

PRESS RELEASE
THE ODYSSEY TRUST
For Immediate Release

U.S. COLLEGE ICE HOCKEY TOURNAMENTS TO RETURN TO BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND IN 2025 AND 2026

BOSTON - Officially announced at the Massachusetts State House in Boston, The Odyssey Trust has unveiled plans to continue the Friendship Four and Friendship Series U.S. college ice hockey tournaments through to 2026. Marking 10 years of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) hockey in Belfast, games are set to take place at The SSE Arena, Belfast in November 2025 and January 2026.

Founded by The Odyssey Trust and held in Belfast since 2015, the Friendship Four and Friendship Series are the first and only NCAA Division One men's and women's ice hockey tournaments to take place outside of North America.

The Friendship Four, which will take place in November 2025, will see the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), Sacred Heart University, Miami University, and Union College go head-to-head for the coveted Belpot Trophy at The SSE Arena.

For the first time, four women's teams will take part in the Friendship Series, with Boston University, Harvard University, Quinnipiac University, and the University of Minnesota Duluth set to make history in January 2026, following three successful two-team Friendship Series tournaments in 2019, 2020, and 2024.

Martin McDowell, Chair of The Odyssey Trust, said: *"I am very proud to announce the return of both the Friendship Four and Friendship Series in 2025 and 2026, and I look forward to welcoming both new and returning teams to The SSE Arena. For nearly a decade, the tournaments have provided unique opportunities for North American student-athletes to have a cross-Atlantic experience in Belfast, using ice hockey as a tool to educate and create a spirit of mutual understanding, friendship, solidarity, and fair play."*

The high-profile tournaments are designed to promote education, social welfare, and community interaction, building on the Sister Cities agreement between Belfast and Boston, signed a decade ago. The agreement aims to foster stronger economic development, trade and investment, tourism, youth, cultural, faith-based exchanges, and educational linkages between the two cities, as well as to increase awareness of Belfast and Boston being growth cities in the connected health and life sciences, creative industries, tourism, financial services, and knowledge economy sectors.

To support the growth and development of the two tournaments, a new legacy committee – the Friends of the Friendship Advisory Board – was formed in January 2024. Reporting to Robert Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive of The Odyssey Trust, and chaired by Martin McDowell, Chair of The Odyssey Trust, the Board will meet twice a year, once in Boston and once at the annual Friendship Four tournament, with a focus on growing relationships with collegiate ice hockey programmes across the United States.

Sarah Fraser, Deputy Director of Athletics at Quinnipiac University, commented: *"As we approach a decade of the Friendship Four, it's been fantastic to see how the tournament has gone from strength to strength. Undoubtedly, the significance and impact of the games reaches far beyond the ice, offering student-athletes a rounded cultural experience in Belfast. Looking ahead to the next two tournaments, I feel particularly proud that 2026 will see the first four-team women's tournament take place at The SSE Arena, Belfast, providing a great opportunity to showcase the up-and-coming talent within the female game."*

Ahead of the tournament's 10th anniversary next year, the Friendship Four returns to Belfast this November with the University of Notre Dame, Harvard University, Boston University, and Merrimack College set to compete for the Belpot Trophy at The SSE Arena. Individual game tickets and weekend passes are on sale and available to purchase [here](#).

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