THE MINNESOTA DAILY

The Minnesota Daily • March 24, 2026 • https://mndaily.com/sports/gophers-hire-brett-larson-as-next-mens-hockey-coach/03/24/2026/eicmndaily-com/

Gophers hire Brett Larson as next men's hockey coach

The former St. Cloud State University coach brings winning experience to lead the Minnesota men's hockey program.

by Jason Lopez Martinez

Director of Athletics Mark Coyle announced Brett Larson as the program's 16th head coach for the men's hockey team, bringing in a veteran with both collegiate and international experience to the Gophers.

Larson, who spent the past eight seasons at St. Cloud State, replaces longtime coach Bob Motzko. He agreed to a five-year contract.

Larson brings 16 years of college coaching experience, including four NCAA tournament appearances and a national championship game run in 2021 with St. Cloud. He also has experience on the international level, serving as an assistant coach for Team USA in multiple tournaments, including gold medal runs at the IIHF World Junior Championships.



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Brett Larson, formerly the St. Cloud Stat University men's hockey coach, announced as the new Gophers men's hockey coach, March 24.

"This program just has something special," Larson said during his introductory press conference. "The history of it, the championships, I think more importantly than that, the people. The people are what makes this place special."

Coyle said Larson stood out during the hiring process because of his track record and ability to connect with players.

"You look at the four national championship games, the three gold medals," Coyle said. "His name just kept coming up over and over again."

Larson says he does not view the job as a restart for the program.

"This is not a rebuild," Larson said. "It's maybe a little bit of a re-tweak."

Instead of making major changes, Larson said his focus will be on refining details that can impact close games.

"How do we find that little bit of margin that's the difference between winning and losing games at this level?" Larson said. "Because that margin is pretty small — everybody's good."

He said recruiting is a key part of maintaining that success, citing changes in recruiting and player movement. With the addition of NIL money and CHL recruiting, Larson said he is ready to be aggressive with player recruitment.

"Recruiting is critical, " Larson said. "It's the lifeline of the program."

On the ice, Larson described his preferred style as fast-paced and aggressive, while still maintaining structure.

“I just like gritty skill, getting after it, playing fast, being on the attack,” Larson said. “I think when you play that way, you can be successful.”

Coyle said Larson’s approach aligns with the program’s expectations.

“There’s just this passion and this caring and this empathy to be a part of the program,” Coyle said.

Larson, a Duluth native and former University of Minnesota-Duluth player, acknowledged the significance of taking over one of college hockey’s most established programs.

“This is the best opportunity in college hockey,” Larson said. “I feel ready.”

As Larson steps into the role, he and the team are focused on continuing the program’s success with winning titles while also adjusting to the evolving landscape of college hockey.