FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Reapers Announce their USA Hockey DL teams head coaches: Brett Lebda as 17U Head Coach and Chris Michael as 15U Head Coach

Experienced coaching duo returns to lead Reapers USA Hockey Development League teams for the upcoming season.

The Reapers are pleased to announce that **Brett Lebda will serve as Head Coach of the Reapers 17U USA Hockey Development League (DL) team, while Chris Michael will serve as Head Coach of the Reapers 15U USA Hockey DL team. Both coaches will be on the staff of both teams.**

Both coaches have been integral members of the Reapers organization since the program's inception in 2021. During their time with the program, Lebda and Michael have led teams to USA Hockey National Championships and helped numerous players advance to the next level of hockey, including opportunities in junior hockey, collegiate programs and NHL draft picks.

Lebda will also continue his current role as General Manager and Midget Hockey Director and Michael as Director of Player Advancement and Coaching Education of the Reapers Hockey Association.

Their continued leadership reflects the Reapers' commitment to player development, competitive excellence, and preparing student-athletes for success at the highest levels of the game.

Brett Lebda – Head Coach, Reapers 17U USA Hockey DL

A native of Buffalo Grove, Illinois, Brett Lebda grew up playing hockey in the Chicagoland area before embarking on a distinguished playing career at the collegiate and professional levels.

In 1998, Lebda was selected to play for the United States National Team Development Program, where he spent two seasons developing among the nation's top young players. He went on to play for the University of Notre Dame Fighting Irish from 2000 to 2004. During his senior season, Lebda helped Notre Dame reach the NCAA Tournament in 2004 for the first time in the modern era.

Following his collegiate career, Lebda signed with the Detroit Red Wings as an undrafted free agent and made his NHL debut at the beginning of the 2005–06 season. Over the course of his professional career, he played 398 NHL games with the Detroit Red Wings, Toronto Maple Leafs, and Columbus Blue Jackets. He was also a member of the Detroit Red Wings team that won the Stanley Cup in 2008.

In recognition of his contributions to the sport, Lebda was inducted into the Illinois Hockey Hall of Fame in 2018.

Chris Michael – Head Coach, Reapers 15U USA Hockey DL

Chris Michael brings an extensive background in player development and coaching at both the Tier I youth and junior hockey levels.

Before joining the Reapers, Michael spent four seasons with the Lincoln Stars of the United States Hockey League (USHL). He initially joined the organization as an assistant coach during the 2017–18 season, before being promoted to Associate Head Coach prior to the 2018-19 season and was named General Manager and Head Coach on April 7, 2020. Prior to his time in Lincoln, the Skokie, Illinois, native spent four seasons with the Omaha Lancers, serving as an assistant coach in 2013–14 and associate head coach from 2014 to 2017. In Omaha, he worked extensively with defensemen and penalty-killing units, and overseeing the player development model that most clubs use today. With both clubs, Michael spent extensive time scouting junior Leagues across North America and Europe, along with high level youth hockey leagues and teams which led to 5 Clark Cup Playoff Appearances and numerous Division 1 commits and NHL Draft picks.

Michael's playing career included two seasons with the Green Bay Gamblers from 2000 to 2002, followed by four seasons at Miami University from 2002 to 2006. He recorded 81 points in 137 games with the RedHawks and helped the program reach the NCAA Tournament twice. His collegiate career also included the 2005–06 CCHA regular-season championship and Miami University's first-ever No. 1 national ranking in any sport in 2006.

Michael began his coaching career in 2008 with the Chicago Mission, where he spent six seasons, including four as head coach. In 2013, he guided the Mission to a U16 National Championship, the club's first ever Midget National Championship where the team won State, Regionals, and Nationals in the same season. With both the Reapers and Mission, Michael has appeared in 6 National Championship Tournaments and 5 National Championship games.

Throughout his coaching career, Michael has helped develop more than 30 NHL Draft picks and over 150 NCAA Division I college commitments along with 21 players being named Captain or Assistant Captain of their respective Division 1 teams, demonstrating a consistent track record of preparing players for success at the next level both on and off the ice.

A Continued Commitment to Player Development

With Lebda leading the 17U team and Michael guiding the 15U team, the Reapers are positioned to build on the foundation established since the program's launch in 2021.

Both coaches bring a combination of elite playing experience, proven coaching credentials, and a demonstrated commitment to helping players reach their hockey goals. Their continued involvement underscores the Reapers' focus on competing at a high level while creating meaningful opportunities for players to advance to junior, NCAA, and other next-level hockey programs.

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About the Reapers

Since its inception in 2021, the Reapers program has focused on developing competitive hockey teams, advancing player development, and preparing athletes for the next level of the game. Through experienced coaching and a commitment to individual and team success, the Reapers continue to provide players with opportunities to compete at a high level and pursue their hockey ambitions.