

Minnesota State set to celebrate 50th season

MANKATO — In honor of its 50th season of hockey, Minnesota State will honor its inaugural class of its “Legends of Maverick Hockey” this weekend at the Verizon Center.

The Mavericks open the season on Friday, starting a two-game, nonconference series against Boston University. The 50-year celebration will take place Saturday, and about 100 alumni are expected to be on hand.

“Legends” being honored include the program’s first head coach, Don Brose, as well as the team’s first captain, Karl Ulrich; the captain of its 1980 national-championship team, Steve Forliti; its first NHL draft pick and player, Tim Jackman; and current Boston Bruins player and two-time Olympian David Backes — “people that have helped us get to where we are as a program,” current coach Mike Hastings said.

“We wanted to recognize players, coaches and builders that have made this program special,” Hastings said.

Hastings, who is beginning his seventh season at Minnesota State, said the connection to the past is important to the program.

“And I’m not saying just this year,” he said.

“We’ve been fortunate in my time being here that there’s been a lot of respect for the people who helped build what we have here.”

In addition to decor highlighting special moments in MSU’s hockey history, the Mavericks’ facility at the Verizon Center, completed in 2015, is called the Don Brose Training Center. The strength-and-conditioning room bears Backes’ name after his donation supplied equipment for the space. and the men’s

dresser room honors alumni who donated to that part of the project.

“It’s unique,” Hastings said. “It’s been enjoyable to learn about the timeline to where we’re at today. I’m reminded of it every single day.

Out of league

WCHA men’s teams are 5-5-0 against nonconference opponents after the first few days of the season.

Bowling Green and Lake Superior State are each 2-0, while Alaska and Alabama Huntsville are each 0-2. Alaska Anchorage went 1-1.

Bowling Green put up 14 goals in wins over Mercyhurst and Western Michigan. Forward Stephen Bayliss had a hat trick and four points in the first game and was named WCHA Forward of the Week.

Lake Superior State, which swept at Merrimack, had the league’s Goaltender of the Week and Rookie of the Week in Mareks Mitens and forward Pierre-Luc Veillette. Mitens had a 31-save shutout on Sunday.

Alaska Anchorage’s Tomi Hiekkavirta was the Defenseman of the Week. He scored the game-winning goal in a 4-3 win Sunday over visiting Colorado College which followed a 10-2 loss Sunday.

There’s more nonconference action this weekend, too.

Besides MSU hosting Boston University, Michigan Tech will host Minnesota Duluth, Alaska will host St. Cloud State and Northern Michigan will travel to Michigan State. There will be home-and-home series between Bemidji State and North Dakota, Ferris State and Western Michigan and Bowling Green and Robert

Morris. Alabama Huntsville will travel to Colorado to play Colorado College and Denver.

One-timers

Minnesota State slipped one spot to No. 11 in both the U.S. College Hockey Online and USA Today/USA Hockey Magazine polls after Minnesota’s tie and win over previous No. 1 Minnesota Duluth propelled the Gophers into the top 10. ... After their 7-3 exhibition victory over Mount Royal on Saturday, the Mavericks are 14-3-0 in preseason games against Canadian universities. ... After a week off, the Minnesota State women’s team will open WCHA play on Friday and Saturday at No. 5 Ohio State.

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