



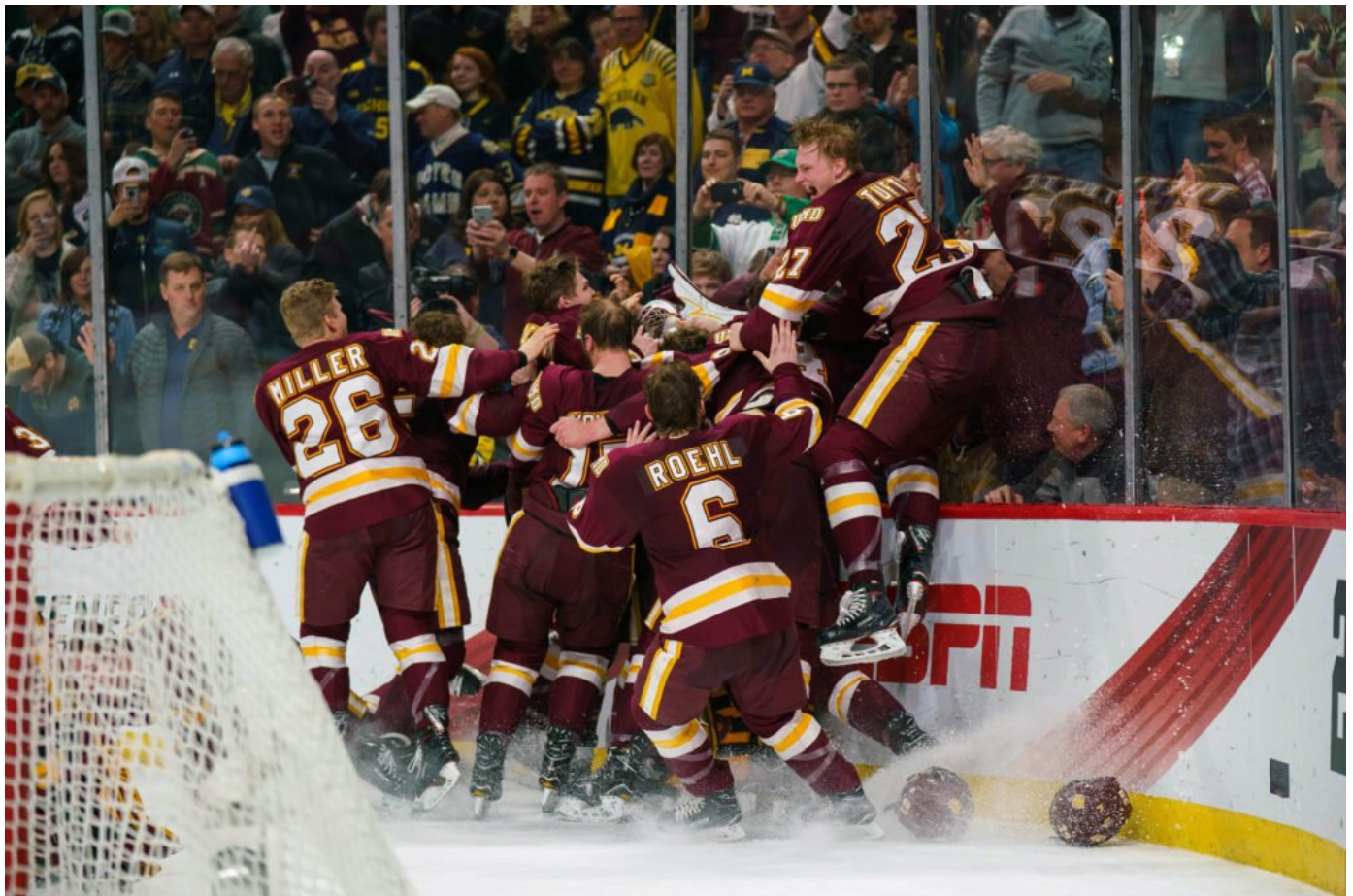
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NCHC Hockey Preview Notebook: St. Cloud State Looks for Redemption With New Coach



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By [Heather Rule](#) - October 5, 2018

When Brett Larson was offered the head coaching job of the St. Cloud State men’s hockey team last spring, he told his nine-year-old son, Lane.

“He looked at me and he (said): ‘Dad, I hate the Huskies. How could you?’” Larson said.

One of the first priorities for the former assistant coach for University of Minnesota-Duluth this summer was to get his son acclimated with dad’s new team. He brought Lane to the Huskies locker room where the Poehling brothers shot pucks with him for about an hour. Lane also got to mingle with the other players in the locker room, too.

“Now I got him wearing a St. Cloud shirt, and... we’re getting him over the hump a little bit,” Larson said.

The Huskies, last year’s National Collegiate Hockey Conference champion and the No. 1 seed in last year’s NCAA Tournament before a first-round upset loss to No. 16 Air Force, enter 2018-19 with a new coach and expectations to keep the pedal down and continue the strong program that former coach Bob Motzko led for the past 13 years. Motzko is now behind the bench for the Gophers.

Larson comes to St. Cloud State for his first heading coaching position at the DI level, having spent 2008-11 and then 2015-18 as an assistant at his alma mater UMD. He was part of the two national championship teams with Duluth.

Motzko and Larson attended the Minnesota Vikings game against Buffalo on Sept. 23 together. After the 27-6 Vikings loss, “neither of us enjoyed it,” Larson told reporters on NCHC Media Day, which drew a few laughs. Larson said the biggest piece of advice Motzko gave him was to just go in and be himself instead of trying to be like Motzko.

“I think that obviously he’s done a great job of building that program and putting it to where it is,” Larson said. “And now I’ve got to go in and just by myself and try to keep it there, and maybe find that one or two little things that can put us over the hump.”

It’s like the old saying: If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.

The Huskies will boast a deep lineup, including senior defenseman and captain Jimmy Schuldt, a Minnetonka native who scored 38 points last season. He’s back with other Minnesota natives like the Poehling brothers (Jack, Nick and Ryan) out of Lakeville North High School, freshman Sam Hentges (Minnesota Wild draft pick) out of Totino-Grace High School and Micah Miller, a freshman out of Grand Rapids.

NCAA Hockey NCHC Tournament Semi Final North Dakota vs St Cloud S...



The transition with the new coach has been a smooth one so far, according to Schuldt.

“He’s the type of guy that (when) you meet him, you’re around the rink with him, and he’s a guy that you want behind your bench,” Schuldt said of Larson. “He’s a guy you want on your side, and you can tell that right away.”

The Huskies open the season with a home exhibition game on Saturday against Mount Royal.

POOLMAN SETS HIS PATH LEADING UND

There’s never a good way to find out your season’s over whether it’s in overtime, in a blowout game or just having a sub-.500 season. Finding out on the long bus ride home across Minnesota after having just snapped a losing streak against a rival isn’t much fun either.

That’s what happened last spring for the University of North Dakota men’s hockey team when, after snapping an eight-game losing skid to Duluth with a victory in the Frozen Faceoff, their NCAA Tournament hopes were dashed on the ride home.

North Dakota vs. Minnesota Duluth | NCHC Frozen Faceoff | UND Hocke...



“I know we had a chance on the way back home, and then to find out on the bus ride home was pretty, it was a real difficult thing to have your season end like that,” said now-junior defenseman and captain Colton Poolman. “That’s a feeling we’re going to try to use for this year as a little bit of motivation just to get back to say, ‘hey, we need to get back to that place.’”

Obviously, the goal is the make the NCAA tournament once again. North Dakota ended a streak of 15 consecutive NCAA Tournament trips after missing the tournament for the first time since 2002. No team wants to be the one that ends the streak, Poolman said, but everything does come to an end. They don’t feel any added pressure but instead will use the end of last season as a learning experience for 2018-19.

The Fighting Hawks come off a 17-13-10 season with a school-record 15 overtime games.

“That’s a feeling we’re going to try to use for this year as a little bit of motivation just to get back to say, ‘hey, we need to get back to that place.’”

Poolman, a graduate of East Grand Forks High School, has yet to miss a game in his collegiate career throughout his first two seasons. Last year as a sophomore, he was an All-NCHC Honorable Mention and one of three finalists for the conference’s Defensive Defenseman of the Year Award. He scored seven goals with 22 assists – ranked fifth among NCHC defenders in the helper category – and blocked 55 shots.

He also received UND's Archie Krum Memorial Athletic Scholarship given to the "player who demonstrates leadership qualities, high academic standards and athletic excellence," according to the school's website.

Poolman is also striking his own path with the Fighting Hawks, away from the shadow of his older brother, Tucker Poolman, a former defenseman with UND who now plays for the Winnipeg Jets. It can be tough because Tucker has been a role model for Colton his whole life, Colton said.

"It is hard to kind of separate yourself," Colton said, who added he just tries to be an "everyday kind of guy." "It's just doing your own thing and knowing what you're doing is right for you."

The brothers spent time together back home this summer in Grand Forks and worked on drills. It's nice for Colton because he can learn about the game from his brother, who's two years ahead of him and "he knows the curve," Colton said.

Colton comes from the Minnesota, state-of-hockey background having played for the Green Wave at East Grand Forks. He was part of the 2014 team that won the Class 1A title under former UND forward Tyler Palmiscno. Colton scored a goal and three assists in that tournament.

"There are so many good memories," Colton said of playing at Xcel Energy Center. "It's exciting just to know that you did something in this building."

The same arena will play host to the NCHC Frozen Faceoff in late March. North Dakota opens its season with a home exhibition game Saturday against the University of Manitoba.

EDEN PRAIRIE'S BERGH LEADS THE WAY AT COLORADO COLLEGE

Colorado College may have finished in a three-way tie for fifth with Western Michigan and Omaha in the stacked NCHC standings last season (15-17-5 overall, 8-12-4-3 NCHC), but it marks the best regular-season finish for the program since 2011-12 in the WCHA. It returns 97.8 percent of last year's scoring, including a group of seniors that was the fifth-highest scoring junior class in the nation with 146 total points last season.

A co-captain for the second season helping to lead the way is Eden Prairie native Mason Bergh.

"He holds guys accountable, which is... one of the reasons why this program is going in the right direction," Haviland said.

The senior forward leads the team in active scoring with 36 goals and 41 assists in 108 games. On a line paired with Nick Halloran, a junior this year, and fellow senior Trey Badley, the trio put up 116 of the team's 267 points last season (43.4 percent). Bergh and Halloran were also two of 74 student-

athletes nominated for the 2018 Hobey Baker Award. Bergh put up 18 goals for a career-high 40-point season in 37 games last year.

It's Bergh's work ethic that is second to none, according to Colorado College coach Mike Haviland.

"Mason practices the way he plays, and he plays hard," said Haviland, in his fifth season at Colorado College.

Bergh is a player that takes the game seriously enough to have helped change the culture for the Tigers, wanting to see excellence increase, according to Haviland. His leadership is evident on the stat sheet and in the locker room.

"He holds guys accountable, which is... one of the reasons why this program is going in the right direction," Haviland said.

Bergh was part of the 2010-11 Eden Prairie team that downed Duluth East with Kyle Rau's goal in the third overtime to win the Class 2A state championship. Bergh, a sophomore, recorded an assist in the tournament and had three goals and five points on the season. He went on to put up 71 points (32-39) in 62 career games in the Eagles uniform.

The Tigers open their season with a series at Alaska-Anchorage this weekend.

List of Minnesota natives on NCHC rosters for 2018-19, with program rankings from the NCHC Media Preseason Poll:

NO. 7 OMAHA

- Jason Smallidge D FR Eagan
- John Schuldt D FR Minnetonka
- Nate Knoepke D SOPH Farmington
- Jalen Schulz D SR Cambridge
- Jordan Klehr D SR Lino Lakes
- Travis Kothenbeutel F FR Sauk Rapids
- Steven Spinner F SR Eden Prairie

NO. 1 UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA-DULUTH

- Matt Anderson D SOPH Shakopee (Holy Family Catholic)
- Dylan Samberg D SOPH Hermantown
- Nick Wolff D JR Eagan
- Louis Roehl D SOPH Eden Prairie

- Scott Perunovich D SOPH Hibbing
- Kobe Roth F SOPH Warroad
- Koby Bender F SOPH Cloquet
- Cole Koepke F FR Hermantown
- Jesse Jacques F FR Hermantown
- Jackson Cates F FR Stillwater
- Noah Cates F FR Stillwater
- Nick Swaney F SOPH Lakeville
- Mikey Anderson D SOPH Roseville
- Peter Krieger F SR Oakdale
- Riley Tufte F JR Ham Lake (Blaine High School)
- Hunter Shepard G JR Cohasset

NO. 6 COLORADO COLLEGE

- Ben Copeland F FR Edina
- Mason Bergh F SR Eden Prairie
- Westin Michaud F SR Cloquet
- Christiano Versich F SOPH Kelly Lake
- Jon Flakne G SOPH Maple Plain

NO. 8 MIAMI

- Christian Mohs F R-SOPH Andover
- Zach LaValle F SR Oakdale

NO. 3 NORTH DAKOTA

- Peter Thome G SOPH Mpls.
- Matt Kiersted D SOPH Elk River
- Colton Poolman D JR East Grand Forks
- Zach Yon F JR Roseau
- Dixon Bowen F JR East Grand Forks
- Gavin Hain F FR Grand Rapids
- Grant Mismash F SOPH Edina
- Mark Senden F FR Medina
- Cole Smith F JR Brainerd
- Hayden Shaw D SR Woodbury

- Ryan Anderson G SR Roseau

NO. 2 ST. CLOUD STATE

- Jack Poehling F JR Lakeville North High School
- Luke Jaycox D SOPH Warroad
- Nick Poehling F JR Lakeville North High School
- Spencer Meier D FR Sartell
- Ryan Poehling F JR Lakeville North High School
- Jack Ahcan D JR Savage (Burnsville High School)
- Micah Miller F FR Grand Rapids
- Will Hammer F SOPH St. Cloud Cathedral High School
- Brenden Bushy D FR Thief River Falls (Lincoln High School)
- Sam Hentges F FR Fridley (Totino-Grace High School)
- Jake Wahlin F JR St. Paul (White Bear Lake High School)
- Jimmy Schuldt D SR Minnetonka
- Nick Perbix D FR Elk River
- Easton Brodzinski F SOPH Blaine
- Blake Lizotte F SOPH Lindstrom (Chisago Lakes High School)
- David Zevnik G SR Lakeville (St. Thomas Academy)

NO. 5 DENVER

None

NO. 4 WESTERN MICHIGAN

None

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