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PRESS RELEASE

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TOP LEAGUES TO SWAP OFFICIALS ***Tim Benedetto (HEA) and Jon Champion (WCHA) trade dates***

As part of an ongoing project to develop officials across league boundaries, the Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA) and the Hockey East Association (HEA) have announced that they will engage in an exchange of referees for a series of non-conference games during the first weekend in January. This is the fourth consecutive season that the WCHA and Hockey East have traded officials on a limited basis.

Under this arrangement, Hockey East's Tim Benedetto will be officiating both games of the Bowling Green series at Minnesota-Duluth. Heading east from the WCHA will be Jon Champion, who will officiate first at UNH (vs. Yale on Jan. 3) and then at Portland (Maine vs. Dartmouth on Jan. 4).

"This exchange has provided a unique learning opportunity for our officials over the years," said Hockey East Commissioner Joe Bertagna. "We appreciate the cooperation with the WCHA and would certainly consider expansion of this program down the road."

Each of the games will include the involvement of three leagues. In Duluth, Benedetto will be overseeing two games between opponents from the CCHA and the WCHA. Champion's assignments are Hockey East vs. ECAC match-ups. Local assistant referees will be used at each site.

"This opportunity for the our leagues to trade officials has been a very positive development for us in the WCHA," said Greg Shepherd, WCHA Supervisor of Officials. "It provides coaches and players a chance to see how other leagues operate and has proven beneficial at national tournament time, when officials are assigned by the NCAA."

A native of Crystal, Minn., Champion is an 11-year veteran official in the WCHA and has worked three NCAA Frozen Fours. A full-time engineer, Champion and his wife, Kelley, are the parents of one daughter (Kelsey) and two sons (Jack and Teddy).

Benedetto is in his 12th season as a Hockey East referee and has also worked numerous postseason tournaments. He works as a police officer full-time and resides in Everett, Mass.

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