

WCHA names Jutting coach of year

By Shane Frederick
Free Press Staff Writer

ST. PAUL — Sometimes patience is indeed a virtue. One year ago, at the Western Collegiate Hockey Association Final Five, Minnesota State announced it was extending coach Troy Jutting's expiring contract for two more seasons.

The decision seemed to be more reprieve than reward, giving Jutting a small window in which to turn the Mavericks around. Fast forward to Thursday afternoon. One year after some were questioning MSU's move to keep its coach, Jutting was named

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MSU's Joel Hanson named WCHA student-athlete of the year.

Gophers top Huskies to open WCHA Final Five.



WCHA coach of the year.

"A lot of the credit goes to the kids," Jutting said after the Final Five awards ceremony. "I think, and I've always believed this, that coaches get too much credit when their teams are successful and too much blame when they're not.

"The kids worked extremely hard this year."

Jutting also dedicated the award to assistant coaches Eric Means and Darren Blue and other assistants around the league.

"They go out and get the players," he said. "You don't run a horse race with plow horses, and we're in a racehorse league."

At the beginning of the season, the Mavericks were picked to finish ninth in the 10-team WCHA by the league's coaches. They finished fourth with a 12-12-4 conference record and hosted a first-round WCHA playoff series for



Minnesota State's Troy Jutting was named WCHA coach of the year Thursday. Jutting also won the honor in 2003.

Pat Christian

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the first time since 2003. The series was a memorable one, as the Mavericks fell to the Minnesota Gophers twice in three overtime games. Two, including the decisive third game, went to double-overtime.

"I'd trade this (award) in a second to be here (playing) tonight with my team," Jutting said.

Overall, the Mavericks are 19-16-4 and crossing their fingers in hopes of getting an at-large berth into the NCAA tournament.

Jutting has been named the WCHA's top coach in his eight seasons. He also won

it in 2003. His predecessor, Don Brose, captured the honor in 2000, the Mavericks' first year in the league, making the school the only one in the conference to get three in the last nine seasons.

"Obviously, Troy responded very well to (the contract extension)," MSU athletic director Kevin Buisman said. "He showed some great leadership. He put himself in position to earn this recognition."

Buisman said negotiations for a long-term contract cannot begin until Jutting has one year remaining on his contract. That will be July 1, and Buisman said he expects there to be some discus-

sions then. There were some notable differences in the way Jutting and his team did things this year.

For one, the Mavericks were a more defensive-minded team than they had been in the past, relying on outstanding junior goaltender Mike Zacharias but also giving him good protection with a corps of defenseman that often included three freshmen.

The Mavericks were more disciplined, cutting their penalty minutes down by nearly eight a game and dropping from being the most penalized team in the WCHA over the previous five seasons to fifth in the conference.

And Jutting himself seemed to be more in control of his emotions on the bench and kept confrontations with officials to a minimum.

"I don't know if I changed, but I've tried to learn," Jutting said. "You can always be learning, all the way up to the end. I've tried to get better each and every day. We ask our kids to get better each day."

Mavericks captain Joel Hanson said Jutting's focus made an impact on his young team.

"He always had confidence in us," said Hanson, a senior. "He picked us up when we were down. He was a great leader and a great inspiration."

The Free Press



Friday,
March 21, 2008

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