



Sports Information Office
 University of Notre Dame
 112 Joyce Center
 Notre Dame, IN 46556
 www.und.com
 574-631-7516
 574-631-7941 FAX

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Contact: Alan Wasielewski - (574) 631-7516

National Championship Meet Spots On The Line For Notre Dame Cross Country This Weekend

2002 Schedule

September

6 Fri.	adidas Invitational	W, 1st
	Notre Dame, Ind.	M, 2nd
20 Fri.	National Catholic	W, 1st
	Notre Dame, Ind.	M, 1st

October

4 Fri.	Notre Dame Invit.	W, 3rd
	Notre Dame, Ind.	M, 3rd
11 Fri.	Bronco Open	W, 2nd
	Three Rivers, Mich.	M, NTS
19 Sat.	Pre-National Meet	W, 4th
	Terre Haute, Ind.	M, 11th

November

2 Sat.	BIG EAST Champ.	W, 1st
	Boston, Mass.	M, 4th
16 Sat.	NCAA G. Lakes Reg.	W, 11 a.m.
	W. Lafayette, Ind.	M, 12:30 p.m.
23 Sat.	IC4A Championship	TBA
	New York, N.Y.	
25 Mon.	NCAA Championship	TBA
	Terre Haute, Ind.	

Home meets in **bold**. All home meets are run at the Burke Memorial Golf Course on the west side of campus (enter at Dorr Road).

All times indicated are local to site.

NTS = no team scoring

The University of Notre Dame women's and men's cross country teams are ready for the most crucial race of the season - the 2002 NCAA Great Lakes Regional meet in West Lafayette, Ind., on Saturday, Nov. 16. The women's 6K race will begin at 11:00 a.m., while the men will begin the 10K race at 12:30 p.m.

The top two teams in each regional meet automatically qualify for the NCAA Championship in Terre Haute, Ind., on Nov. 25. There also are 13 at-large bids on the line and those teams are selected by the NCAA cross country championship committee.

The women's team, ranked fifth in the country, enter their race as the favorites, though the Great Lakes Region race might be one of the most hotly contested in the nation. Michigan (#12), Michigan State (#19), Indiana (#20), Marquette (#22) and #30 Wisconsin all have the ability to finish in the top two of Saturday's race.

The men's team has a tough road ahead, as their side of the race is even more challenging. Wisconsin (#4), #7 Eastern Michigan, #9 Central Michigan, #17 Ohio State, #18 Michigan, #20 Indiana, #21 Butler and #28 Michigan State will all be entered in this weekend's race. The Irish men have been ranked in the top 25 for most of the season, but dropped out after a fourth-place finish at the BIG EAST Championship. The men welcome back top runner Todd Mobley this weekend, however, and cannot be counted out from contending in the Great Lakes meet.

Women's Outlook: The strength for the Notre Dame women's team is its top three runners. Sophomore Lauren King, freshman Molly Huddle and senior Jen Handley are all in the running for All-America honors and are a potent lineup that many teams will have difficulty matching up with. The challenge for the Irish women will be their fourth and fifth runners, which will need to run well for Notre Dame to claim one of the two automatic bids to the NCAA Championship.

The options for Notre Dame's fourth and fifth scoring entries run deep, as head coach Tim Connelly has fielded perhaps his most talented team ever this season. At the BIG EAST meet, freshmen Lori King (23rd) and Stephanie Madia (31st) served as the final scoring runners for the Irish. Junior Kate Wales (24th, ND Invite), senior Jen Fibuch (38th, BIG EAST) or senior Ana Morales (24th, Pre National JV race) have all shown the ability to step up their production when needed.

Lauren King and Molly Huddle have run well together for most of the season, highlighted by a one-two finish at the BIG EAST Championship. Contenders for the Great Lakes individual title will need to battle the two Irish harriers for most of the race. Lauren King has finished second at the adidas Invite, sixth in the ND Invite, sixth in the Pre National meet and first at the BIG EAST Championship. Huddle began running this year at the ND Invite and placed fourth, followed by a seventh-place effort at the Pre National and her second-place finish at the BIG EAST.

Opponents fixated on Lauren King and Huddle cannot afford to look past Handley. A veteran of national competition, Handley has shown All-American ability this season and will be among the race leaders on Saturday. She finished 37th in the Pre National this season and 12th at the BIG EAST meet, earning all-conference honors for the second consecutive season.

Men's Outlook: The men's team lost three All-Americans to graduation last year, but the rebuilding effort occurred quicker than head coach Joe Piane might have expected. The Irish finished second at the adidas Invite, first at the National Catholic, third in the ND Invite and fourth at the highly-competitive BIG EAST Championship.

The key to the Irish season has been the leadership of junior Todd Mobley. Mobley was running exceptionally well early in the season, taking home the individual titles at the adidas Invite and National Catholic. He finished third in a top field at the ND Invite, but suffered an injury in the Pre National race which dropped him back to 94th in the field. Mobley was unable to return for the BIG EAST Championship, but the West Bloomfield, Mich., native will be back in the Irish lineup on Saturday.

The men's field is extremely challenging at the Great Lakes Regional this year and a

FinishLynx Women's
Cross Country Division I Poll
Nov. 4, 2002

<u>Team</u>	<u>Pts.</u>	<u>Prev.</u>
1. BYU (12)	389	1
2. Stanford (1)	378	2
3. Colorado	364	3
4. Wake Forest	345.5	4
5. NOTRE DAME	332	8
6. North Carolina State	328.5	6
7. Georgetown	319	5
8. Columbia	281	12
9. Northern Arizona	277	7
10. Arkansas	270	10
11. Virginia	250	16
12. Michigan	229	24
13. Missouri	221	11
14. Duke	216	13
15. Providence	203	14
16. Villanova	200	22
17. Arizona State	194	17
18. North Carolina	179	15
19. Michigan State	172	23
20. Indiana	137	18
21. Washington	127	25
22. Marquette	106	20
23. UCLA	97	19
24. Penn State	75	-
25. Boston College	69	30
26. Toledo	62	26
27. James Madison	52	-
28. Colorado State	43	-
29. Texas	40	28
30. Wisconsin	23	9

bold indicates 2002 Great Lakes Regional participant



number of underclassmen runners will need to step up for the Irish to contend for the title. In Mobley's absence at the BIG EAST meet, freshman Tim Moore continued his stellar rookie campaign with a 10th-place finish and earn all-conference honors.

Moore ran side-by-side with Mobley early in the season, taking second place at the adidas Invite and National Catholic and sixth at the ND Invite. He also finished 22nd in the Pre National meet, hinting at a possible run for All-America honors at the NCAA Championship.

Behind Mobley and Moore, the Irish lineup becomes a bit muddled. Junior David Alber and senior John Keane appear to be the top candidates for the third and fourth spots. Keane has been a steady presence the entire season, finishing in the top 30 at the adidas Invite, National Catholic and BIG EAST Championship. Alber has run well at times this year, including a solid 34th-place effort at the Pre National meet.

Two second-year harriers have been running well for Notre Dame late in the season. Eric Morrison began the season by winning the National Catholic JV race and was the second Irish runner to cross the finish line at the BIG EAST meet in 28th. Fellow sophomore Ryan Johnson has steadily improved the entire season, finishing 20th in the Pre National JV race and 33rd at the BIG EAST.

Other runners who figure to be in the field for Notre Dame on Saturday include Brian Kerwin (19th, Pre National JV race), Kaleb Van Ort (49th, BIG EAST) and Austin Weaver (fifth, Bronco Open).

Notre Dame's Great Lakes Regional history: The Irish men's team has been competing in the District IV or Great Lakes Region meet since 1972. Notre Dame has won the meet four times, including 2001 and 1996. The Irish men have finished in the top five nine out of the last 10 years.

The women's team has competed in the regional meet since 1986. They are looking for their first team title this season after finishing second in 2001. The Irish women have finished in the top six at the regional meet in nine out of the last 10 years.

Should the Irish men advance to the NCAA Championship, it will be the 40th appearance for the team since 1938. Since the regional meet was established, Notre Dame has advanced to the NCAA Championship 13 times, five of those berths were of the at-large variety. The women have gone to the NCAA Championship as a team three times (1993, 1999, 2001) and two of those years ('01, '93) the Irish finished second at the regional meet to earn an automatic bid. They finished fourth in 1999.

A number of Irish harriers who will appear in the race field Saturday have a history at the regional meet. Most recently, Lauren King finished second a year ago as a freshman, while Jen Handley placed 22nd and Jennifer Fibuch was 34th.

From the men's team, Todd Mobley finished eighth a year ago, David Alber took 26th, John Keane was 62nd and Brian Kerwin was 97th.

Participating teams: Men's teams: Akron, Ball State, Bowling Green, Butler, Central Michigan, Cincinnati, Dayton, Detroit Mercy, Eastern Michigan, Evansville, Indiana, Indiana State, IPFW, IUPUI, Ken State, Marquette, Miami (Ohio), Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Oakland, Ohio State, Purdue, Toledo, Valparaiso, Western Michigan, Wisconsin, Wisconsin-Green Bay, Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Wright State, Youngstown State.

Women's teams: Akron, Ball State, Bowling Green, Butler, Central Michigan, Cincinnati, Cleveland State, Dayton, Detroit Mercy, Eastern Michigan, Evansville, Indiana, Indiana State, IPFW, IUPUI, Kent State, Marquette, Miami (Ohio), Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Oakland, Ohio State, Purdue, Toledo, Valparaiso, Western Michigan, Wisconsin, Wisconsin-Green Bay, Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Wright State, Xavier, Youngstown State.