



# Sports

## First impression: MSU officials get chance to shine

Now that Minnesota State has applied to the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference, with no logical backup plan in place, the real work begins. On Sunday, Minnesota State officials get their first chance to meet with counterparts from the Northern Sun, hoping to do enough to impress those folks who someday may be conference colleagues.

"First impressions are the most important ones," athletic director Kevin Buisman said, working late

Wednesday to prepare to leave early Thursday for the NCAA meetings at Orlando. "I felt we did a pretty good job of putting together our application packet. We tried to go above and beyond their expectations, and I'm anxious to get their initial feedback."

The Minnesota State contingent, which includes President Richard Davenport, will attend the usual NCAA meetings over the next three days, but on Sunday, each of the four North Central Conference universities —

Minnesota State, St. Cloud State, Augustana and Minnesota Duluth — have been granted 15 minutes with Northern Sun officials to ask and answer questions, sort of a get-to-know-you session.

"I think there will be a lot of informal opportunity to talk with the Northern Sun people," Buisman said. "A lot of work gets done in the boardroom, but a lot of work also gets done in the hotel lobby. At least initially, we'll start to gauge their level of interest."

The NCC meeting should be short. South Dakota and North Dakota officials will likely be more interested in

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finding Division I friends as those aggressive programs prepare for that transition. Nebraska-Omaha officials, if there are any left, might be walking around the convention with a sign reading "Homeless program, somebody please take us in."

That leaves Minnesota

State, St. Cloud State, Minnesota Duluth and Augustana sitting in a room, munching cocktail weenies and slurping slushies, talking about how one of the most prominent conferences in Division II has been destroyed by its own ambitions.

"A lot has happened since (NCC officials) last met in May," Buisman said. "It's been

a turbulent period, a lot of change has taken place."

Then on Monday, Minnesota State begins the process of waiting for the Northern Sun to act, hoping with all fingers and toes crossed that the league doesn't say no. The decision might not come until late February as Northern Sun officials gather information this week and

digest it when they return to their campuses.

"With the uncertainty of our future as an athletic program, there's a lot at stake," Buisman said.

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