

PRESS RELEASE
THE ODYSSEY TRUST

THE ODYSSEY TRUST ANNOUNCES TEAMS FOR 2026, 2027 AND 2028 FRIENDSHIP FOUR TOURNAMENTS IN BELFAST

Officially announced at the Massachusetts State House in Boston, The Odyssey Trust is proud to announce the competing teams for the 2026, 2027, and 2028 Friendship Four ice hockey tournaments, marking a major milestone as the event celebrates its 10-year anniversary in Belfast in 2025.

Founded by The Odyssey Trust and held annually at The SSE Arena, Belfast, the Friendship Four is the first and only National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I ice hockey tournament to take place outside of North America. Since its inception in 2015, the tournament has become a flagship event in Northern Ireland's sporting calendar, bringing world-class collegiate hockey to Belfast while promoting education, cultural exchange, and community engagement.

The 2026 edition of the Friendship Four will welcome the University of Connecticut, Providence College, the University of Minnesota Duluth, and Colgate University, bringing together four renowned teams for another memorable tournament in Belfast. In 2027, Northeastern University, Quinnipiac University, the University of North Dakota, and the University of Wisconsin will take to the ice in pursuit of the Belpot Trophy. The 2028 lineup will see the University of Notre Dame, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Dartmouth College, and the University of Maine continue the tradition of world-class collegiate hockey in Belfast.

Steve Thornton, Sports Director at The Odyssey Trust, said: *"Reaching the 10-year anniversary of the Friendship Four is a remarkable achievement and a celebration of everything the tournament has come to represent. Over the past decade, Belfast has welcomed some of the top NCAA teams and inspired new generations of fans. As we look to the future, we are thrilled to confirm three outstanding lineups for 2026, 2027, and 2028, which promise to deliver more unforgettable hockey memories at The SSE Arena."*

The high-profile tournament is 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 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.

Martin McDowell, Chair of The Odyssey Trust, commented: *"The Friendship Four began as an ambitious idea and has grown into an event that embodies the values of friendship, learning, and international collaboration. We are incredibly proud of the impact it has made in Belfast and beyond over the past decade, from building relationships with U.S. institutions to providing local communities with access to top-level sport. Announcing the 2026, 2027, and 2028 teams as we celebrate 10 years this year is the perfect way to look ahead with excitement and confidence."*

In conjunction with the announcement in Boston, a special acknowledgement was also made to Ralph Cox, whose vision, leadership, and unwavering commitment have been instrumental in the growth and success of the Friendship Four since its inception. Cox, who is a member of the Friends of the Friendship Four Advisory Board, was presented the Belfast Homecoming Ambassador Medal, a prestigious honour presented annually to outstanding individuals who have shown exceptional commitment to reconnecting with, investing in, and supporting Belfast.

The Friendship Four returns to Belfast in November 2025, with the Rochester Institute of Technology, Sacred Heart University, Miami University, and Union College going head-to-head at the home of the Belfast Giants. The fourth women's Friendship Series tournament will see Boston University, Harvard University, Quinnipiac University, and the University of Minnesota-Duluth take to the ice in Belfast in January 2026. For more information or to purchase tickets for both tournaments, please click [here](#).

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