



Pioneer file photo  
Bemidji State players and fans celebrate Ben Kinne's first-period goal against Niagara on Feb. 20, 2010. The Beavers won 6-1 in the final game played at the John S. Glas Fieldhouse.

## A look back at the 2009-10 Beavers, one decade later

**By Austin Monteith**  
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A decade has passed since what was arguably the greatest regular season of the Bemidji State men's hockey program's NCAA Division I era.

Riding high on the heels of a Frozen Four appearance, the 2009-10 Beavers didn't miss a beat.

They tied a D-I era program record for single-season wins with 23, knocked off the nation's top-ranked team and secured the team's first at-large bid to the NCAA Tournament. A squad that featured two future NHLers captured the College Hockey America title in the conference's final season of existence while climbing as high as No. 4 in the national rankings, also a program record.

A grind of a schedule took its toll, however. BSU was upset in the CHA Tournament before a first-round defeat in the NCAA Tournament to one of the country's hottest teams

ended hopes of a return trip to the Frozen Four.

Nevertheless, the Beavers made their final season at the John S. Glas Fieldhouse one that holds a special place in program lore.

"They won big games. We were consistent in our play, by and large, and then we get an at-large bid," head coach Tom Serratore said a decade later. "To me, it was a direct carryover from the year before, and that's not easy to do."

**Beavers reload after Frozen Four**

Bemidji State reached unparalleled heights by advancing to the 2009 Frozen Four.

The Beavers lost six seniors from that team to graduation, as well sophomore goaltender Matt Dalton, who signed with the Boston Bruins after a stellar campaign.

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Bemidji State's Matt Read is pictured during a game against Minnesota Duluth at the John S. Glas Fieldhouse on Jan. 22, 2010.

## BHS spring coaches wait on decisions, hope for opportunity to play

**By Micah Friez**  
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**BEMIDJI** — So what do we do?

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Minnesota State High School League on Wednesday pushed back the start of the spring sports season to May 5. At least.

That means empty fields, quiet stands and unworn jerseys that stay tucked in the closet for at least another month and a half. Coaches at Bemidji High School are playing the waiting game for now, and that's about all that's left to do as the fate of spring sports hangs in limbo.

"It's really up in the air," boys golf coach Seth Knudson said. "It's hard because nobody really knows what's going to happen. We don't know if we're going to start in May, or if we're even going to have a season."

"It's such an unknown that nobody's had to deal with before," boys track and field

coach Steve Sneide added. "I think that every coach right now is just hoping for the best and trying to figure out what's best for their program."

The BHS coaches are trying to prepare athletes for the possibility of a season, but, like most every other challenge caused by COVID-19, there are obstacles to overcome.

Until at least May 5, coaches aren't allowed to have in-person contact with their athletes, per MSHSL rules. They can't require or even suggest group practices, and they can't require individual workouts or training. The league's guidelines allow for communication through technology and optional individual workouts, but that's hardly a substitute for schedules full of red X's rather than final scores.

"All of us coaches are just dying to see the kids," girls track and field coach Chris Lehman said. "We definitely miss them. I can't imagine this being my senior year, too, and how excited the kids were. It's

just so much unknown, that's the hard part."

**'Wait and see'**

If teams do eventually get the green light, the coaches kicked off possible solutions — such as a shortened regular season. Any season would be better than no season, new girls golf coach Tina Offerdahl said.

"It's the extracurricular part of it, it's the socialization part of it that they're going to miss right now," she said. "I think the kids are missing out on that a lot because of all this. But you want them to stay healthy, so you can't really push the limit."

Without inside information or anything other than a gut feeling, the mood among most coaches is that the spring sports season won't happen. There's still hope, but many admitted it's impossible to predict a future that doesn't have a blueprint from the past.

"We're going to have to live with whatever decisions they make," baseball coach Mike Fogelson said. "If they give us



Micah Friez / Bemidji Pioneer  
Bemidji High School baseball head coach Mike Fogelson (left) discusses a call with the field umpire during a 2019 game at the BSU baseball field.

a chance to play this spring, we're certainly going to be excited to get out there and play. We just have to wait and see what they decide."

Ultimately, the final say will come from the MSHSL. So far, the league has operated in accordance with direction from Gov. Tim Walz and the Centers for Disease Control, and that's not likely to change moving forward.

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## MSHSL further postpones spring sports season

**Pioneer Staff Report**  
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**BROOKLYN CENTER** — The Minnesota State High School League announced Wednesday the continued suspension of all participation in spring activities at all member schools until the current school closure declaration is lifted.

The decision was made in alignment with Gov. Tim Walz's extension of school closures through May 4, meaning the earliest date for spring sports has been pushed back to May 5. Walz issued a "stay at home" order effective 11:59 p.m. Friday, March 27, through 5 p.m. Friday, April 10, to slow the spread of the coronavirus in Minnesota.

"Pending a reopening of schools by the Governor,

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BSU

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But back in the fold were a couple of key cogs who'd also one day ink NHL contracts.

Junior Matt Read led the charge offensively with 41 points off of 19 goals and 22 assists, while sophomore Brad Hunt patrolled the blue line and totaled 33 points (7g-26a) to lead the defensive corps.

"We had some very good top-end players," said Serratore, then in his ninth season as coach. "And when you have very good top-end players and those top-end players are your hardest workers, like Read and Hunt, that really helps pave the way because everybody else follows in line."

Upstart freshman forward Jordan George contributed immediately, tallying 34 points (13g-21a) to finish second on the team while playing on the top line alongside Read and junior Ian Lowe, the team's leader with 21 goals. Shoring up the defense were seniors Kyle Hardwick and Chris Peluso.

"We had a good blend with that team," Serratore said. "We had good size and we had good skill. We could play a physical game and we could play a skill game."

A versatile third line of captain Chris McKelvie, Tyler Lehrke and Jamie MacQueen was also a useful weapon in Serratore's arsenal.

"We put that line against everybody's top line," the coach said. "It was great because we could put Matt Read against (opponents' third or second lines). And there weren't many players that we were playing against that year that were better than Matt Read."

In the crease, sophomore Dan Bakala took over the starting job and backstopped the team to 19 of its wins.

"Dan Bakala, just out of the chute with zero games experience, he had a great year for us as well," Serratore said. "He was a big puzzle piece for that team."

Everything was in place for BSU to make a run at its fourth NCAA Tournament appearance in the D-I era.

Rise through the rankings

Bemidji State shocked the nation when it made its 2009 NCAA Tournament run. There were no such surprises one year later.

Still, the Beavers didn't get much respect from the USCHO.com poll voters when they started the season unranked, though a sweep of No. 19 Air Force to open the year launched BSU to No. 15. Soon, BSU was up to No. 7 by the second week of November.

Minnesota handed Bemidji State its first loss Nov. 14 in the opening game of a series at Mariucci Arena, but the Beavers answered with a resounding 6-2 win the next night.

"That team early in the year, we were really dialed in," Serratore said. "And that team was very confident. We started off like gangbusters. It just carried over from our 2009 Frozen Four team."

Following a sweep of Alabama Huntsville, the six-ranked Beavers were 10-1-1 entering a Thanksgiving weekend showdown with No. 1 Miami at North Dakota's holiday classic. BSU avenged a Frozen Four loss to the RedHawks by knocking off the top-ranked team in Division I to the first time in program history. McKelvie broke a 2-2 tie with less than four minutes remaining to deliver a 3-2 win.

"It was like a playoff game," Serratore recalled. "There was just no easy ice. It was just a battle. It was both ways. We were battling with each other. They were ranked No. 1 and we were flying high.



Pioneer file photos

Bemidji State's Tyler Lehrke reacts after scoring in the second period of a 3-2 win over No. 1 Miami on Nov. 27, 2009, at Ralph Engelstad Arena in Grand Forks, N.D.

There's no question. A lot of our fans were there. It was in Grand Forks, an hour and a half away. There was a great crowd."

A 2-1 overtime loss to Ohio State in the weekend finale couldn't spoil the fun. The Miami victory lifted the Beavers to No. 4 nationally while garnering first-place votes in the USCHO poll for the second of three successive weeks. "I kind of said to myself that this team's for real," Serratore said. "Even though we lost that game to Ohio State, we played very good. And then right before Christmas we got swept by Mankato."

Goodbye Glas

After starting the season 13-2-1, the first-half ending sweep at the hands of Minnesota State dropped BSU to No. 10. The Beavers went 10-8-3 the rest of the way.

"We were running out of gas," Serratore said, "We were really fighting it and we were having a hard time putting 60 minutes together."

A brutal second-half schedule saw the team play 11 of its final 16 games away from the John S. Glas Fieldhouse, traveling all over the map to Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Nebraska and Alabama.

Bemidji State dropped to as low as No. 14 before a home-and-home sweep over fourth-ranked Minnesota Duluth in late January shot the team back into the top 10 to No. 7.

The Beavers ran away with their third straight CHA regular-season title, clinching with a 3-2 win over Niagara on Feb. 19.

With the new Sanford Center rising from the earth a couple miles away, the program bid farewell to the Glas one night later with a 6-1 victory.

"That last weekend against Niagara was an outstanding weekend. I'll never forget," Serratore said. "There was no way we were going to get denied that night, that last game in the John Glas Fieldhouse. We won 6-1 and the electricity in the building was something I'd never witnessed before. What a great sendoff for our alumni, our fans and our players."

The Beavers capped a 23-8-3 regular season two weeks later at Alabama Huntsville, finishing 14-3-1 in CHA play in the league's final year of existence. BSU also finished 6-2-1 against teams in the top 25 of the Pairwise rankings with wins over Miami, Minnesota, Minnesota Duluth, Northern Michigan and Omaha.

Postseason struggles

Eighth-ranked Bemidji State entered its final CHA Tournament as the top seed going up against host Niagara. The Purple Eagles had gone 1-5 against the Beavers in the regular season, but the home crowd gave them the edge in a 5-4 upset win. A 3-3 tie in the third-place game against Robert Morris was a sour way for BSU to end its CHA days.



Bemidji State captain Chris McKelvie (23) and goalie Dan Bakala (33) eye the puck during a game against Minnesota Duluth on Jan. 22, 2010, at the John S. Glas Fieldhouse.

However, an at-large bid to the NCAA Tournament was all but assured before the conference tournament began, and Bemidji State made the field as the No. 2 seed in the Midwest Regional in Fort Wayne, Ind.

"Our body of work throughout the year allowed us to get that at-large bid," Serratore said. "And a lot of it was because of that first half when we played so well."

The Beavers would go head-to-head with CCHA Tournament champion Michigan, while Miami and CHA Tournament winner Alabama Huntsville squared off in the other regional semifinal. The Wolverines entered as winners of eight of their last nine games and proved to be tough to handle.

Michigan scored in each of the first two periods to take a 2-0 lead into the final frame. Lowe scored on the power play off a feed from Read to make it a one-goal game with less than 10 minutes to go.

Just as it seemed BSU may have some momentum, future Stanley Cup winner Carl Hagelin bucketed a pair of goals before an empty netter finalized the score at 5-1 for the Wolverines.

"Michigan was one of the hottest teams in the country," Serratore said. "Michigan had to win the CCHA to get into the NCAA Tournament and they did. And we were fighting it. We didn't have the chemistry and we just didn't have what we had the first half of the year."

In 2008-09, the Beavers finished 7-2-1 in their last games and only qualified for the NCAAAs by claiming the CHA Tournament title, whereas the 2009-10 team completed one of the greatest regular seasons in program history.

Bemidji State just wasn't able to shift back into the gear it'd found earlier in the year. Serratore compares the '09 run to a sprint, while the '10 season was a marathon.

The 2010-11 campaign saw BSU join the WCHA and the Sanford Center open its doors. The Beavers haven't returned to the NCAA Tournament since 2009-10, though the 2019-20 squad might have done so if not for the coronavirus pandemic.

A decade later, the '10



Bemidji State's Jordan George is seen wearing one of the throwback jerseys the team donned to mark the final game played at the John S. Glas Fieldhouse on Feb. 20, 2010.



Bemidji State's Brad Hunt skates during a game against Minnesota Duluth on Jan. 22, 2010, at the John S. Glas Fieldhouse.

Beavers retain a special place in the hearts of all who went along for the ride.

"They validated that Frozen Four in 2009," Serratore said. "And that isn't easy to do.

There was a little bit of a bullseye on our head at that particular time and those guys responded like champions."

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return to participation protocols will be determined and communicated by the MSHSL Board and MSHSL staff," the MSHSL said in a release. "No decisions regarding the cancellation of spring activities have been made at this time."

The affected teams at Bemidji High School include baseball, boys and girls golf, softball, boys tennis, and boys and girls track and field.

"In alignment with state leadership and the Governor, we support the actions to limit gatherings and to stay home as directed," MSHSL executive director Erich Martens said in the release. "... The continued suspension of fine arts and athletic activities within our member schools is an example of our responsibility to the health and safety of our students, schools and communities."

The league said additional information will be provided as it becomes available and as decisions are made.

The MSHSL previously announced on March 13 that spring sports competition could begin April 6. The remaining winter sports competitions were also canceled on March 13.

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"Really, the best solution is following the advice of the governor and the Minnesota State High School League," boys tennis coach Mark Fodness said. "They're well informed and, so far, making the right decisions for the safety and well-being of our community. And that's what has to come first."

Fodness' stance covers the overarching mindset of his coaching career-parts: It's not fair, and it's nobody's fault, but it's the reality the teams have been dealt.

Seniors, no doubt, are hurting the most. Many will not pursue collegiate athletics, so this spring is the last hurrah to represent the Lumberjacks.

"It's frustrating for all the seniors, for sure, because this is their chance," softball coach Brad Takkenun said. "They had aspirations of trying to go to state. That was a little extra blow for them. They're still holding out (hope)... The kids are handling it remarkably well."

Answers will come, ready or not, and they'll either provide athletes with a platform to compete the disappointment that comes with not having that chance.

In the meantime, we wait.

Micah Fries is a sports reporter for the Pioneer. Readers can reach him at (218) 333-9789.

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In response to Gov. Tim Walz's "stay at home" order, the Bemidji Pioneer's front office will be closed through April 10 to walk-in traffic to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. As always, **memberships can be mailed, dropped off in our payment slot or paid by credit card by calling our office at (218) 333-9200.** We appreciate all of our members and we ensure that our commitment to local journalism will not be compromised during a time when access to information is more important than ever.

The Bemidji Pioneer



MEN'S HOCKEY

# Driscoll named Richter Award semifinalist

**Pioneer Staff Report**  
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CHANHASSEN — Bemidji State junior goaltender Zach Driscoll has been selected as one of 10 semifinalists for the 2019-20 Mike Richter Award by Let's Play Hockey. The award, now in its seventh season, is presented annually to the top goalie in NCAA Division I men's hockey.

Driscoll recorded a 21-8-4 record with a 1.63 goals against average and a .937 save percentage after appearing in 33 of the Beavers' 37 games this season. He finished among the top 10 nationally in several statistical categories, including GAA (third), save percentage (fifth), wins (sixth) and tied for eighth with four shutouts.

The Apple Valley native led the WCHA in games

started (27) and minutes played (1626:31) during the regular season. He ranked second with a 1.48 GAA, .944 save percentage and 19 wins in league play, while tying for second with three shutouts.

The on-ice accomplishments earned Driscoll All-WCHA Second Team honors last week.

The junior's 1.48 GAA is the fourth-lowest single-season mark in league play in the 68-year history of the WCHA. His overall GAA of 1.63 is also the fourth-lowest mark in league history, behind only North Dakota goalie and longtime BSU coach Bob Peters (1.27 in 1957-58), fellow Richter semifinalist Dryden McKay of Minnesota State (1.31 in 2019-20) and Wisconsin's Brian Elliott (1.55 in 2005-06).

The other semifinalists include McKay, Matt Galajda (Cornell), Spencer Knight (Boston College), John Lethemom (Michigan State), Strauss Mann

(Michigan), Frank Marotte (Clarkson), Hunter Shepard (Minnesota Duluth), Jeremy Swayman (Maine) and Tyler Wall (UMass-s Lowell).

The five finalists will be named March 30 by a committee of coaches, scouts and media members. The winner will be revealed April 10.

Previously, BSU goalie Michael Bitzer was one of five finalists for the award in 2016-17.

Past Mike Richter Award winners include Connor Hellebuyck (UMass-Lowell), Zane McIntyre (North Dakota), Thatcher Demko (Boston College), Tanner Jalliet (Denver), Cal Morris (Notre Dame) and Cayden Primeau (North-eastern).

The Beavers finished the season at 22-10-5 and ranked No. 11 in both national polls after the coronavirus pandemic canceled the remainder of the season prior to the WCHA semifinals.



**File photo**  
Cass Lake-Bena guard Jarell Jacobs (1) scores in the 2019 Section 8A championship game against Ada-Borup at Ralph Engelstad Arena in Thief River Falls.

## Jacobs, Ofstedal headline Northland Conference award winners

**Pioneer Staff Report**  
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Jarell Jacobs of the Cass Lake-Bena boys basketball team captured the Northland Conference Most Valuable Player award on Wednesday, while fellow Panther Leroy Fairbanks won the Rookie of the Year award and Blackduck's Ben Ofstedal captured Coach of the Year honors.

Jacobs led the conference with 28.8 points per game, and he even averaged a double-double by grabbing 10.6 rebounds a night. His totals respectively ranked first and second in the conference, while Red Lake's Delwyn Holthusen was second in points (27.0 ppg) and first in rebounds (17.5 rpg).

Miguel Reyes and Timmy Smith joined Jacobs and Fairbanks

on the All-Conference Team, while Brent Fowler and Kaydin Lee were honorable mention picks for Cass Lake-Bena.

Red Lake's representatives included Aaron Chaboyea, Riley Chaboyea and Holthusen on the all-conference team, while Daylen French and Gerald Kingbird Jr. received honorable mention recognition.

Blackduck's Dylan Moen (23.4 ppg, 9.5 rpg) and Ethan Merrill (12.4 ppg) were also all-Northland picks, and

Shawn O'Brien, Quick McKeeman and Sawyer Nendick received honorable mention nods.

In all, 16 players were named to the all-conference team, while 12 others were honorable mention selections.

Cass Lake-Bena and Nevis shared the conference title, each posting an 11-3 record. Red Lake was third at 9-4 and Blackduck placed fourth at 9-5. Northome/Kelliher (2-12) and Laporte (0-13) were seventh and eighth, respectively.



### Report: U.S. Open golf tourney postponed

The U.S. Open golf tournament will be postponed from its scheduled June dates, the New York Post reported Thursday night.

The event was due to be played June 18-21 at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, N.Y. According to the Post, the U.S. Golf Association hopes to hold the tournament later in the summer, pending the region's

recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

Winged Foot was shut down last week when New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order, halting all non-essential businesses statewide in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

USGA senior director of championship communications Beth Major told the Post on Thursday night in response to the report, "Nothing is official at this point. Obviously, we're talking about

it, knowing what's going on in New York (which has the most COVID-19 cases in the country) right now."

Major followed up on a USGA statement issued earlier this week that said an announcement about the U.S. Open's status would be coming in mid-April.

Westchester County, the site of Winged Foot, has been one of the areas hit hardest by the pandemic.

-Field Level Media

### BRIEF

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Andrea Wilson  
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