votes)	Points
1	Minnesota (4)	34
2	Wisconsin (3)	33
3	Minnesota Duluth	23
	Ohio State	23
5	Bemidji State	14
6	St. Cloud State	11
7	Minnesota State	9

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

WCHA Preseason Player of the Year (votes)

Kassidy Sauve, RS-Jr., G, Ohio State (6); Abby Roque, So., F, Wisconsin (1).

WCHA Preseason Rookie of the Year (votes)

Grace Zumwinkle, F, Minnesota (4); Ashton Bell, F, Minnesota Duluth (1); Clair DeGeorge, F, Bemidji State (1); Emma Maltais, F, Ohio State (1).

Minnesota, which has competed in the NCAA Frozen Four for the past six seasons, collected four first-place votes and 34 points in the preseason poll of the WCHA's seven head coaches.

Wisconsin, the two-time defending WCHA regular season champion (and winners of three-straight WCHA Final Faceoff crowns), a Frozen Four participant the last four years and the 2017 NCAA runner-up, placed a very close second in the coaches' poll with 33 points and three first-place votes. Minnesota Duluth, coming off a 25-win campaign and No. 5 national ranking, and Ohio State, which improved by four wins a year ago and won a WCHA playoff game, tied for third place with 23 points apiece.

Bemidji State, with 14 points, was selected to finish in fifth place and St. Cloud State in sixth. Minnesota State was picked as the seventh-place finisher.

Ohio State redshirt-junior goaltender **Kassidy Sauve**, a second-team All-American last season after setting the Buckeyes' single-season saves record with 1,135 (second-most in WCHA history), was the coaches' preseason choice for league Player of the Year. Sauve, who ranked fifth nationally with an OSU-record .942 save percentage in 2016-17, received six of seven votes. Wisconsin sophomore forward **Abby Roque**, the 2016-17 WCHA Rookie of the Year with a league freshman-best 28 points, received the other vote.

Minnesota forward **Grace Zumwinkle**, who joins the Gophers after being named the 2017 USA Today High School Sports All-USA Girls Hockey Player of the Year and the Minnesota Ms. Hockey award winner, earned the coaches' nod as preseason WCHA Rookie of the Year. Zumwinkle received four votes, beating out Minnesota Duluth forward **Ashton Bell**, Bemidji State forward **Clair DeGeorge** and Ohio State forward **Emma Maltais** (one vote apiece).

The WCHA's 19th regular season gets underway Sept. 22 and 23, when 2017 national finalist Wisconsin hosts Lindenwood. The first full weekend takes place Sept. 29 through Oct. 1, while the WCHA league opener seeds Ohio State visiting Minnesota on Oct. 6 and 7.

Prior to the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea, six WCHA teams will have the opportunity to play the host country in exhibition games. The Korean National Team will play at Wisconsin (Sept. 16), Bemidji State (Sept. 20), St. Cloud State (Sept. 22), Minnesota (Sept. 24), Ohio State (Sept. 26) and Minnesota State (Jan. 2).

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 seasons 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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