NCHC 2015-16 Season: Year in Review
Summarizing the conference’s third season and looking ahead to the future

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – Looking back on a successful third season of the National College Hockey Conference (NCHC), the NCHC has built upon its first two seasons of competition while continuing to make strides and improvements both on and off the ice. Among the highlights of the 2015-16 campaign was a new 3-on-3 overtime format, a new television partner, the creation of the NCHC Postgraduate Scholarship and the conference’s first NCAA National Champion in North Dakota.

The NCHC held its Annual Meeting with all coaches, Athletic Directors and Faculty Athletics Representatives in Naples, Fla. April 25-26, along with Presidents/Chancellors in Colorado Springs, Colo. May 19, to discuss several topics, including a recap of last season, as well as possible changes for the future. The following is a review of the NCHC’s successes and accomplishments during 2015-16, which includes some topics discussed at the Annual Meeting, as well as other possible changes for the future and some changes that have already been approved.

“Collectively, the membership of the National Collegiate Hockey Conference continues to set the bar higher each and every year. As our focus has keenly shifted to improvements for the future, we celebrate an incredible 2015-16 season. Culminating with the conference’s first National Champion, the entire year once again proved why the NCHC is one of the most innovative and best conferences in all of college hockey,” Commissioner Josh Fenton said.

“We remain focused and guided by improving the experiences of our student-athletes and fans while being a leader nationally.”

COMPETITION
Continuing on the incredible competitive success in 2014-15, this past year proved to be the NCHC’s best season yet in its short three-year history.

1. **NCAA Tournament** – For the second straight season, the NCHC placed at least 50 percent of its members in the NCAA Championship Tournament with four teams making the 2016 16-team field, including two No. 1 seeds and a No. 2 seed. North Dakota captured the NCAA National Championship becoming the first NCHC team to achieve the feat after winning the Midwest Regional. Denver also advanced to the NCAA Frozen Four as West Regional champions marking the second straight year two NCHC teams made the Frozen Four. UND defeated DU in the first-ever all-NCHC Frozen Four match-up while NCHC teams went 7-3 in the NCAA Tournament. In its three-year history, the NCHC has now placed 13 teams in the NCAA Tournament (second-most behind Hockey East) while the conference’s five Frozen Four participants are the most by any conference since the 2014 NCAA Tournament.

2. **Non-Conference Success** – For the second straight season, NCHC teams led the six NCAA Division I men’s hockey conferences with the best non-conference record in the regular season. The eight teams posted a combined record of 48-26-10, good for a .631 win percentage, while no other conference was above a .600 winning percentage.

3. **Scheduling** - The current 24-game conference slate allows teams to schedule 10 non-conference games (not including exhibitions or exempt games), which the membership believes to be a good balance between conference and non-conference games. The 2016-17 conference schedule has already been released while the 2017-18 conference schedule has been approved.
4. **Overtime Structure** – Approved by the NCHC Board of Directors last offseason, the NCHC became the first collegiate hockey conference to use a 3-on-3 overtime structure for regular season games, following the NCAA-mandated 5-on-5 overtime. The NCHC was granted a provisional rule by the NCAA last offseason that allowed use of 3-on-3 overtime to determine an extra point in the standings after a tie, replacing the 3-man shootout the NCHC used its first two seasons. In conference play, only six of 96 games needed 3-on-3 overtime (6.2 percent) with five of the six decided during the 3-on-3 overtime and one game requiring a sudden-death shootout to decide the extra point in the standings.

5. **Individual Honors** – While NCHC teams had great success on the ice, individual student-athletes also earned national recognition for their on-ice performance. An NCHC record seven players earned AHCA West All-America Team honors. In addition to his All-America honor, St. Cloud State senior defenseman Ethan Prow was named Senior CLASS Award First-Team All-America and was the lone Hobey Baker Award finalist from the NCHC. Two NCHC goaltenders (SCSU’s Charlie Lindgren and UND’s Cam Johnson) were among five finalists for the Mike Richter Award, as well. NCHC coaches were also recognized in 2015-16 with UND’s Brad Berry being named USCHO Coach of the Year and runner-up for the Spencer Penrose Award, while Denver’s Jim Montgomery was a Penrose Award finalist and SCSU assistant coach Mike Gibbons earned the Terry Flanagan Award.

**ACADEMICS**
While on-ice performance is certainly a focus for the NCHC, the conference is extremely proud to recognize the academic successes of our student-athletes and institutions over the past season.

1. **Awards** – As was recommended by the Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs) and approved by the Board of Directors last offseason, the NCHC changed its Scholar-Athlete Team to recognize all student-athletes who achieve a 3.5 cumulative GPA or higher this past season (previously one from each school). A total of 33 student-athletes earned the honor while freshmen achieving the mark will be recognized in June. In addition, Denver senior forward Gabe Levin became the third straight NCHC student-athlete to earn the NCAA Elite 90 Award for having the best GPA among the competing student-athletes at the NCAA Frozen Four.

2. **Post-Graduate Scholarship** – To recognize highly achieving student-athletes in the classroom who want to continue their studies, the NCHC created and approved a post-graduate scholarship last summer with the inaugural scholarship awarded to Denver’s Levin at the 2016 NCHC Awards Celebration. He will receive a $7,500 scholarship, which is being provided through a grant from the El Pomar Foundation. Levin plans to attend law school next year at Harvard University. The scholarship will be awarded annually with the amount to be determined each season.

3. **APR Scores** – For the third straight year, ice hockey led all NCAA Division I men’s sports in the NCAA’s Academic Progress Rate (APR) with an average APR score of 987. Half of the NCHC’s member schools posted an APR score of 985 or better for the 2014-15 academic year, led by Denver at 997, while NCHC teams averaged a 981 APR score, two points above the NCAA national average.

**FINANCIAL**
The first competitive seasons saw two straight surplus positions for the conference. Although the fiscal year has yet to conclude for 2015-16, the conference is again projecting a surplus for 2015-16. The NCHC has been able to sustain a healthy financial model thanks to sound budgeting, spending efficiently, enhancing existing revenue streams and diversifying revenue through new opportunities. Among the factors that contributed to the NCHC’s financial success are:

1. **NCHC Tournament** – As has been the case in previous years, the majority of the revenue in 2015-16 came from the NCHC Tournament. Between ticket sales from the campus-site quarterfinal round (total of eight games were played) and the Frozen Faceoff at Target Center, the NCHC Tournament produced approximately $1.2 million. The combined, two-day attendance for the Frozen Faceoff was 22,569, second only to Hockey East’s combined two-day attendance. The revenue generated through the NCHC Tournament is balanced approximately 50-50 between the Quarterfinal Round and Frozen Faceoff.
2. **Sponsorships** – The second largest source of income for the NCHC came from corporate sponsorships, which accounted for a little less than 10 percent of the conference’s revenue (roughly $120,000). The NCHC brought in its most Frozen Faceoff sponsorship revenue in the tournament’s three-year history with over $80,000 being generated, while conference-specific sponsorship accounted for a little more than $40,000. Trade partnerships created significant value-in-kind, allowing for items such as student-athlete/fan gifts, medical services at the Frozen Faceoff, office space and much more. The NCHC’s partners in 2015-16 included:

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3. **NCHC.tv** – A 30 percent increase in revenue was seen from the second season of having NCHC.tv, which continues to help diversify the NCHC’s revenue stream. Nearly $250,000 was generated through NCHC.tv subscriptions, which is an increase from last season of approximately $56,000. Nearly 87 percent of the NCHC.tv revenue will be distributed back to member schools.

4. **Merchandise/Licensing** – A small portion of NCHC revenue also comes from apparel and merchandise sold through the NCHC Fan Shop on NCHC.com and at the Frozen Faceoff. The NCHC collects licensing fees for apparel and products containing the NCHC mark(s). With a first-time Frozen Faceoff champion, two teams in the Frozen Four and North Dakota winning the national championship, fans purchased more apparel than in previous years. The NCHC expects merchandising/licensing related revenue to be up by approximately 50 percent.

At the conclusion of our inaugural season, the NCHC Board of Directors voted to establish a reserve account. The fund was created in the fall of 2014 and the surplus revenue from each of the first two seasons has been placed in the account. The expected surplus from Fiscal Year 16 will also be added to the account this fall. The goal is to reach approximately one year’s worth of annual operating expense budget in the reserve account. The reserve fund is meant to be used as a mechanism to assist the annual financial operations should it be warranted.

**NCHC TOURNAMENT/FROZEN FACEOFF**

The focus of the conference office throughout the season, and perhaps the most visible production by the NCHC, is the NCHC Tournament, and specifically the Frozen Faceoff. With two tournaments to serve as guides, the NCHC used feedback provided by fans and member school participants to make improvements for the 2016 NCHC Tournament.

1. **Campus-Site Games** – The quarterfinal series, which were hosted on campus sites, saw all four higher seeds advance for the first time in three years of the NCHC Tournament. All four series were two-game sweeps as only eight quarterfinal round games were played, the fewest in the tournament’s three-year history. All eight games were streamed live on NCHC.tv with three of the four series also airing on local television.

2. **Frozen Faceoff** – For a third consecutive season, Target Center, in the heart of downtown Minneapolis, served as the host for the NCHC’s championship weekend. The arena was transformed into a full hockey venue complete with NCHC branding throughout the building. Several improvements were made for the
2016 event based on fan feedback, marking the best Frozen Faceoff yet, while four top-15 teams battled for a championship, creating a quality on-ice product to go with a great atmosphere. Several enhancements and factors led to an improved Frozen Faceoff experience.

a. Fan Engagement/Fan Experience

i. **Entry/Exit Procedures** – After experiencing some issues at the 2015 Frozen Faceoff, will call ticket line locations were changed and wristbands were distributed upon entry to create a smoother experience when coming into or leaving Target Center.

ii. **Ticket Pricing** - For the 2016 Frozen Faceoff, fans had four pricing levels, compared to two in past years. For the first time in the three-year history, a general admission ticket was also made available for purchase.

iii. **Concessions** – Working with Delaware North, which is the concessionaire at Target Center, the event saw several new menu items during the Frozen Faceoff, some of which were hockey themed and based on local favorites from NCHC arenas. Multiple new beer brands were also made available with each NCHC market represented by a local brewery.

iv. **In-game Entertainment/Community Involvement** – After reviewing fan feedback, different music selections were played and different contests took place than in 2015. A new public address announcer was also brought in for the Frozen Faceoff and each team’s “goal song” was played following a goal. In addition, members of local police and fire departments were recognized for their service during the games for the first time, along with members of the Minnesota National Guard, as was done last season. Through partnerships with Minnesota Hockey and TRIA Orthopaedics, youth teams skated between periods for intermission entertainment, as well.

v. **Giveaway Item** – For the second consecutive year, the NCHC provided fans a free gift upon entry – a NCHC-branded micro-fiber cloth. Also through a sponsorship, t-shirts were tossed out during games.

vi. **National Television** – Both semifinals and the championship game were broadcast live on CBS Sports Network, which is in approximately 60 million homes throughout the country. The Frozen Faceoff is the only men’s college hockey championship aired on a national TV network.

vii. **NCHC.tv/Live Streaming** - The third-place game was streamed on NCHC.tv while all press conferences (post-practice and postgame) at the Frozen Faceoff were streamed live for free on NCHC.tv. Free feature content, interviews and highlights of each game were also created at the Frozen Faceoff and placed on NCHC.tv for fans to enjoy.

viii. **Frozen Faceoff Live** – Sponsored by ASPIRE Beverages, the unique page on NCHCHockey.com was a one-stop shop for fans to stay connected with the Frozen Faceoff digitally, providing event information and behind the scenes content, including photos, videos and social media. It was the most viewed page on NCHCHockey.com outside of the home page.

ix. **Minneapolis Visitors Information Center** – New in 2016, thanks to a partnership with Meet Minneapolis, the MVI Center near Target Center displayed the Frozen Faceoff Trophy, apparel and promotional information throughout the week leading up to the tournament.

b. Fan Events

i. **Awards Celebration** – For a third straight year, this event was held at Muse Event Center in Minneapolis the night before the Frozen Faceoff semifinals. The Awards Celebration was hosted by CBS Sports Network personalities, while honoring the NCHC’s top players and student-athletes with videos and awards. The venue was heavily branded with NCHC graphics.

ii. **Fan Fest** – For a second consecutive year, Fan Fest was held in front of Target Center with half of First Avenue shut down Friday, allowing fans to enjoy live music, food, drinks and games in the street before the hockey games. Saturday Fan Fest moved
inside to the Skyway Level of Target Center. Several sponsors were involved while many fans enjoyed both days of extra entertainment.

iii. **NCHC Fan Skate** – Held for the third year, the free skate for fans open to the public took place at Target Center the Thursday night before the semifinals. This year Sports Minneapolis served as a sponsor to help promote the event.

iv. **Postgame Party** – For a second straight year, the NCHC Postgame Party was held at 508 Bar + Restaurant, one block from Target Center, each night after the games. The location gave fans a close spot to mingle following hockey while enjoying food and drink specials in a sports bar atmosphere.

c. **Student-Athlete Experience**

i. **Playing Surface** – From feedback and specific comments from the participating teams, the ice at the Frozen Faceoff was the best it has been in the three-year history of the event. Target Center worked extremely hard to take care of pre-event setup and preparation earlier in the week, which led to improved ‘Field of Play’ conditions.

ii. **Awards Celebration** – New awards were added and presented this year, while several media members were in attendance to cover the 75-minute event. An expanded program was also used to recognize more student-athletes.

iii. **Branding** – Through a partnership with MMT, branding in Target Center was enhanced from 2015 with more locker room hallway signage, including graphics featuring the student-athletes on locker room doors.

iv. **Apparel** – Through value-in-kind from corporate partners, the NCHC was able to supply participating student-athletes with gift packages, including several apparel items, commemorating their experience.

v. **Media** – Over 100 media members were credentialed to cover the championship, giving the student-athletes a big-time feel to the event. This was the highest attendance from media members in the three-year existence of the event.

vi. **Medical** – Through a partnership with TRIA Orthopaedics, the medical coverage was once again provided with a dedicated athletic training staff supporting the participating teams. Rehydrating drinks were also made available through a corporate partnership with ASPIRE Beverages.

**BRANDING/FAN ENGAGEMENT**

Another area that the NCHC spends a lot of time and focus on is expanding the NCHC’s brand and engaging with our fans. With season three complete, the conference brand continues to grow but is still focused on further expansion nationally, while strengthening what has already been developed in member school markets. The efforts to expand the brand are done by developing affinity with fans through the following engaging efforts:

1. **NCHC.tv** – In its second year of existence, NCHC.tv streamed more games live than in 2014-15 (over 150 games), allowing fans to see nearly every conference game and home non-conference game on a computer, tablet or mobile device. Several schools improved the quality of their live streams, which helped increase subscribers and revenue. NCHC.tv also added an integrated live scoreboard function and Twitter function while watching a live game. In addition to post-game highlights and press conferences, the NCHC produced weekly content on NCHC.tv that was available for free on-demand.

2. **Television** – The NCHC continued to expand its television coverage, partnering with American Sports Network (ASN) for the first time in 2015-16, while still airing games on CBS Sports Network and FOX Sports outlets. Once again 14 games aired nationally on CBSSN (11 regular season and three Frozen Faceoff games), which features some of the best production quality and crew in the game of hockey. Eight NCHC games, mostly from venues without local/regional television partnerships, were broadcast nationally on ASN, airing on affiliate stations in the local market and also other stations around the country, providing more national exposure. For a second season, FOX Sports North aired NCHC games from Minnesota Duluth and St. Cloud State, showing seven games throughout Minnesota and the upper Midwest, which is a key market for the NCHC. Including the seven games on FSN, 18 NCHC contests were
shown nationally on FOX College Sports with all eight teams being shown at least twice. Five NCHC games were also broadcast on TSN in Canada.

3. **Website/Feature Stories** – NCHCHockey.com is the conference’s website for news, information, fan-engaging content, statistics/standings and much more. New to the site in 2015-16 were a search bar, the webpage for the College Hockey Showdown and updated player cutouts in the margins to showcase our champions. The NCHC also hired a freelance writer to write several feature stories for NCHCHockey.com throughout the season. The website saw 817,534 unique page views, which were slightly down from last season. A site redesign is in process that will feature even more fan-engaging content for the 2016-17 season.

4. **Social Media** – One of the best ways for the NCHC to engage with fans is through social media, which allows the conference to interact with fans, answer questions and provide unique content. The NCHC has three channels: Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, which have content posted to them daily during the season. Twitter increased more than 4,500 followers (now 17,158 followers) in 2015-16, while Instagram more than tripled, going from 700 followers to more than 2,200 followers and Facebook jumped more than 1,600 “likes” this past season (now at 6,790 likes). In addition to weekly trivia, videos, caption contests and more, other engaging promotions included a student-athlete Twitter Takeover at Media Day and giveaway contests.

5. **TV/Radio Shows** – After debuting “NCHC: Between the Boards” as a half hour biweekly show in 2014-15, Midco Sports Network made it a weekly show in 2015-16, which was also shown on NCHC.tv each Friday. The show recapped the previous week in the NCHC with highlights, interviews and feature stories. The NCHC Radio Show remained as a podcast on iTunes and Podomatic for a second straight season, allowing fans easy access to download and listen to the 6-7 minute audio show that also airs during NCHC game broadcasts on local radio stations.

6. **Media Day** – The unofficial start of the season, NCHC Media Day was held at Target Center for the third straight year in late September, but this past year it was held in the administrative offices, which made for the best setting yet. NCHC branding filled the room while over 40 media members were in attendance, including TV partners CBSSN, ASN and MidcoSN. The head coach and one student-athlete from each team were in attendance and took part in interviews, while fans were also engaged with Twitter Takeover and Periscope Q & A sessions, as well as a live stream of the State of the Conference address on NCHC.tv.

7. **Jersey Colors** – During the first half of the season, NCHC teams wore their normal home white jerseys, while during the second half of the regular season, NCHC teams wore their dark or colored jerseys at home to allow fans to see different jerseys and possibly help sell more jerseys on campuses.

8. **Trophy Tour** – Once again the NCHC toured a trophy as the Frozen Faceoff Trophy was displayed at all eight NCHC venues for fans to see and take pictures with, while the trophy was also showcased on TV and radio stations in Duluth, St. Cloud and Grand Forks.

9. **Member School Promotion** – One of the best ways to reach fans for branding and advertising purposes is in the member schools arenas. Schools were provided with several general and school-specific marketing and promotional materials by the NCHC to promote the conference and the NCHC Tournament.

**OFFICIATING**
Perhaps the most visible element of the NCHC week in and week out is its officiating at NCHC venues each weekend. Over the past season, the NCHC continued its process of focusing on on-going education, communication and supervision.

1. **Staff** - NCHC Director of Officiating Don Adam was retained to lead the NCHC’s officiating program for a third straight season. Two referees were added to complete a 16-man NCHC referee roster for 2015-16,
with referees located throughout the country. The NCHC used 31 linesmen during the season, with several in each NCHC region to help limit travel/expenses.

2. **Officiating Camps** – Before the 2015-16 season began, the NCHC held its annual officiating camps in September. First was a three-day referee camp in Colorado Springs, while one-day linesman camps were also held in Colorado Springs, Minneapolis and Detroit. The camps encompassed a wide spectrum of educational sessions for referees and linesmen, including on and off-ice training, as well as a focus on NCAA rules clarifications.

3. **Supervision** – While the NCHC has used two officiating supervisors in its first two years, the conference hired a third officiating supervisor for 2015-16 in Brent Rutherford. With three supervisors spaced across the NCHC footprint, complementing the NCHC Director of Officiating, approximately 90 percent of NCHC games had a supervisor in attendance. This allows the officials to get feedback and be evaluated immediately following the game.

4. **Education/Evaluation** – As part of the officiating process, NCHC officials were educated on all NCAA rule clarifications, as well as NCHC overtime format changes. During the season, the officials are ranked by Adam and supervisors to help evaluate the officials, provide them feedback and also determine which officials earn the opportunity to work the Frozen Faceoff and NCAA Tournament.

5. **Video Replay** – With Omaha opening Baxter Arena in 2015-16, all eight NCHC venues had access to high-definition replay systems, which had not been the case in previous seasons. The NCHC continues to work with replay technicians to improve the replay process conducted with the on-ice officials.

6. **Mentoring** – At a limited number of games during the past season, an official from the local youth hockey association was invited to attend an NCHC game and go through the pre and post-game process with the NCHC officials. As the mentoring program grows next season, the hope is to develop more quality officials in the game of hockey.

7. **Promotion** – The NCHC continues to promote its “ninth team” through stories, videos and awards. In addition to the NCHC officials page on NCHCHockey.com, stories were written focusing on the NCHC officials Movember efforts and Paul Carnathan winning the second annual Mark Rudolph Officiating Achievement Award. Videos were also produced to showcase the referee camp and referees in action at the Battle on Blake and Frozen Faceoff using a GoPro camera. Recognition was also given to those NCHC officials selected to work the NCAA Frozen Four.

8. **Butch Mousseau** – During the postseason, longtime college hockey referee Butch Mousseau, who worked both NCHC and WCHA games the past few seasons, tragically passed away from an on-ice accident. A fund to help support the Mousseau family was established by Dawg Nation. Donations are still being accepted for those wishing to donate. In addition to a donation, the NCHC will also be planting a tree in Butch’s memory.

**CONERENCE GOVERNANCE**

Although not typically seen by fans, behind the scenes the NCHC has several documents, committees and governance structures, which make decisions for the conference and outline the day-to-day procedures for conference staff. The governing documents are updated each offseason with policy and rule changes, while the NCHC’s overall governance structure was altered in 2015-16.

1. **Document Updates** - The following were updated with changes and improvements from 2014-15:
   a. **Bylaws** – Governance structure changes
   b. **Policies and Procedures**
   c. **Manuals**: NCHC Tournament, Game Operations, Facility Operations, On-Ice Officials, Off-Ice Officials, Medical Directory, Sports Information Director (SID) and NCHC Style Guide
2. Committees
   a. Board of Directors – Represented by the Presidents/Chancellors
      i. Previously the Board of Directors distinction was held by the Athletic Directors at the
         eight member institutions, however final authority on major decisions has been shifted
         to the Presidents and Chancellors, which now make up the NCHC Board of Directors.
      ii. Current Chair: Dr. John Christensen, Omaha Chancellor
      iii. Past Chair: Dr. Lendley “Lynn” Black, Minnesota Duluth Chancellor
   b. Athletic Council – Consisting of Athletic Directors
      i. The newly named NCHC Athletic Council consists of the eight member institutions
         athletic directors, who have voting power on general, day-to-day conference policy
         decisions.
      ii. Current Chair: Ron Grahame, Denver Associate Athletic Director
      iii. Past Chair: Ken Ralph, Colorado College Athletic Director
   c. Advisory Committee – The committee offers advice and helps guide the NCHC Commissioner,
      Athletic Council and Board of Directors in decision-making processes. The committee consisted
      of the following people for 2015-16:
      i. Ken Ralph, Colorado College Athletic Director
      ii. Ron Grahame, Denver Associate Athletic Director
      iii. David Sayler, Miami Athletic Director
      iv. Kathy Beauregard, Western Michigan Athletic Director
   d. Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs)
      i. FARs are involved in academic awards and post-graduate scholarship processes,
         participates on the Athletic Council and other committees, and looks out for student-
         athlete welfare.
      ii. Current Chair: Dr. Steve Castleberry, Minnesota Duluth
      iii. Past Chair: Dr. Nancy Sampson, Denver
   e. Other Committees – Meet as needed
      i. Head Coaches – 2015-16 Chair: Enrico Blasi, Miami
      ii. Finance Committee
      iii. Conduct Committee
      iv. Awards Committee
      v. Student-Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC)
      vi. Membership Committee

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

While improvements continue to be made and the conference had a very strong ‘junior season,’ the NCHC feels
there are still several areas of focus for improvement during the upcoming 2016-17 season. During the NCHC’s
Annual Meeting in Naples, Fla. in late April and the NCHC’s Annual Board of Directors Meeting in Colorado Springs
in May, many topics were discussed and some small changes were finalized. In addition, the conference will review
its strategic plan and examine feedback from fans, coaches, student-athletes and administrators to come up with
our goals and strategies for next season, with the idea of improving the fan experience and the student-athlete
experience at the forefront.

1. Competition
   a. Jersey Colors – During the 2015-16 season, the NCHC experimented with having home teams
      wear dark-colored jerseys during the second half of the regular season. With much of our fan
      feedback stating they liked seeing various visiting team colors in their home venue, the Athletic
      Council voted to return to wearing white or light-colored jerseys for all home games in 2016-17.
b. **Overtime** – After seeing the excitement in NCHC venues during 3-on-3 overtime and the format’s ability to end most games prior to a shootout in 2015-16, the conference’s current 3-on-3 overtime format will continue into the 2016-17 season.

2. **Awards**
   a. **Senior Scholar-Athlete Award** – With the recommendation from the Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs), who wanted the award to be more focused on a student-athletes career, the Athletic Council approved changing the name of the Scholar-Athlete of the Year Award to the Senior Scholar-Athlete Award. The same criteria still applies.
   
b. **Postseason Defenseman Awards** – Over the NCHC’s first three seasons, the conference has awarded a Defenseman of the Year and an Offensive Defenseman of the Year at the end-of-year NCHC Awards Celebration. All three seasons the same student-athlete has won both awards. To help recognize multiple defensemen, the coaches and Athletic Council voted to change the Defenseman of the Year Award to the Defensive Defenseman of the Year, creating two distinctly different defensemen awards, while matching the Forward of the Year and Defensive Forward of the Year Awards handed out currently.
   
c. **Post-Graduate Scholarship** – The scholarship will continue to be awarded annually with funding provided by a generous grant from the El Pomar Foundation. Faculty Athletics Representatives vote to decide the recipient.

3. **NCHC Tournament/Frozen Faceoff**
   a. **Quarterfinal Round** – With attendance down at 2016 quarterfinal series on campus sites, the conference will work closely with host schools to help promote the games, possibly providing marketing materials or other solutions to help increase fan attendance.
   
b. **Target Center Renovation** – Starting this spring through the summer of 2017, Target Center will be undergoing a major renovation to both the interior and exterior of the building. Many of the changes will not take place until the summer of 2017, but some changes will be noticeable for the 2017 Frozen Faceoff.
      i. **Scoreboard** – Target Center will have a new center-hung scoreboard for next year’s tournament, which will feature 15 display spaces totaling 4,300 square feet. The scoreboard will also have high definition video, which it does not currently.
      ii. **Suites** – The suite level is being completely rebuilt with an all new look and amenities for next season.
      iii. **Sound System** – In addition to replacing the scoreboard, Target Center will be installing new speakers and a new sound system to improve the acoustics in the building.
      iv. **Exterior** – Beginning in the fall, Target Center will start construction on the outside of the building, including a new main entrance into the building. The exterior will feature more glass and have a new look. The exterior improvements will not be completed until the fall of 2017.
   
c. **Field of Play** – With the ice conditions much improved in 2016, Target Center and the NCHC feel it can make sure the ice is in good playing conditions moving forward. Target Center will continue to tweak and adjust the glass and boards to make subtle improvements. As part of a separate project, the City of Minneapolis and Target Center are taking on; a new floor will be installed, which will improve the ice conditions for the 2018 event.
   
d. **Fan Engagement/Fan Experience**
      i. **Fan Events** – While the NCHC felt the fan events went well this past year and we plan to follow a similar schedule next season, the conference will look at subtle changes to Fan Fest, the Fan Skate and the Post-Game Party, including helping promote them better. The goal is to create a destination weekend for fans that offers not only hockey games but a complete event experience.
      ii. **In-Venue Experience** – While many improvements were made in regards to concessions, music selection and in-game entertainment this past season, the
conference will continue to create the best possible atmosphere for fans attending the

game, working closely with Target Center and their guest services staff.

iii. Third-Place Game Live Stream – With Target Center improving their video to HD, the

quality of the third-place game stream on NCHC.tv will be vastly improved from past

seasons. Other improvements to the stream will also be explored, including a better

graphics package and audio integration.

e. Student-Athlete Experience

i. Tournament Travel – With NCHC member schools located across several states, travel
to both quarterfinal round games and the Frozen Faceoff can be difficult on short
notice. While some plans were put in place to help with possible air travel to the Frozen
Faceoff this past season, the conference will continue to explore different possibilities
while still minimizing missed class time and remaining financially responsible.

ii. Awards Celebration – This event will remain a part of the Frozen Faceoff festivities. The

conference will continue to make improvements so that the student-athlete experience
is maximized, including an attempt to condense the length of the overall program.

f. Future of the Tournament – With two years remaining on the current contract with Target

Center, the NCHC has begun to have discussions with its Board of Directors, Athletic Council and
Target Center regarding the future of the conference’s championship weekend.

4. Branding/Exposure/Fan Engagement

a. Television – CBS Sports Network has picked up the fourth year option on the NCHC’s contract,

meaning 2016-17 will once again have a full lineup of games on CBSSN. The NCHC is in talks with

CBSSN about the future of the partnership. In addition, the NCHC will have at least 10 games air
nationally on American Sports Network in the second year of a two-year partnership with ASN
after having eight games broadcast last season. The NCHC will continue its partnerships with FOX
Sports North for important visibility in the Minnesota market. The conference also hopes to
continue its relationship with FOX on a national standpoint to elevate regional broadcasts to the
FOX College Sports platform where appropriate and allowed.

b. NCHC.tv – Although some schools made great strides in 2015-16, the conference will again work
closely with each member school to help them improve the quality and look of their live streams,
including taking inventory of the equipment used. With that information, the conference can
create a suggested list of equipment for NCHC.tv streams. In addition, the conference is working
with NeuLion, which hosts NCHC.tv, on the possibility of making NCHC.tv available on OTT
services such as Roku and AppleTV.

c. Website – The NCHC has signed a two-year extension with Sport Ngin to remain the host of
NCHCHockey.com. As part of the extension, NCHCHockey.com will be going through a redesign.
The redesign will give the NCHC’s website a new look and feel, while making the site mobile
responsive and more user-friendly. A focal point of the redesign will be to create more fan
engagement through better incorporation of both video and social media on the website.

d. Social Media/Content – The NCHC will continue to utilize its three social media channels
regularly with unique daily content during the season. The conference will review its weekly
social media schedule and look at other possible contests or content for next season. In addition,
the conference will explore creating more podcasts and will also work with Midco Sports
Network to revamp the weekly “NCHC: Between the Boards” show, which will likely become a 5-7
minute feature segment, as opposed to a full 30-minute show.

5. Financial

a. NCHC Tournament/Frozen Faceoff Tickets – After having four pricing levels this past year at the
Frozen Faceoff, the NCHC will evaluate fan feedback and other factors before making a
determination on pricing levels for 2017. The conference will announce Frozen Faceoff pricing
options and how to renew tickets later this summer.

b. NCHC.tv – As the quality of the live streams continue to improve and enhancements are made to
NCHC.tv, the pricing for various packages in 2016-17 is being assessed. Fans that have purchased
an annual pass previously will automatically be renewed at the original purchase price. More
information on NCHC.tv subscriptions will be announced in the coming months.

c. **Diversifying Revenue Streams** – A key focal point for the NCHC moving forward will be to expand
the NCHC’s revenue sources so the conference is not as reliant on the NCHC Tournament.
Increasing sponsorships will be one focal point, while hosting unique showcase events or
tournaments, such as the NCAA Frozen Four will also be explored.

6. **Special Events**
   a. **College Hockey Showdown at MSG** - Already scheduled for next season, the College Hockey
      Showdown at Madison Square Garden will take place in New York City Dec. 3, 2016 between
      North Dakota and Boston College. Over 5,000 tickets have already been sold to the battle
      between two perennial powers, which included the most tickets sold of any pre-sale MSG had
      done for a college hockey event. The event is co-hosted by the NCHC and Madison Square
      Garden. More information on the event is available at CollegeHockeyShowdown.com or on
      Twitter @HkyShowdown_MSG.
   b. **NCAA Frozen Four Host** – With the bidding process for the 2019-2022 NCAA Frozen Four cycle
      out, the conference is exploring the possibility of hosting a Frozen Four.

7. **Officiating**
   a. **Hiring** – The conference is looking to hire a few new referees for 2016-17. Don Adam will work to
      find the best possible officials that fit the NCHC’s goals and expectations, while also conducting a
      review of the entire officiating staff.
   b. **Mentoring Program** – Building on the program started this past season, the NCHC is looking to
      expand the newly named ‘Butch Mousseau NCHC Mentoring Program’ in 2016-17, named after
      the former NCHC and WCHA official who tragically passed away earlier this year. The program
      will have local youth hockey officials attend a game and get to experience what it’s like to be a
      college hockey official in the hopes to build more well-trained hockey officials across the country.
   c. **NCAA Rule Changes** – The 2016-17 season is an NCAA rule change year. New rules and revised
      interpretations to current rules will be known this summer. Officials will be trained on new NCAA
      rules that are approved for next season.

8. **Governance**
   a. **Governing Document Updates** – All NCHC Bylaws, Policies and Procedures and manuals will be
      updated over the summer to reflect changes enacted by the Board of Directors and Athletic
      Council, as well as other changes to create more efficient and improved operations.
   b. **Membership** – As membership remains a popular and much discussed topic, the conference
      continues to be guided by its focus to strengthen our current members and the NCHC as a whole.
      The conference will have discussions with several entities regarding expansion as appropriate.
      Decisions impacting the membership number or structure in the future will be firmly guided by
      whether those decisions strengthen and add value to the existing membership.

As the National Collegiate Hockey Conference begins to plan for the 2016-17 season, the conference would like to
thank all its fans for their support and passion during the past season. The feedback provided by fans is very
insightful to the NCHC and helps steer our focus for improvements and changes. The 2015-16 season was truly
special, culminating in our first national championship, but we want to applaud all eight of our teams for their
success and impact they had on further showcasing what the NCHC is about. As we move through the summer and
head toward next season, we encourage our fans to stay involved on social media and visit NCHCHockey.com,
especially as we unveil a new site, and NCHC.tv. The NCHC looks forward to creating an even better fan and
student-athlete experience next season as we build upon a great 2015-16 campaign. We can’t wait to see you at
the rink in five months as we drop the puck on our fourth season!

--#NCHCHockey--