

MEN'S HOCKEY

# DREAM DEFERRED

**At a glance**  
 ▶ **Who:** BSU vs. Wisconsin  
 ▶ **What:** NCAA East Regional semifinals  
 ▶ **Where:** Bridgeport, Conn.  
 ▶ **When:** noon Friday  
 ▶ **TV:** ESPN2  
 ▶ **Radio:** Beaver Radio Network/92.1 FM



The Beavers celebrate after senior Brendan Harris (21) scored an empty-net goal against Bowling Green on Jan. 22, 2021 at the Sanford Center. Bemidji State has ended an 11-year NCAA Tournament drought after being in good position to make the field of last year's event, only for it to be wiped out by the coronavirus pandemic.

## Undeterred Beavers end NCAA drought after shock 2020 cancellation

**By Austin Monteith**  
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The shock and disappointment of last March has been replaced with excitement and anticipation for the Bemidji State men's hockey team. A year after their season was unexpectedly cut short, the Beavers have taken care of unfinished business in accomplishing what no other team has in more than a decade.

BSU's 11-year NCAA Tournament drought is over. Since the storied program's modern era began with the completion of the John S. Glas Fieldhouse in 1967-68, the Beavers had never gone so long without appearing in a national tournament. Fourth-seeded Bemidji State will embark on what it hopes will be a long tournament run in the East Regional semifinals against top-seeded Wisconsin at noon central time Friday, March 26.

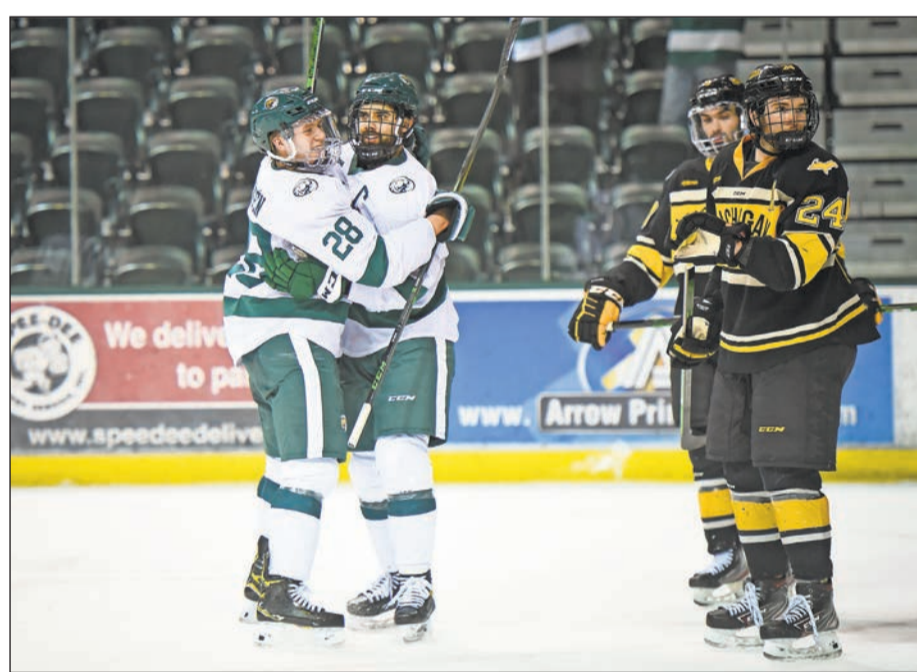
BSU was in a good position to make the Big Dance in 2020. One day before the team was set to play in the WCHA semifinals, the

coronavirus pandemic brought the country to a halt. A promising season was left without a true ending. "We kind of got it stripped away from us last year. A lot of the guys are not forgetting about that one," senior forward Brendan Harris said.

The team regrouped over a longer-than-usual offseason and picked up where it left off. Overcoming a slow start, the Beavers ended at 15-9-3 while enduring a challenging gauntlet of games, ranking first in the country in strength of schedule. The team compiled a 9-6-2 mark against opponents ranked in the USCHO poll, including 11 combined games against fellow tournament teams Minnesota State and Lake Superior State.

"Our body of work this year got us into the tournament," senior forward Ethan Somoza said. "We're glad to make it in, but we're not just happy to be there. We're looking to win and go to the Frozen Four."

**DREAM:** Page B2



Photos by Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer  
 Bemidji State's Elias Rosen (28) and Ethan Somoza (9) celebrate Somoza's game-winning goal in the WCHA quarterfinals against Michigan Tech on March 13, 2021 at the Sanford Center.

## Despite Selection Sunday drama, Bemidji State was safe after all

Bemidji State found itself in a precarious position Friday night following a 4-1 loss to Lake Superior State in the WCHA semifinals. Gone was the Beavers' chance to advance and have a shot at the WCHA postseason title, and the accompanying automatic bid. The fact NCAA shoo-in and regular-season league champion Minnesota State was knocked off

by Northern Michigan in the other semifinal complicated matters further. Would the NCAA selection committee take three WCHA teams? If NMU won Saturday, would Lake State get an at-large bid and leave BSU on the outside looking in? The Lakers' 6-3 win in the league final, possibly the last WCHA game ever played, might have helped Bemidji State's case. In the end, it turned out the Beavers were safe all along anyway. Committee chair Mike Kemp



Jason Wachter / The Rink Live  
 Bemidji State players celebrate a goal against Lake Superior State in the third period Friday, March 19, 2021, during the WCHA semifinals at the Mayo Clinic Health Systems Event Center in Mankato.

indicated Notre Dame was the last at-large team selected for the tournament, and that Omaha was the second-to-last team in. That means BSU was considered the best No. 4 seed, and therefore the third-to-last team to earn an at-large bid. The Beavers will face the fourth overall No. 1 seed Wisconsin on Friday, March 26, in Bridgeport, Conn. The Bemidji State faithful needn't have sweated it

**DRAMA:** Page B3



Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer  
 Bemidji State goalie Zach Driscoll (33) stops the puck while junior Tyler Kirkup (27) helps defend the net in the third period against Lake Superior State on March 3, 2021 at the Sanford Center.

## BSU dancing for the 5th time at D-I level

**By Austin Monteith**  
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When the Bemidji State men's hockey team faces off against Wisconsin on Friday, March 26, the game will mark the program's fifth NCAA Tournament appearance in its Division I era. The Beavers have made 31 national tournament appearances all-time going back to 1967-68. BSU is set to appear in its 18th NCAA Tournament

at any level, including 13 appearances at the Division II and III levels over a 16-year period between 1983 and 1998. Bemidji State claimed six national championships during that span, with D-II titles in 1984, 1993, 1994, 1995 and 1997, as well as a D-III title in 1986. As NAIA members, BSU racked up seven national titles from 1968 to 1980.

**D-I LEVEL:** Page B2