Ferris State, the 2002-03 Central Collegiate Hockey Association Regular-Season Champions, received the program’s first-ever bid to the NCAA Championship Tournament.

Bulldogs went into the NCAA West Regional at Mariucci Arena in Minneapolis, Minn., as the number two seed. Host Minnesota was the region’s top seed while North Dakota was seeded third and Mercyhurst fourth.

Ferris State advanced to the West Regional finals with its 5-2 victory over North Dakota, despite being outshot 46-27. The Bulldogs claimed a 3-0 lead with 1:56 remaining in the second period on Jeff Legue’s goal. The Fighting Sioux drew within 4-2 with 4:26 left in the game, but Trevor Large’s empty-net goal sealed the win. Chris Kunitz picked up three assists for FSU while Derek Nesbitt and Trevor Large both had a goal and an assist in the game.

In the regional championship game, Minnesota tallied five goals in the contest’s opening 20 minutes and went on to a 7-4 decision over Ferris State thus ending the Bulldogs’ historic season. The Golden Gophers accounted for the game’s initial three scores before FSU struck at 12:02 of the first period on a Kunitz goal. Kunitz scored again in the opening frame on a shorthander before UM answered with 1:06 left in the high-scoring period. Both teams would score one goal apiece in the remaining two periods with Ferris’ coming off the sticks of Nesbitt in the second on a shortie and Phil Lewandowski early in the third period.

Ferris State head coach Bob Daniels addresses the media following the Bulldogs’ NCAA Division I West Regional Final setback to Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minn. Joining Daniels at the post-game press conference are team captain Troy Milam and Phil Lewandowski. Ferris State concluded its best season ever as evidenced by finishing among the nation’s top eight teams in the 2003-04 season.