



For Immediate Release

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AMERICAN COLLEGIATE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES SUPPORT OF EXPLORATION BY ACCHL TO FORM NEW MEN'S DIVISION 1 CONFERENCE

TROY, MI (May 23, 2024) – The American Collegiate Hockey Association (ACHA), the governing body for non-NCAA men's and women's hockey in the United States, today announced its support of the Atlantic Coast Collegiate Hockey League (ACCHL) to explore the formation of a conference within ACHA Men's 1 Division Conference with an intention to start play in 2025-2026.

Current ACHA member teams from University of Alabama (Men's Division 1), University of Louisville (Men's Division 2), North Carolina State University (Men's Division 2) and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Men's Division 2) are expected to participate in the newly proposed ACCHL M1 conference.

The proposed ACCHL M1 conference will be unique in its purpose as its mission will be to grow college hockey at universities in the Southeast United States that are members of Power Five Conferences, and currently do not have an NCAA team. The ACCHL has been 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.
- A well-organized and fully developed ACHA program.
- Currently enjoys widespread fan support.

"As the ACHA continues to look for ways to grow and provide prospective student-athletes with opportunities to continue their hockey careers in college, we have identified a few prospects," said ACHA Executive Director Craig Barnett. "One of those prospects is to support the ACCHL conference as they explore and pursue an ACHA Men's Division 1 conference. The ACHA has identified certain conditions that would need to be met to be compliant with a Men's Division 1 league and we are hopeful that the ACCHL leadership group will be successful in meeting those conditions to provide growth in the Southeast region!"

Barnett continued, "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!"

“Liberty University is so excited to see and support the growth of ACHA D1 hockey in the Southeast,” said Kirk Handy, Head Coach at ACHA M1 Liberty University. “I believe that this effort is just start of seeing many more teams join ACHA D1 in the Southeast!”

“The inevitable evolution of ACC Hockey to the most competitive level of ACHA collegiate hockey is absolute proof of the growth of our game in the Southeast,” said ACCHL Commissioner Mike Walley. “With the creation of an M1 Conference in the Southeast, there will now be top tier ACHA hockey in all geographic regions of the country. Specifically, the ACC will provide a conference home to showcase the highest levels of collegiate hockey in the Southeast, and in turn, will 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.”

For more information, please contact ACHA Executive Director Craig Barnett at cbarnett@achahockey.org.

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About American Collegiate Hockey Association

The American Collegiate Hockey Association (ACHA) was founded in 1991 and is the national association for Non-NCAA Collegiate Hockey throughout the United States. Our organization of more than 460 colleges and university-affiliated teams representing 48 states provides structure, regulates operations, and promotes the sport of Hockey nationwide. With approximately 13,000 players and coaches as well as countless volunteers and game officials, the ACHA has experienced tremendous growth over the past decade and continues to be a viable option for college bound student-athletes to continue playing competitive hockey nationwide. Headquartered in Troy, Michigan, the ACHA's primary mission is to support the growth of Collegiate Hockey while emphasizing academic performance, personal development, and opportunities for regional, national, and international competition. The ACHA identifies standards which serve to unite and regulate teams at the collegiate level and completed its 33rd season in March 2024. For more information, visit achahockey.org.