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SPORTS

How should UND recognize this hockey season?

One of the best men's hockey seasons in UND's decorated, 74-year history ended Thursday afternoon when the NCAA announced it was canceling all of its national tournaments because of the coronavirus outbreak.

It ended with the players sitting around a table in Ralph Engelstad Arena's players' lounge, wearing street clothes, scrolling through Twitter on their cell phones —



BRAD E. SCHLOSSMAN
Sports writer

not with them putting on their uniforms and playing a game.

It ended with them sitting at No. 1 in the Pairwise Rankings, the ranking system used to seed and choose the NCAA

Five best seasons in UND hockey history

.833 – 1986-87 (NCAA national champions)
.825 – 1998-99
.818 – 2015-16 (NCAA national champions)
.800 – 2019-20 (Pairwise No. 1 when season ended)
.788 – 1979-80 (NCAA national champions)

tournament field.

It ended with them as the odds-on favorite in Vegas to win the NCAA national championship, a distinction that won't be

awarded in 2020.

It ended with UND holding an .800 winning percentage, a rare achievement in the sport. Only four other

teams in program history finished with a winning percentage better than .785. Three of them won the national championship. This team never got the chance.

That leaves a problem for UND's athletic department.

How does it properly recognize this team?

We know UND will raise a white banner to the ceiling of Ralph Engelstad Arena as Penrose Cup champions.

It will sit next to all the other Western Collegiate Hockey Association and National Collegiate Hockey Conference regular-season league title banners.

The NCAA will not be awarding a national championship trophy this season. It is hard to find precedent for what to do in a season like this. It has never happened in college hockey.

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SUSPENDED

Photos by Eric Hylden / Grand Forks Herald

Devils Lake's Jes Mertens, left, and Jailyn Martinson console each other after hearing the announcement that the rest of ND Girls Class A tournament has been postponed until further notice due to the coronavirus crisis. The Firebirds had just defeated Fargo Davies to advance to the championship game.



Teams face disappointment of suspended state tournaments

By Greg DeVillers
Herald Staff Writer

The Four Winds-Minnewaukan team gathered Friday afternoon in a high school classroom to watch as pairings were announced on statewide television for the upcoming North Dakota Class B boys high school basketball tournament.

Four Winds-Minnewaukan, fresh off of winning the Region 4 championship Thursday night, received the No. 1 seed at the B. They watched with interest to see who would be playing who at state.

"I think we anticipated getting the No. 1 seed," said FW-M coach Rick Smith, whose team has been first all winter in the weekly state B poll. "But there was still a buzz in the room

when we saw it."

The excitement was short-lived. Shortly after the pairings were disclosed, it was announced that next week's Class B state tournament, as well as the conclusion of this week's Super A basketball tournament, were suspended.

Due to the emergency declaration issued by President Trump Friday afternoon because of the coronavirus pandemic, the North Dakota High School Activities announced the suspension of all remaining 2020 winter postseason state tournaments.

"I got the press release right after the pairings were announced and read it to the boys," Smith said.

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Martinson, left, and Mertens are consoled by Mattea Vetsch, left, and Mertens' dad, Tom Mertens, after the NDHSAA suspended the ND Girls Class A basketball tournament due to the coronavirus crisis. Devils Lake had just defeated Fargo Davies to advance to the championship game.

UND football follows school lead, suspending activities

University remains online only

By Tom Miller
Grand Forks Herald

All along, the UND football team has planned to take a two-week break from spring football during the university's spring break.

That football break, however, will be extended due to the coronavirus outbreak, Fighting Hawks coach Bubba Schweigert confirmed Friday.

Schweigert said the football program has suspended activities while the university conducts academics through an online only format.

"We're listening to our administration as they make decisions," Schweigert said. "Public health is a top concern, as is our team's health."

UND announced Thursday it will cease in-person education and move courses online for two weeks after spring break. Spring break begins at the con-

clusion of the school day Friday and ends March 23.

Students will have online-only instruction from March 23 through April 3. In-person classes are set to resume April 6.

The UND football team has conducted seven of the allotted 15 practices of spring ball, with the latest practice coming Wednesday, which featured the team's first scrimmage-like setting of the spring.

The program had originally planned for a two-

week break between practices No. 7 and 8, returning on March 25. The program's return date to spring ball is now in flux.

"We're collecting more information as we go," Schweigert said.

Schweigert also said his staff was just recently informed of a new NCAA decision to place recruiting in a dead period, meaning no on-campus or off-campus visits for prospective athletes.

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James Snook / Special to the Grand Forks Herald
UND head coach Bubba Schweigert calls a timeout during a game against Eastern Washington at Roos Field in Cheney Wash., Saturday, Sept. 28, 2019.