

# ALABAMA HOCKEY

## For Immediate Release

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## **ALABAMA HOCKEY AMONG FOUNDING MEMBERS OF NEW ACHA ACCHL MEN'S DIVISION 1 SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE**

A new era is set to begin for Alabama Hockey. Seasoned American Collegiate Hockey Association (ACHA) Division 1 members, The Alabama Frozen Tide has been granted a path to join a new ACHA Division 1 conference for 2025-2026. The conference will start under the Atlantic Coast Collegiate Hockey League (ACCHL) and has been given preliminary approval by the ACHA to add a Division 1 conference. The ACHA and ACCHL reached a Memorandum of Understanding allowing core members: University of Alabama, NC State University, University of Louisville, and University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to begin play in the ACHA once the six-team conference requirement is met. The ACCHL conference is focused on bringing together some of the biggest brands in college athletics in the south to compete at the highest level of non-NCAA college hockey in North America.

The ACCHL, along with the founding members, is charged with creating a conference whose members meet that mission and include the following parameters:

- Member of a "Power 5 Conference" with historical and current athletic success, making them an NCAA athletic brand name.
- The top team at their university, meaning there is no NCAA team.
- Currently enjoys widespread fan support.

Head Coach Mike Fairbanks is thrilled about what is to come with this new conference; "The formation of this new conference will lead to great opportunities for the ACHA teams in the Southeast! This new conference will spawn growth, needed exposure, better opportunities, and elevated competition to the teams that are participating in the new conference! Alabama Hockey is proud to be a founding member of the new Southeast conference and looks forward to a bright future that lies ahead!"

The Frozen Tide has long been the center of college hockey growth in the South, having been members of the ACHA since 2005 and helping found the original Southeast College Hockey Conference (SECHC) in 2008-2009. Since 2015, Alabama has been one of only two SEC schools to compete at the ACHA D1 level. The

growth of hockey in the south and specifically at Alabama, point to why now is the perfect time for a new Southeast conference.

The ACHA sees the formation of this conference as an essential part of its growth plan. According to Executive Director, Craig Barnett, “Current ACHA members University of Alabama and Liberty University are in that geographic location, so adding a new Men’s Division 1 league with ‘Power 5’ type members will enhance not only Men’s Division 1, but the ACHA as a whole. We are excited to follow the progress of this prospect!”

According to General Manager Will Zeek, “Alabama is eager participate in a conference to showcase the highest levels of collegiate hockey in the Southeast. It will in turn, inspire an entire new generation of youth hockey players in non-traditional hockey areas who aspire to eventually be rostered on these exceptional university ice hockey teams. The timing of the conference is the perfect storm. Hockey is very much alive and well in the south and growing fast. This will fuel the fire in an extremely positive direction”

According to NC State head coach and founding member, Tim Healy, meeting the six-team threshold will not be an issue as the league is already speaking to multiple teams about joining the conference. “As word of this conference has circulated amongst schools, we are speaking with a new team daily. Adding teams is not a question; it is about adding the right teams to ensure this becomes the best conference in the ACHA. We also have the right four partners to start this journey. This will be a great conference between the core four and the schools that have inquired.”

For the players, this is a measure of the program's growth and is as much about the past as it is about the future. Junior Team President Austin Fink says “It is game changing not only for the current guys on the team, but also the club here as a whole. It gives us a shot at a national auto bid every single year, and it is a huge step in the right direction towards hopefully becoming a NCAA program one day!”

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#### About Alabama Hockey

The Alabama Hockey Club was founded in 2005 by University of Alabama students. Alabama began play at the ACHA D3 level and was a founding member of the Southeast College Hockey Conference (SECHC) with Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi State, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Vanderbilt. After many successful seasons at D3, Alabama was promoted to the Division 1 level of ACHA hockey in 2015 and played its first D1 game against West Virginia on September 11, 2015. The team won 6-3 and has competed at the D1 level ever since. The program is now in its nineteenth season and plays its home games at the Pelham Civic Complex in Pelham, AL. For more information, visit [alabamahockeyclub.com](http://alabamahockeyclub.com)