



CENTRAL COLLEGIATE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION
23995 Freeway Park Drive, Suite 101
Farmington Hills, MI 48335
Phone: (248) 888-0600 • Fax: (248) 888-0664
ccha@ccha.com • www.ccha.com

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CONTACT: Fred Pletsch
(248) 888-0600

CCHA ANNOUNCES THREE FINALISTS FOR TOP INDIVIDUAL AWARDS *Award winners will be announced March 16 at the Fox Theatre.*



FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich. – The Central Collegiate Hockey Association announces the top three finalists of six of the major individual awards that will be presented on Thursday, March 16 at the historic Fox Theatre in downtown Detroit.

If the saying that “defense win championships” is true, then it is appropriate that upperclassmen from the CCHA's top three regular-season finishers earned the right to be finalists for the CCHA Defensive Forward of the Year. All three finalists excelled on the penalty kill, combined for a plus/minus of +32, and were usually matched up against the opposing team's top players as CCHA coaches nominated Miami senior Matt Davis, a converted defenseman, Michigan senior captain Andrew Ebbett and Michigan State junior captain Drew Miller, as the CCHA's top frontline defenders.

Northern Michigan senior Nathan Oystrick, last year's Defensive Defenseman of the Year, is looking to repeat as the 'Cats captain is a finalist for the award for the third consecutive campaign. He is joined by Miami captain Andy Greene and Michigan junior Matt Hunwick. Greene led a Miami defense that surrendered just 57 goals in conference action while Hunwick led the Maize and Blue with a +14 rating.

Andy Greene will look to become the second two-time champion of the CCHA Offensive Defenseman of the Year as he has been chosen as a finalist for the third consecutive season. The Miami captain led the conference in goals scored by a blueliner with eight, while adding 17 assists, but MSU junior Tyler Howells and Michigan rookie Jack Johnson will look to snare the award away from Greene. Howells placed third among defensemen in conference scoring while Johnson tied for the league lead with 30 points.

Every season there are a handful of CCHA freshmen who make everyone around the league forget that they are, indeed, rookies. This season has proven to be no different as a pair of netminders from the first and second seeds join a forward who helped his team improve by 15 points in the CCHA standings. Miami goalie Jeff Zatkoff helped the RedHawks soar to the CCHA regular-season title by posting 11 wins in 14 conference starts and a 2.22 goals-against average. He is joined by Michigan State counterpart Jeff Lerg. The Livonia, Mich., native sparked a Spartans charge to second place in the league with 11 victories during the second half of the season. Joining the two backstops is Notre Dame forward Erik Condra. Condra led the league in rookie scoring and ranked among the Top 10 freshmen scorers in the nation.

Behind every good team there is a good coach, and the nominees for the CCHA Coach of the Year award helped lead their clubs towards the top of the CCHA. For first-year Lake Superior head coach Jim Roque, he guided his alma mater to their first home-ice playoff berth in six years. MSU bench boss Rick Comley led the Spartans to a 14-7-7 mark and their best finish in his four seasons at the helm in East Lansing. The third finalist is Miami head coach Enrico Blasi. The youngest active coach in Division I hockey, Blasi will be looking to capture his third CCHA Coach of the Year award in seven seasons after guiding the RedHawks to a 16-point improvement in the standings and the first RedHawk regular-season championship since 1992-93.

The RBC Financial Group CCHA Player of the Year nominees include Miami senior defenseman Andy Greene, Lake Superior junior goaltender Jeff Jakaitis and Nebraska-Omaha junior forward Scott Parse. Greene is looking to become the first blueliner since Western Michigan's Wayne Gagne in 1987 to be named the league's best player. Laker netminder Jeff Jakaitis was the only CCHA goalie to start all 28 conference contests and was named a Perani Cup game star in 15 of those 28 tilts. The nation's leading scoring, Scott Parse, opened the season with a 15-game point streak and was the first player in the nation to top both the 50-point and 60-point plateaus.

The CCHA Awards Banquet kicks off the CCHA Championship weekend on Thursday, March 16. The Banquet, an Academy Awards-style event with music videos, video highlights and special awards presentations, is held at the historic Fox Theatre in downtown Detroit, across from Comerica Park. The Banquet begins with a social hour presented by the RBC Financial Group at 7:00 p.m. during which a cash bar will be available and light hors' d'oeuvres will be served. The Awards Program will be at 8:00 p.m. and will last approximately one hour and 20 minutes. Banquet tickets are \$15 and can be purchased by calling the CCHA at (248) 888-0600 or at the door the day of the event.

TOP THREE AWARD FINALISTS

BEST DEFENSIVE FORWARD FINALISTS

Matt Davis, Miami
Andrew Ebbett, Michigan
Drew Miller, Michigan State

BEST DEFENSIVE DEFENSEMAN FINALISTS

Andy Greene, Miami
Matt Hunwick, Michigan
Nathan Oystrick, Northern Michigan

BEST OFFENSIVE DEFENSEMAN FINALISTS

Andy Greene, Miami
Jack Johnson, Michigan
Tyler Howells, Michigan State

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

Jeff Zatkoff, Miami
Jeff Lerg, Michigan State
Erik Condra, Notre Dame

COACH OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

Jim Roque, Lake Superior
Enrico Blasi, Miami
Rick Comley, Michigan State

PLAYER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

Andy Greene, Miami
Jeff Jakaitis, Lake Superior
Scott Parse, Nebraska-Omaha