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REDHAWKS AND SPARTANS SHARE TOP BILLING Media and Coaches Agree to Disagree Again

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich. – For the second straight year, the coaches and media disagree over who should hold down the No. 1 position in the CCHA's annual preseason polls. The conference's 12 head coaches ranked Miami first while the media voted for defending NCAA champion Michigan State. Defending regular-season and playoff champion Notre Dame placed third in each category.

The RedHawks edged out the Spartans for top honors in the coaches poll despite finishing with one fewer first-place vote (five) compared to Michigan State (six). The Irish are the only other team picked by a coach to finish on top. For the second consecutive year, the Spartans garnered the most first-place votes in both rankings as they are also the top choice of 25 media members. Notre Dame attracted 13 first-place votes in media balloting with Michigan rounding out selections with the remaining four.

The RedHawks, guided by three-time CCHA Coach-of-the-Year Enrico Blasi, have 20 players returning, including both starting goaltenders, all eight defensemen who suited up last season for the team with the third-best defensive numbers in the conference, and impact senior forwards Ryan Jones and Nathan Davis. Jones, a 2004 draft pick of the Minnesota Wild, is the league's top returning goal scorer after having notched 18 in conference action and 29 in overall games last season. Davis, selected by Chicago in the 2005 NHL Entry Draft, was one of just nine players in the nation in 2006-07 to reach the 50-point plateau (21-29-50).

The Spartans also bring back 20 players from a squad that captured the school's third national championship, and the eighth won by a CCHA member, on April 7 in St. Louis. Michigan State is backstopped by junior goaltender Jeff Lerg, who is 5-1-0 with a 1.50 goals-against average and .949 save percentage in NCAA Tournament play, and led offensively by the potent all-junior combination of leading scorer Tim Kennedy (18-25-33), Frozen Four winning goal-scorer Justin Abdelkader and Pittsburgh draft pick Tim Crowder.

The Irish have 16 lettermen back, including their top five scorers led by Eric Condra (14-34-48) and 2007 All-Rookie Team picks Ryan Thang (20-21-41) and Kevin Deeth (17-22-39). On defense, another All-Rookie Team member, Kyle Lawson, will be joined by freshman Ian Cole, the first, first-round NHL draft choice in school history, who went 18th overall to St. Louis.

A total of 63 members of the media ranked the 12 CCHA teams in projected order of finish for the regular season. Points were awarded on a 12-11-10-9, etc., basis. League coaches ranked the CCHA teams, excluding their own school, in the order they predicted the regular season will end. Points in the coaches poll were tallied on a 11-10-9, etc., basis.

Coaches Poll

1. Miami (5)	114
2. Michigan State (6)	113
3. Notre Dame (1)	105
4. Michigan	92
5. Ohio State	77
6. Nebraska-Omaha	68
7. Lake Superior	52
8. Northern Michigan	48
9. Ferris State	44
10. Western Michigan	41
11. Alaska	25
12. Bowling Green	13

Media Poll

1. Michigan State (25)	701
2. Miami (21)	667
3. Notre Dame (13)	656
4. Michigan (4)	596
5. Ohio State	414
6. Nebraska-Omaha	412
7. Western Michigan	352
8. Ferris State	279
9. Lake Superior State	270
10. Northern Michigan	248
11. Alaska	212
12. Bowling Green	108