



NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HOCKEY CONFERENCE



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Finalists Revealed for 2017-18 NCHC Individual Awards DU's Borgström, Omaha's Pope and SCSU's Schuldt up for NCHC Player of the Year

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – While the winners won't be known for another week, the National Collegiate Hockey Conference (NCHC) unveiled the finalists and nominees for 11 of its individual awards for the 2017-18 season on Thursday. The winners will be announced and presented their awards next Thursday, March 15 at the annual NCHC Awards Celebration at the Science Museum of Minnesota in Saint Paul on the eve of the fifth annual NCHC Frozen Faceoff, and first at Xcel Energy Center.

Up for the NCHC's top honor are a trio of All-NCHC First-Team selections as Denver sophomore forward Henrik Borgström, Omaha senior forward David Pope and St. Cloud State junior defenseman Jimmy Schuldt are the finalists for NCHC Player of the Year. Borgström, a Panthers draft pick, captured the NCHC scoring title, finishing with 33 points in 24 conference games (1.38 ppg), tying for second with 14 goals, while dishing out 19 assists. He was the NCHC Rookie of the Year last season. Pope, a Red Wings prospect, also tied for second in conference play with 14 goals, totaling 28 points in 23 NCHC games (1.22 ppg) with 11 of his 14 goals coming on the power play. Schuldt tied for second among defensemen in scoring, compiling 23 points in 24 games, including 20 assists, while he led the NCHC with a +19 plus/minus.

The bench bosses up for NCHC Herb Brooks Coach of the Year all exceeded their predicted finish in the NCHC Preseason Poll. St. Cloud State head coach Bob Motzko guided his team to their second Penrose Cup as regular-season champions, finishing 16-4-4-1/0 in NCHC play after being predicted to finish second. Minnesota Duluth head coach Scott Sandelin, who lost nearly his entire D corps and several key forwards from last year's National Runner-Up team, led the Bulldogs to a mid-season turnaround and a third-place finish with a 13-11-0-0 conference record, after starting conference play 2-7-0. UMD was picked fourth in the preseason. Perhaps the biggest turnaround came from Colorado College, as head coach Mike Haviland led the Tigers to their best ever NCHC finish, tying for fifth with an 8-12-4-3/0 record, after finishing eighth the last three seasons and being predicted to finish last again this year.

Three of the top all-around student-athletes in the NCHC are nominees for the Senior Scholar-Athlete Award. Western Michigan defenseman and captain Scott Moldenhauer is a business management major with a 3.88 grade-point average, while North Dakota forward Johnny Simonson is a managerial finance and accounting major with a 3.56 GPA and Omaha forward Tyler Vesel, an assistant team captain, is an exercise science major with a 3.85 GPA.

The back end of the NCHC All-Rookie Team make up the finalists for NCHC Rookie of the Year in SCSU goaltender Dávid Hrenák, Denver defenseman Ian Mitchell and UMD blue liner Scott Perunovich. Hrenák led all NCHC netminders with a .929 save percentage, while posting a 9-3-2 record in 14 NCHC starts. Mitchell compiled 16 points, including 14 assists, in 24 NCHC games, while the Blackhawks prospect blocked 36 shots and posted a +8 plus/minus. Perunovich led all rookies in scoring with 24 points in 24 games on eight goals and 16 assists to go with his +12 plus/minus.

Hrenák is also up for NCHC Goaltender of the Year, along with UMD sophomore Hunter Shepard and last year's NCHC Goaltender of the Year, Denver senior Tanner Jaillet. Jaillet led the NCHC with a 1.91 goals-against average in conference play, while ranking second behind Hrenák with a .928 save percentage and going 12-5-5 in 23 starts. Shepard and Jaillet both tied for the league lead with four shutouts, while Hrenák finished with three. Shepard was the lone goalie to start all 24 conference games, going 13-10-0 with a .915 save percentage and a 2.23 GAA.

The three All-NCHC First-Team forwards are the finalists for NCHC Forward of the Year in Borgström and Pope, who are also up for Player of the Year, along with Colorado College sophomore Nick Halloran. Halloran finished second in NCHC scoring behind Borgström with 31 points in 24 games, including 13 goals and 18 assists, while leading the NCHC with four game-winning goals.

A quartet of blue liners are up for Defensive Defenseman of the Year in SCSU junior Will Borgen, Omaha senior Joel Messner, UND sophomore Colton Poolman, and UMD sophomore Nick Wolff. Borgen, a Sabres draft pick, blocked 33 shots in 20 NCHC games, missing four due to the Winter Olympics, while posting a +8 plus/minus. Messner, the team captain for Omaha, was fifth in the NCHC with 52 blocked shots, appearing in all 24 games. Poolman and Wolff both blocked 34 shots in 24 games and finished +2 and +3, respectively, in NCHC play.

Providing offense from the blue line, the three finalists for Offensive Defenseman of the Year are Perunovich, Schuldt and North Dakota junior Christian Wolanin, who were the top three scoring defensemen in NCHC play. Wolanin tied with Schuldt with 23 points, one fewer than Perunovich's 24 points, while Wolanin, a Senators prospect, tallied six goals and dished out 17 assists, also firing 65 shots on goal. Schuldt led all NCHC blue liners with 73 shots on goal in conference play.

Up for Defensive Forward of the Year are North Dakota junior Rhett Gardner, UMD senior Karson Kuhlman and Omaha's Vesel. Gardner, a Dallas Stars draft pick, totaled 13 points in 18 games, while winning 57.8 percent of his faceoffs and logging a +3 plus/minus. Kuhlman, UMD's team captain, racked up 10 points, including nine goals, in 24 NCHC games, while blocking 10 shots and committing only six penalties. Vesel tallied 21 points in 24 games, as the Oilers prospect also blocked 21 shots and won 50.8 percent of his draws, leading the NCHC with 290 faceoff wins.

The finalists for the NCHC's Three Stars Award, given to the player with the highest Three Stars of the Game point totals from the season, are Denver junior forward Dylan Gambrell, Colorado College's Halloran and sophomore goaltender Alex Leclerc, and Omaha's Pope.

The four nominees for the NCHC Sportsmanship Award are UMD's Kuhlman, Omaha's Vesel, UND senior forward Austin Poganski and SCSU senior forward Judd Peterson. Sportsmanship Award nominees were nominated by each institution.

For most of the awards, finalists were determined based on voting by the conference's eight head coaches with the top three vote-getters for each award (plus ties) being finalists. The Senior Scholar-Athlete Award nominees were submitted by and then voted upon by the conference's Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs). Athletic Directors at each NCHC institution had a vote on Herb Brooks Coach of the Year, as well, along with the coaches.

In addition to these 11 award winners being announced at the NCHC Awards Celebration next Thursday, March 15, the NCHC will also announce its inaugural Media Excellence Award winner. The NCHC's Postgraduate Scholarship winner will be revealed this coming Monday. The conference recognized its All-Conference and All-Rookie Teams earlier this week, while the NCHC announced its all-academic teams in February.

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Player of the Year Finalists

Henrik Borgström, So., F, Denver
David Pope, Sr., F, Omaha
Jimmy Schuldt, Jr., D, SCSU

Herb Brooks Coach of the Year Finalists

Mike Haviland, CC
Bob Motzko, SCSU
Scott Sandelin, UMD

Senior Scholar-Athlete Award Nominees

Scott Moldenhauer, D, WMU
Johnny Simonson, F, UND
Tyler Vesel, F, Omaha

Rookie of the Year Finalists

Dávid Hrenák, G, St. Cloud State
Ian Mitchell, D, Denver
Scott Perunovich, D, UMD

Goaltender of the Year Finalists

Dávid Hrenák, Fr., St. Cloud State
Tanner Jaillet, Sr., Denver
Hunter Shepard, So., UMD

Forward of the Year Finalists

Henrik Borgström, So., Denver
Nick Halloran, So., Colorado College
David Pope, Sr., Omaha

Defensive Defenseman of the Year Finalists

Will Borgen, Jr., SCSU
Joel Messner, Sr., Omaha
Colton Poolman, So., UND
Nick Wolff, So., UMD

Offensive Defenseman of the Year Finalists

Scott Perunovich, Fr., UMD
Jimmy Schuldt, Jr., SCSU
Christian Wolanin, Jr., UND

Defensive Forward of the Year Finalists

Rhett Gardner, Jr., UND
Karson Kuhlman, Sr., UMD
Tyler Vesel, Sr., Omaha

Sportsmanship Award Nominees

Karson Kuhlman, Sr., F, UMD
Judd Peterson, Sr., F, SCSU
Austin Poganski, Sr., F, UND
Tyler Vesel, Sr., F, Omaha

Three Stars Award Finalists

Dylan Gambrell, Jr., F, Denver
Nick Halloran, So., F, CC
Alex Leclerc, So., G, CC
David Pope, Sr., F, Omaha