FERRIS STATE’S CHRIS KUNITZ CAPTURES CCHA PLAYER OF THE YEAR

U-M’s Jeff Tambellini honored as CCHA Rookie of the Year;
FSU’s Daniels voted CCHA Coach of the Year

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich. — Ferris State senior forward Chris Kunitz (Regina, Sask.) became the first Bulldog to be named the Central Collegiate Hockey Association’s Player of the Year at the annual Bauer Nike Hockey/CCHA Awards Presented by Galyan’s on Wednesday, March 19. The league’s coaches voted on the 2002-03 season’s eight individual awards presented at Detroit’s historic Fox Theatre.

Kunitz, who has produced 30-40-70 in 38 contests with 11 two-goal games this season in leading the Bulldogs to their first CCHA regular-season title, stands second in the nation in scoring.

Michigan forward Jeff Tambellini (Port Moody, B.C.) garnered the Rookie of the Year honor after pacing all CCHA freshmen in goals and points in both overall and conference games. Tambellini, who was named CCHA Rookie of the Week a league-high four times, is the first freshman to lead the Wolverines in goal scoring since 1988-89 and the eighth Wolverine to be voted top freshman.

Bob Daniels, the bench boss of the Ferris State Bulldogs for the past 11 years, locked up the CCHA Coach of the Year award Presented by Galyan’s after guiding his team to its most successful season in its 21-year history. Under Daniel’s direction, the Bulldogs captured their first regular-season title after being picked to finish ninth in the preseason media and coaches polls. They also established a new school mark for victories in a season and improved by 20 points in the conference standings.

Michigan State senior forward Brian Maloney (Bassano, Alta.) was given the Terry Flanagan Memorial Award in recognition of his perseverance in recovering from two broken ribs and a lacerated kidney he suffered last March in the playoffs. Maloney has accumulated 14 goals and 23 points in the last 17 games after being limited to two goals and nine points in his first 21 contests this season.

The third annual Mike and Marian Ilitch Humanitarian award was presented to Ohio State junior goalie Mike Betz (Elizabeth, Penn.). Betz was recognized for missionary work performed with children last summer in the African nation of Tanzania, and following up by getting his teammates involved in a charity dinner in January that raised $9,200 for STEMM (Sioux Land Tanzania Educational and Medical Ministries). The Mike and Marian Ilitch Humanitarian Award is given to the league’s top citizen based on their contributions off the ice as well as on, to his team, his program, his school and his community.

Michigan State senior defenseman John-Michael Liles (Zionsville, Ind.) was honored as the CCHA’s Best Offensive Defenseman becoming the first two-time winner of this award. Liles led all CCHA defensemen with 14 goals and quarterbacked a Spartan power play that led the league with 38 goals and boasted a success rate of nearly 30 percent. MSU senior Brad Fast (Fort St. John, B.C.) earned the Best Defensive Defenseman award. He becomes the seventh Spartan to receive the honor in the past 14 years.

Michigan senior forward Jed Ortmeyer (Omaha, Neb.) received the Best Defensive Forward award. The two-time captain of the Wolverines anchored a Michigan short-handed unit that has led the nation most of the season in penalty-killing statistics.

The CCHA Super Six Championship Presented by Galyan’s Weekend continues tomorrow with the tournament quarterfinals where No. 3 Ohio State will face No. 6 Notre Dame at 4:05 p.m., followed by No. 4 Michigan State taking on No. 5 Northern Michigan at 7:35 p.m. Thursday’s winners will be re-seeded for semifinal action on Friday with No. 1-seed Ferris State involved in the 4:05 p.m. game and No. 2-seed Michigan participating in the 7:35 p.m. game. The survivors will vie for the league’s automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament on Saturday night in the CCHA Championship Game at 7:35 p.m., while the two semifinal non-qualifiers will skate in the third-place game at 4:05 p.m. Saturday.