



Sports Information Office
 University of Notre Dame
 112 Joyce Center
 Notre Dame, IN 46556
 www.und.com
 219-631-7516
 219-631-7941 FAX

For Immediate Release: Nov. 16, 2001
 Contact: Alan Wasielewski - (219) 631-7516

Irish Cross Country Teams Enter National Championship Race After Stellar Regional Efforts

2001 Schedule

SEPTEMBER

7	Sat.	Valparaiso Invitational Valparaiso, Ind. Top Finishers: M - Todd Mobley (first) W - Christi Arnerich (fourth)	M-1st W-2nd
21	Fri.	National Catholic Notre Dame, Ind. Top Finishers: M - Ryan Shay (first) W - Jen Handley (first)	M-1st W-2nd
29	Sat.	Central Collegiate Kalamazoo, MI Top Finishers: M - John Keane (second) W - Hilary Burn (18th)	M-1st W-2nd

OCTOBER

5	Fri.	Notre Dame Invitational Notre Dame, Ind. Top Finishers: M - Luke Watson (first) W - Lauren King (first)	M-1st W-1st
13	Sat.	Pre-National Meet Greenville, SC Top Finishers: M - Luke Watson (fourth) W - Lauren King (15th)	M - 4th W - 11th
26	Fri.	BIG EAST Champ. Van Cortland Park, NY Top Finishers: M - Luke Watson (second) W - Jennifer Handley (seventh)	M - 1st W - 4th

NOVEMBER

10	Sat.	NCAA Great Lakes Region Terre Haute, Ind. Top Finishers: M - Luke Watson (third) W - Jen Handley (seventh)	M - 1st W - 2nd
19	Mon.	NCAA Championships Greenville, SC	M - 11 a.m. W - 12:15 p.m.

All home meets run at the N.D. Golf Course
 All times local to site

Dominant Great Lakes Regional performances earn both Irish teams NCAA National Births: In what proved to be a hugely successful Great Lakes Regional meet, the University of Notre Dame men's and women's cross country teams took first and second place, respectively, enabling each team to earn a spot in the NCAA National meet to be held Monday, Nov. 19 in Greenville, SC.

With the quality performances turned in by both the men's and women's squads at a highly competitive regional competition featuring many nationally ranked teams, the Irish have reason to be confident and optimistic entering the signature meet of the season.

The Irish men, ranked as one of the top teams in the nation consistently this season and currently holding the #4 spot, won the regional competition with by an 11-point margin over second place Michigan. All-American Luke Watson led the way for the Irish, finishing third in 30:37.3, continuing to demonstrate the strength he has shown throughout his career with the Irish. Sophomore Todd Mobley, who has greatly improved his regional performance from last season when he placed 24th, was next across the line for the Irish, finishing eighth among the highly competitive field.

Following Mobley was senior Marc Striowski in 10th, and classmate Sean Zanderson, (93rd in last year's regional) in 24th. Sophomore David Alber, running in his first Great Lakes Regional Meet, added to the Irish team effort with a 26th place finish and junior John Keane, also running in his inaugural Great Lakes Regional, finished 62nd. The Irish seventh man was sophomore Brian Kerwin, who turned in a 97th place finish.

The Irish victory is even more impressive when it is noted that All-American seniors Ryan Shay and Pat Conway, who have been consistent front runners for the Irish, did not run with the team last weekend. Both Conway and Shay, however, are slated to join the team for the national competition, two gains in the lineup that are likely to significantly aid the team on its quest for a top-five finish at the NCAA meet.

On the women's side, the 15th-ranked Irish team's performance at the Great Lakes Regional was equally impressive, knocking off #18 Marquette en route to second place team honors.

Freshman Lauren King, in possibly the best race of her collegiate career to date, managed a second place overall finish among a field of over 200 runners. King, who finished in 20:43.8, was just seconds behind the overall champion, proving that she has the strength and ability to run with the nation's top competitors.

With a relatively young team devoid of any seniors in the top eight and just three juniors, the women's team utilized its depth to improve upon last year's eighth-place regional finish. Sophomore Megan Johnson added to the effort with a 20th place finish, followed closely by junior Jen Handley just seconds behind in 22nd. Fellow junior Jennifer Fibuch turned in a 33rd place finish, and freshman Christi Arnerich, continuing a stellar rookie season for the Irish, turned in a 47th place finish as the team's fifth runner.

Julia Schmidt, a sophomore competing in her first Great Lakes Regional, ran to 61st place, followed by junior Muffy Schmidt, who earned 127th place.

No escaping the nation's best at NCAA Championships: Although both the men's and women's teams have faced multiple nationally ranked teams at the Pre-National Championships, BIG EAST Championships, and the Great Lakes Regionals, the runners will have to contend with all of the nation's toughest competition on the Furman University Golf Course next Monday.

The Irish have already seen many of their national competitors, allowing the teams a form of scouting and preparedness.

On the men's side, the Irish men have already met and defeated Air Force (#20), Arizona (#23), Duke (#24), UC Santa Barbara (#18), and Villanova (#10) all at the NCAA Pre-National meet, while finishing just behind #1 Colorado.

At the BIG EAST Championships, the Notre Dame men defeated #9 Providence, #10 Villanova, and #22 Georgetown - all of whom will compete at the NCAA nationals.

At the Great Lakes Regional last week, the Irish beat Michigan (#7), Michigan State (#12), Wisconsin (#11), and Butler (#25) giving the Notre Dame team a wealth of experience against some of the teams they will be competing with on Monday.

The Irish women have run against many of their national competitors as well, most notably competing back and forth fiercely with #21 Marquette. The Irish fell to Marquette at the National Catholic Championships (without King in the field) and at the Pre-Nationals, but rallied to beat Marquette in last week's regionals. The team also has competed against the likes

of #5 Boston College, Boston University, #2 Brigham Young, Colorado State, Dartmouth, #3 Georgetown, #7 Michigan State, #4 North Carolina State, #11 Providence, #1 Stanford, #17 Villanova, as well as Virginia, Washington, and Yale. The Irish fell to all of these teams, but will have the chance to overcome their opponents one more time at the NCAA meet.

For the #4 Irish men, a high finish at the national meet has been a goal throughout the season. The series of hard-fought victories that the team has captured this season was just a prelude to its performance on the NCAA stage. However, the Irish are not without a history of strong NCAA performances to build from at the 2001 championships.

Appearing in 43 NCAA cross country championships (beginning in 1938), the 2001 team wants to leave its own distinct mark on the Irish record books. Most of the Irish who ran on last year's ninth-place NCAA team return to compete again this year, providing the experience necessary for success.

Senior Luke Watson was the top Irish

finisher in the 2000 NCAA Championships, finishing as an All-American in seventh place. Watson has followed up with a stellar senior season, placing in at least the top four of each meet in which he has competed. The Notre Dame Invitational Champion for the past two years, Watson was also the BIG EAST runner up and fourth at the NCAA Pre-Nationals in mid-October. Watson has clearly established himself as the standard-bearer of the 2001 team and can be counted on for a very high individual finish at the NCAA meet.

Fellow All-American and senior Ryan Shay will be a major addition to the Notre Dame lineup when he returns to run with the team at the national meet. A seasoned veteran, Shay will be the key to the team's success at the national meet. Hampered by an Achilles' tendon strain, Shay sat out the regional meet and gutted through the BIG EAST Championship competition. While he has only run in three races this season, Shay has performed well in each, winning the National Catholic Championships and finishing as the 2001 Notre

**2001 MONDO
Men's Cross Country Poll
Nov. 12, 2001**

Rank	Team	Region	Points	Prev.	Region Finish
1.	Colorado (7)	MT	391	1	1
2.	Stanford (8)	W	389	2	1
3.	Arkansas (1)	SC	369	3	1
4.	NOTRE DAME	GL	346	5	1
5.	N.C. State	SE	333	6	1
6.	Portland	W	302	8	2
7.	Michigan	GL	282	11	2
8.	N. Arizona	M	281	9	2
9.	Providence	NE	271	10	1
10.	Villanova	MA	265	7	1
11.	Wisconsin	GL	250	4	4
12.	Michigan St.	GL	210	19	3
13.	BYU	M	200	12	3
14.	Oregon	W	199	18	3
15.	Arizona St.	W	168	14	4
16.	William&Mary	SE	153	24	2
17.	Colorado St.	M	135	23	4
18.	Santa Barbara	W	111	13	5
19.	Wake Forest	SE	88	17	3
20.	Air Force	M	87	15	5
21.	Alabama	MA	70	--	1
22.	Georgetown	MA	65	--	2
23.	Arizona	W	52	20	6
24.	Duke	SE	32	22	4
25.	Butler	GL	29	--	5

Also receiving votes: Minnesota 27, Utah 18, Bartmouth 16, E. Michigan 13, Oklahoma State 9, Washington 8, Indiana 3.

**2001 FinishLynx
Women's Cross Country Poll
Nov. 12, 2001**

Rank	Team	Region	Points	Prev.	Region Finish
1.	Stanford (8)	W	319	1	1
2.	Brigham Young (5)	MT	317	2	1
3.	Georgetown	MA	293	3	1
4.	NC State	SE	280	4	1
5.	Boston College	NE	268	5	1
6.	Colorado	MT	257	7	2
7.	Michigan State	GL	256	6	1
8.	North Carolina	SE	235	9	2
9.	Arizona	W	226	8	2
10.	Arizona State	W	200	11	3
11.	Providence	NE	191	10	2
12.	Arkansas	SC	187	12	1
13.	Northern Arizona	MT	156	13	3
14.	Virginia	SE	150	14	3
15.	NOTRE DAME	GL	118	19	2
16.	Colorado State	MT	100	16	4
17.	Villanova	MA	99	21	2
18.	Brown	NE	97	-	3
19.	Oklahoma State	MW	92	20	1
	Washington	W	92	24	4
21.	Marquette	GL	76	18	3
22.	Cornell	NE	64	22	4
23.	James Madison	SE	42	23	4
24.	Georgia Tech	S	36	-	1
25.	Yale	NE	29	15	5

Also receiving votes: UCLA 22, Minnesota 11, Toledo 8, Duke 2, Weber State 1, Wisconsin 1.

Dame Invitational runner up.

Sophomore Todd Mobley has greatly improved during the 2001 season, serving as one of the top Irish runners. Starting the season with an individual title at the Valparaiso Invitational and continuing to post quality finishes throughout the season, earning all-BIG EAST honors with an eighth place finish in the 2001 BIG EAST Championship. After finishing 99th in the 2000 NCAA Championships, Mobley is expected to greatly improve on that finish with the added strength and consistency he has shown this season.

While he placed a solid 42nd in the snowy conditions at the 2000 NCAA Championships, senior Marc Striowski will look to improve on that finish this year coming off an impressive season. Striowski is one of the more dependable harriers on the team, consistently running exactly where he needs to be in the field. He has a ninth place BIG EAST finish and a 12th place finish at the NCAA Pre-Nationals on his resume from the 2001 season.

Also returning to the team for the NCAA race will be senior All-American Pat Conway. Like Shay, Conway has only competed in the three races this season, yet he is expected to finally shake off the effects of a nasty chest cold that he has battled throughout the season and figures to be a major contributor for the Irish in Greensboro.

Yet another senior, Sean Zanderson, has been a consistent Irish competitor throughout his Notre Dame career and was a key contributor to last year's ninth place NCAA finish.

His highest finish this season came at the Central Collegiate Championships, where he placed third and helped the Irish win the team title.

Notre Dame (men) probable lineup for the 2001 NCAA Cross Country Championship:

- Luke Watson, Sr., Stillwater, Minn.
- Ryan Shay, Sr., Central Lake, Mich.
- Todd Mobley, So., West Bloomfield, Mich.
- Marc Striowski, Sr., Toronto, Ontario
- Sean Zanderson, Sr., Poway, Calif.
- Pat Conway, Sr., Springfield, Va.
- David Alber, So., Dayton, Ohio
- John Keane, Jr., Winona, Minn.

Irish men boast a wealth of experience at the national meet: The Irish lineup that enters the 2001 NCAA Cross Country Championship will be one of the more experienced teams in the field. Notre

Dame will feature five seniors among the seven that will compete in the race on Monday and all five have competed in the NCAA Championship race at least once in their careers.

A breakdown of the Irish experience in the NCAA cross country championships:

- Ryan Shay - 1997, 51st (team finished 12th); 1998, 229th (lone team competitor); 1999, 12th (All-American, helped team finish eighth - also affected by a cramp halfway through the race while running with the leaders and forced to drop back)
- Luke Watson - 1999, 58th; 2000, seventh (All-American, led team to a ninth-place finish)
- Pat Conway - 2000, 36th (All-American)
- Marc Striowski - 1999, 111th; 2000, 42nd
- Sean Zanderson - 2000, 165th
- Todd Mobley - 2000, 99th
- David Alber - 2000, 214th

Extend the tradition of excellence: As the Irish men are poised to post a top finish in the NCAAs this year, they are also looking to keep Notre Dame's tradition of excellence at the meet intact. Notre Dame has competed as a team in 38 NCAA championship meets and sent at least one competitor to 43 final races. Notre Dame produced a National Championship (see "Back to the Bend" note that follows in this packet) in 1957 and boasts two individual champions in Greg Rice (1938) and Oliver Hunter (1942).

More recently, Notre Dame has finished in the top 15 as a team nine out of the last 14 years at the NCAAs.

Analyzing the 2001 Notre Dame women's team: The 15th-ranked Irish women will return to NCAA national action after failing to make the race in 2000 for the first time in two years. Relying on a mix of youth and experience, the women will attempt to defend its move up the national rankings after an impressive performance at the Great Lakes Regional - where the team finished second and earned an automatic bid to the 2001 NCAA Championship.

Junior Jen Handley has had a stellar season in 2001, establishing herself as a team leader immediately by winning the first home meet of the season, the National Catholic Invitational. She has been one of the top Irish runners throughout the season and was the top team finisher with a seventh-place effort in the BIG

EAST Championships.

Handley is the lone Irish women's runner with NCAA championship meet experience. She ran in the 1999 NCAA meet in Bloomington, Ind., where she finished 134th in the field.

Sophomore Megan Johnson, who burst on the scene as a rookie last year but faded toward the end of the season, has put the end of the 2000 schedule behind her. Johnson has been as consistent as any harrier on the Irish roster this season and stepped in up a notch in the previous two races leading up to the National Championship. Johnson finished second on the team at the BIG EAST Championships and also was the second Irish runner across the line at the Great Lakes Regional meet. Capable of an outstanding performance each time she takes to the course, Johnson has the ability to earn All-America honors at the NCAA meet on Monday.

The difference between the 2001 Notre Dame women's cross country roster and the 2000 edition has been the addition of two talented and dependable freshman.

In just four meets this season, freshman Lauren King has been a major force in the team's competitive power, winning her first collegiate meet at the Notre Dame Invitational and taking second place overall at the Great Lakes Regional meet. King, in similar fashion to Johnson, has the ability to rip off an impressive finish at the NCAA meet this season after proving she can run with the best at the regional meet.

Classmate Christi Arnerich has given the Irish a calming influence in the middle of their lineup in each race. Arnerich has not finished out of the top five on the team in any race this season. In keeping with the team's improvement over the last month, Arnerich finished 25th at the BIG EAST Championship and 47th at the Great Lakes region.

Junior duo Jennifer Fibuch and Muffy Schmidt have added depth to this Irish squad, as both have competed in most of the scheduled meets in 2001. Fibuch and Muffy Schmidt have shown the ability to run well together, posting 11th and 12th place finishes, respectively, at the National Catholic Invitational.

After placing 28th in last year's Valparaiso Invitational, sophomore Julia Schmidt proved that she was a stronger runner this year by finishing 16th at the 2001 Valpo Invite, and hopes to main-

2001 Notre Dame Cross Country Results

	Valpo Invite	National Catholic	Central Collegiates	Notre Dame Invite	Pre-National Championships	BIG EAST Championships	Great Lakes Regional
Jennifer Fibuch		18:25 (11)		18:18 (24)	23:09 (121)	22:28 (40)	22:01.7 (33)
Jen Handley		17:31 (1)		17:28 (3)	22:25 (65)	20:45 (7)	21:44.4 (22)
Muffy Schmidt	23:05 (8)	18:32 (12)		18:40 (50)	23:20 (132)	22:43 (47)	23:48.3 (127)
Rachel Endress		19:31 (1*)	19:06 (21)	18:58 (18^)		22:49 (52)	
Megan Johnson		17:38 (3)		17:54 (10)	22:13 (52)	21:09 (14)	21:40.5 (20)
Julia Schmidt	23:32 (16)	18:44 (20)		18:45 (54)	23:53 (168)	22:56 (54)	22:40.2 (61)
Christi Arnerich	22:55 (4)	18:40 (19)		18:15 (20)	23:25 (139)	21:53 (25)	22:22.2 (47)
Lauren King				17:20 (1)	21:20 (15)	21:50 (24)	20:43.8 (2)
TEAM	1st of 7	1st of 26		1st of 18	11th of 36	1st of 14	1st of 31
Pat Conway	25:10 (8)			25:56 (70)		26:14 (38)	
Ryan Shay		24:03 (1)		24:25 (2)		25:05 (11)	
Marc Striowski	25:29 (3)	24:47 (5)		24:38 (5)	24:45 (12)	24:48 (9)	30:59.2 (10)
Luke Watson		24:03 (2)		24:06 (1)	24:17 (4)	24:22 (2)	30:37.3 (3)
Sean Zanderson			25:21 (3)	24:59 (17)	25:21 (51)	25:30 (19)	31:43.5 (24)
John Keane	27:17 (19)		25:18 (2)	25:37 (53)			32:38.5 (62)
David Alber		25:45 (1*)		25:25 (38)		25:32 (20)	31:50.3 (26)
Todd Mobley	25:17 (1)	24:15 (3)		24:25 (3)	24:46 (14)	24:47 (8)	30:58.2 (8)
TEAM	1st of 7	1st of 26	1st of 6	1st of 18	2nd of 36	1st of 14	1st of 31

* - indicates JV race

^ - indicates Gold Division race

tain the strength that she has shown all season in the NCAA meet.

Notre Dame (women) probable lineup for the 2001 NCAA Cross Country Championship:

- Christi Arnerich, Fr., Huntington Beach, Calif.
- Jennifer Fibuch, Jr., Leawood, Kan.
- Jen Handley, Jr., Barrie, Ontario
- Megan Johnson, So., Seattle, Wa.
- Lauren King, Fr., Toronto, Ontario
- Muffy Schmidt, Jr., Miles City, Mont.
- Julia Schmidt, So., Oakland, Mich.
- Rachel Endress, So., Wheaton, Ill.

"Back to the Bend": Although the Irish won their only cross country national championship in 1957, the ride home from East Lansing, Mich., was anything but a celebration.

In 26-degree weather, the Irish upset heavily favored Michigan State, but when coach Alex Wilson added up the team score of 121 points, he felt the score was extremely high to contend for the title.

As a result, he packed up the team bus for the ride back to South Bend. About halfway through the trip home the stunning news came over the bus radio, Notre Dame had defeated Michigan State by six points.

The 1957 National Championship team recently reunited on campus and was

honored during the Notre Dame-Michigan State football game on Sept. 22, 2001.

Piane earns regional coach of the year award: The United States Track and Field Coaches Association has named University of Notre Dame men's cross country coach Joe Piane as the 2001 MONDO Great Lakes Region Coach of the Year. He is now eligible to be considered for the NCAA Cross Country Division I Coach of the Year Award, which will be given after the championship meet on Nov. 19.

"This is a very special honor because it is a vote by my peers," Piane says.

"It is a real thrill when your colleagues think that you have done a good job."

Piane has helped the Irish to six meet titles in 2001, including the BIG EAST Championship and the Great Lakes Regional Championship in Terre Haute, Ind., on Nov. 10. The Irish have been ranked fifth in the MONDO Men's Cross Country Top 25 for most of the fall, marking the highest position the team has ever been ranked during the regular season.

The longest tenured coach at Notre Dame with 26 full seasons behind him, Piane has developed one of the most talented and deep cross country rosters in the nation this season. The Irish earned

team titles at the Valparaiso Invitational and Central Collegiate Championships with its "B" team, and defeated two ranked teams en route to the 2001 BIG EAST Championship. Piane and volunteer assistant coach Matt Althoff earned the BIG EAST Cross Country Staff of the Year award after the conference meet.

Most recently, Notre Dame took first place at the Great Lakes Regional Championship, finishing ahead of fourth-ranked Wisconsin and placing four runners among the top 25 finishers in the race.

Piane has now earned five regional cross country coach of the year awards including this season's honor and was named the NCAA Division I Cross Country Coach of the Year in 1987.

Piane's team will compete in the 2001 NCAA Championship in Greenville, SC, on Monday, Nov. 19. The Irish have finished in the top 15 at the final meet in eight out of the last nine years.