

NOTRE DAME 2006-07 PREVIEW



Senior Kurt

Benninger has earned four All-America citations (three track & field, one cross country) and won three BIG EAST Conference track titles heading into his final collegiate season in 2006-07.



Consistency Remains Formula for Irish Success

Notre Dame men's track & field team has significant talent, depth in virtually all events entering 2007 campaign

Flashes of brilliance bring fleeting glory, but consistency, especially in the world of track & field, brings home the hardware.

For the last decade in the BIG EAST Conference, the Notre Dame men's track & field team has been the model of consistency, earning 21 top three finishes at the 22 indoor and outdoor conference meets in which it has participated since joining the conference prior to the 1995-96 season. Last year was no exception, with the Irish capturing their sixth conference title in come-from-behind fashion at the 2006 outdoor meet, while finishing third indoors despite an injury-depleted roster.

The steady leadership of 32nd-year head coach **Joe Piane** has been a major reason for that sustained success. Piane, the longest actively tenured coach at Notre Dame and one of the four longest-tenured coaches in the 119-year history of Irish athletics, demands a high level of performance from his athletes. Losing has never been an option for the long time coach, and that is not likely to change this year.

"We have set a standard of performance with this program and the athletes who come to Notre Dame understand that our expectations will always be high," Piane says. "There are some exciting possibilities with this year's team in just about every event, and we're looking forward to seeing how things progress in 2007."

A lack of leadership should not be a problem with this year's Irish squad, starting with a stacked group of distance runners that includes the reigning BIG EAST 1,500-meter champion **Kurt Benninger**. The Irish senior All-American from Chepstow, Ontario, made history last year by becoming the first athlete in the long and storied history of the program to clock two sub-four-minute miles in his career, when he finished in 3:58.77 at the Notre Dame Invitational.

The BIG EAST 1,500-meter title was the third of Benninger's career (first outdoors), adding to the mile and 3,000-meter crowns he captured at the 2005 indoor meet. Benninger also finished second in the 5000 at the '06 BIG EAST outdoor meet, giving him seven career all-conference citations.

Thomas Chamney will anchor the 800-meter contingent this year following a breakout season in 2006. The senior from Tipperary, Ireland, received his first two All-America awards after finishing sixth at both the NCAA indoor and outdoor meets, wrapping up the year by clocking three of the 10 fastest 800-meter times in school history. As if that weren't enough, Chamney then broke the 37-year-old school record in the event during the summer of 2006 with a time of 1:46.82 at a meet in Belgium. What's more, Chamney and Benninger teamed up with **Ryan Postel** and **Adam Currie** to lead the Irish to All-American honors in the distance medley relay at the NCAA indoors.

"Kurt and Thomas look to be the leaders of the distance group this year," Piane says. "Both have extensive experience, not only at the college level, but on the international level as well. They have each made tremendous strides during their careers here at Notre Dame and I would expect they will want to do everything in their power to make their final year with the Irish as successful as possible."

The Irish distance crew lost three veterans in Vinny Ambrico, A.J. Andrassy, and Tim Moore, but have a stellar recruiting class that figures to contribute immediately. **Brock Hagerman**, the 2005 Indiana state cross country champion, was a three time all-state selection in the 3,200-meter run, and his personal-best mark of 9:12.07 figures to be very competitive this season. **Kenny Minogue** recorded a career-best 1:55.77 at 800 meters en route to

an undefeated senior season, and he will join **Jack Howard** and **Jim Notwell** to bring fresh legs to the Notre Dame middle distance unit.

"It's hard to really know how much the freshmen will contribute early in their careers," Piane said. "We have some talented new faces on the roster this year, and all of them are hungry to make their mark at the college level. It will be interesting to see who rises out of that group of first-year runners and is ready to help us from the get-go."

The sprinters return a wealth of experience, paced by fifth-year senior Postel, who earned all-conference honors in the 400-meter dash by finishing second at the outdoor meet last season. It was his eighth all-conference award, and his fifth at the outdoor meet, and it led to a spot in the NCAA Mid-east Regional 400-meter race. Postel currently holds the indoor school record at that distance (47.01), as well as four of the top-10 indoor times and five of the top-10 outdoor marks in school history. In addition, the Lexington, Ky., native has been a vital contributor on various Irish relay units, setting Notre Dame records with both the 4x400-meter quartet (3:09.87 in 2004) and last year's distance medley squad, which not only claimed All-America honors, but set a school record in the event earlier in the season (9:33.82).

"We're expecting to contribute more at the conference meet this year, and with a more seasoned group of individuals, led by Ryan, I would look for a much more competitive group," veteran Irish sprints coach **John Millar** says.

Millar also expects big things from junior **Austin Wechter**, a Shelby, Ohio, product who was a Mid-east Regional qualifier a year ago in the 400-meter hurdles after posting three of the top nine times in school history for that event. In fact, his mark of 52.32 at the BIG EAST Championship was the quickest by a Notre Dame runner in nearly a half-century and second fastest in the Irish record books.

Balazs Molnar, a native of Dunaujvaros, Hungary, brings a wealth of international experience in the 400-meter hurdles, having won the European Under-23 Championship in 2006, as well as posting a sizzling 51.38 during a fourth-place finish at the '05 European Junior Championship. Joining the Hungarian National Team member will be classmate **Jeff Farnell**. Originally slated to attend the U.S. Military Academy in West Point in the fall of 2005, Farnell instead will bring an impressive pedigree to Notre Dame that includes Illinois state titles in 100 and 200 meters in 2005. Both athletes should be in contention for points at both the conference and regional levels this season.

"Austin is another individual who I believe is ready for a big year," Millar noted. "He made significant improvement last year in the hurdles and with the experience he gained, along with the addition of Balazs to the group, the hurdlers should be a factor in the BIG EAST."

Senior **Jordan Powell** (short sprints) and junior **Bob Kueny** (long sprints) also will be key contributors for the Irish. Their experience combined with a talented group of freshmen could provide fireworks for the Irish in '07.

Meanwhile, the Irish jumpers will be looking to battle back from an injury-plagued '06 season. When healthy, the Notre Dame leapers have the talent and depth to provide important points at the BIG EAST meet.

"Last year, we were bitten by the lower leg injury bug," 19th-year Irish jumps coach **Scott Winsor** says. "It made it a physically and mentally tough year. The very talented freshman class battled through the pain and performed very well when they needed to. It was a year that definitely highlighted the meaning of the word 'team.'"

"Our goals for this season are pretty much as always – win the BIG EAST title and get individuals to the NCAAs," Winsor continues. "Both can be done with hard work and focus. The minimum goal for everyone on the team is to score at the BIG EAST meets. Others have goals of getting to the NCAAs, and for them, anything less would be a disappointment."

Experience is certainly the buzzword for Winsor's charges, with veterans returning in all events. Senior pole-vaulter **Dave Viken** will look to improve upon a sixth-place finish and personal-best leap of 4.80 meters (5-9) at the BIG EAST outdoor meet. He will lead the group that includes sophomore **Brian Mahon** and freshmen **Matt Schipper** (15-6 mark in prep competition) and **Jim Marchun**.

Sophomore high jumper **Blair Majcina** was a significant contributor during his rookie season at Notre Dame, most notably with his third-place finish at the BIG EAST indoor meet, and is looking for even greater improvements in 2007. He will team with senior **Christopher Jacques**, who leads the charge for the Irish in both the high jump and long jump. Jacques cleared a career-best 2.02 meters (6-7 1/2) in the high jump at the 2006 Notre Dame Opener, and also finished sixth with a personal-best leap of 7.22 meters (23-8 3/4) in the long jump at the '06 BIG EAST Outdoor Championship after winning the indoor version of the event in '05.

Freshman **Eric Quick** adds a new dimension to the Irish jumps crew, having fired off a personal-best triple jump mark of 14.88 meters (48-10), in addition to garnering prep All-America status and a spot in the 2003 USATF Junior Olympics. That career-long triple jump also placed him in the top 10 high school marks in the nation last year, and he figures to make an immediate splash in the jumping pit.

Perhaps no events saw more growth for Notre Dame in '06 than the throwers as the Irish contingent enjoyed a record-breaking conference performance. Current junior **Kyle Annen** finished second in the hammer throw at the BIG EAST on the strength of a school-record throw of 61.46 meters (201-8), improving his career-best toss during the season by more than 18 feet. Now a senior, **Garet Koxlien** also recorded a personal-best hammer throw of 57.36 meters (188-2) at last year's BIG EAST meet, posting a mark that was eighth-longest in school history on his way to a third-place finish in the conference. The 2-3 finish earned both athletes all-conference honors and wound up providing the clinching points in Notre Dame's 2006 outdoor team title.

With both Annen and Koxlien retuning to the lineup this season, the throws group figures to be a valuable asset for the Irish squad. Junior **Mike Schubert** will anchor the shot put for the Irish, while newcomers **Brandon Drenon** and **Lee Kunz** will look to make their mark in the discus.

"I'm expecting big things out of Kyle and Gareth this year," fifth-year Notre Dame throws coach **B.J. Linnenbrink** says. "Kyle needs to take the next step to the NCAA meet this year and I expect Gareth to continue to be our utility thrower in the BIG EAST and also qualify for the regional meet. Together, they will be the strength of the throwers this year. Overall, our goal this year is to help the team score points and win a conference championship and then try to advance a couple of people to the NCAAs."

The potential exists for more great things in the Notre Dame men's track & field program this season. In fact, the realization of those possibilities has been a recurring theme for the Irish throughout their history, and thus, it would come as no surprise to many observers if Notre Dame was a major player on both the conference and national stage in '07.

2006-07 Men's Track & Field Roster

TRACK & FIELD

Name	Ht.	Event	Class	Hometown	High School
Brett Adams	5-8	Distance	Jr.	Davenport, IA	Assumption
Jamal Afridi	5-10	Distance	Jr.	Perrysburg, OH	Maumee Valley
Kyle Annen	5-11	Throws	Jr.	Orofino, ID	Orofino
Robbie Barany	5-11	Distance	So.	Yakima, WA	Eisenhower
Kurt Benninger	5-11	Distance	Sr.	Chepstow, Ontario	Walkerton D.S.S.
Daniel Bradley	5-11	Distance	Jr.	South Bend, IN	St. Joseph's
Gonzalo Brenner	6-0	Multi	So.	Santiago, Chile	St. George's College
Billy Buzaid	6-1	Distance	So.	Verona, NJ	Seton Hall Prep
John Cavanaugh	5-10	Distance	Jr.	Granger, IN	St. Joseph's
Thomas Chamney	6-2	Distance	Sr.	Tipperary, Ireland	St. Columba's
Blake Choplin	5-11	Distance	Fr.	Kansas City, MO	Oak Park
Daniel Clark	5-10	Distance	So.	Jackson, MI	Lumen Christi
Tom Connelly	6-0	Sprints	So.	Malvern, PA	Conestoga
Dan Curran	5-11	Distance	Jr.	Naperville, IL	Naperville North
Adam Currie	5-11	Distance	Jr.	Verdun, Quebec	Richelieu Valley
John Daly, Jr.	6-1	Distance	So.	Louisville, KY	St. Xavier
Colin Diamond	5-11	Distance	So.	Wheaton, IL	St. Francis
Brandon Drenon	6-1	Throws	Fr.	Pearland, TX	Pearland
Cameron Eckert	5-11	Distance	Fr.	Markle, IN	Norwell
Terrence Egan	5-8	Distance	Fr.	Yorktown Heights, NY	Fordham Prep
Jeff Farnell	5-8	Sprints	Fr.	Oak Brook, IL	Montini Catholic
Jose Genao	6-0	Sprints	Jr.	Port Jefferson Station, NY	Comsewogue
Mitch Gillespie	6-3	Sprints	Fr.	Huntington Beach, CA	Marina
Brock Hagerman	5-10	Distance	Fr.	Markleville, IN	Pendleton Heights
Charlie Hilding	6-1	Sprints	So.	Oak Brook, IL	Montini Catholic
Jack Howard	6-2	Distance	Fr.	Libertyville, IL	Libertyville
Christopher Jacques	6-0	Jumps	Sr.	Old Brookville, NY	Chaminade
Matt Johnson	6-2	Distance	Fr.	Newark, NY	Newark
Greg Kiley	5-6	Distance	Fr.	Saratoga Springs, NY	Saratoga Springs
Garet Koxlien	6-1	Throws	Sr.	Galesville, WI	Galesville-Ettrick-Trempealeau
Bob Kueny	6-3	Sprints	Jr.	Lebanon, MO	Lebanon
Lee Kunz	5-11	Throws	Fr.	Wheat Ridge, CO	Columbine
Dan Kuzma	5-9	Distance	So.	McKees Rocks, PA	Central Catholic
Michael Lewis	6-1	Sprints	Fr.	Houston, TX	St. Pius X
Brian Mahon	5-9	Pole Vault	So.	Granger, IN	Clay
Blair Majcina	6-1	Jumps	So.	Mokena, IL	Lincoln-Way East
Kevin McFadden	6-1	Distance	So.	New Tripoli, PA	Allentown Central Catholic
Jeff Mensch	6-2	Throws	So.	Del Mar, CA	Torrey Pines
Jim Merchun	5-10	Jumps	Fr.	Carmel, IN	Cathedral
James Millar	6-3	Distance	Jr.	Granger, IN	St. Joseph's
Kenny Minogue	6-2	Distance	Fr.	Louisville, KY	Trinity
Balazs Molnar	5-10	Sprints	Fr.	Dunaujvaros, Hungary	Szechenyi Istvan
Mark Moore	6-5	Distance	So.	Novi, MI	Novi
Tray Morgan	6-2	Pole Vault	So.	Daphne, AL	McGill-Toolen Catholic
Patrick Needham	6-5	Sprints	So.	Chicago, IL	Loyola Academy
Jim Notwell	6-0	Distance	Fr.	Upper Arlington, OH	Upper Arlington
Andy O'Connor	6-0	Distance	Sr.	Lake Mary, FL	Homestead (IN)
Nathan Payne	5-10	Sprints	Jr.	South Bend, IN	St. Joseph's
Matt Plaska	6-0	Distance	Sr.	Zeeland, MI	Zeeland
Mike Popejoy	5-11	Distance	Jr.	Wheaton, IL	Wheaton Warrenville South
Ryan Postel	6-3	Sprints	Sr.	Lexington, KY	Catholic
Jordan Powell	6-3	Sprints	Sr.	Springfield, IL	Calvary Academy
Todd Ptacek	6-1	Distance	Sr.	Benton Harbor, MI	Lake Michigan Catholic
Eric Quick	5-10	Jumps	Fr.	Bakersfield, CA	Liberty
Chris Rodriguez	5-10	Distance	So.	Kelso, WA	Kelso
Matt Schipper	5-11	Jumps	Fr.	Leo, IN	Bishop Dwenger
Mike Schubert	6-5	Throws	Jr.	Naperville, IL	Benet Academy
Patrick Smyth	5-9	Distance	So.	Salt Lake City, UT	Judge Memorial
Brier Steenberge	5-9	Distance	Fr.	Granbury, TX	Granbury
Matt Tieuli	5-8	Distance	Fr.	Upton, MA	St. John's
Ryan Truesdale	5-10	Distance	So.	Tinley Park, IL	Andrew
Kevin Veselik	6-2	Distance	So.	Clarendon Hills, IL	Benet Academy
Dave Viken	5-9	Pole Vault	Sr.	Arlington Heights, IL	Rolling Meadows
Jake Walker	5-7	Distance	Fr.	Ellwood City, PA	Lincoln
Tommy Walton	6-0	Distance	Fr.	Fort Collins, CO	Mountain View
Jake Watson	6-0	Distance	Jr.	Stillwater, MN	Stillwater Area
Michael Webber	5-9	Sprints	Jr.	Salt Lake City, UT	Judge Memorial
Austin Wechter	5-10	Sprints	Jr.	Shelby, OH	Shelby

Head Coach: Joe Piane (Loras '69 – 33rd season at Notre Dame; 32nd season as head coach)

Assistant Coach (Sprints/Hurdles): John Millar (Western Ontario '78)

Assistant Coach (Jumps): Scott Winsor (Loras '87)

Assistant Coach (Throws): B.J. Linnenbrink (Florida State '02)



Deep Talent Pool Has Irish Thinking Big For 2007

Notre Dame set to roll out one of its most balanced and experienced women's track & field squads ever

Last year, the Notre Dame women's track & field team earned its first BIG EAST Conference title since 2002, claiming the indoor crown with a balanced effort, receiving contributions in nearly every event. The 2007 edition of the Irish is poised to repeat that success and then some, thanks to a lineup that is well stocked with both experienced veterans and hungry young performers.

Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the Irish sprint group. Leading the sprinters yet again is the senior duo of **Maryann Erigha** and **Okechi Ogbuokiri**, and both athletes have the potential to make noise on the national level. Erigha is the defending BIG EAST indoor 200-meter champion, having added that crown to a resume that already includes a BIG EAST 100-meter title and the 60-meter school record. Entering her final season with a school-record 10 all-BIG EAST certificates, she will look to secure the one thing still missing from her mantle — NCAA All-America honors. Meanwhile, Ogbuokiri was the 2005 BIG EAST indoor 400-meter medalist and will look to get back atop the podium this year, while pushing through for national accolades.

"Both individuals have the ability to continue on with their track careers after college," Notre Dame sprints coach **John Millar** says. "This year will be a big step towards that goal."

Providing the Irish with vital depth in the sprints will be juniors **Crysta Swayzer**, **Brienne Davis** and **Domenique Manning**, along with incoming freshman **Janna Schultz**. In particular, Swayzer should provide a lift after missing most of the 2005-06 campaign with an injury. Along with Davis and Manning, the trio have experience at the BIG EAST level in both individual events and sprint relays. The continued improvement of these athletes will be critical to Notre Dame's goal of title runs at both conference meets, not to mention the development of the Irish sprint relays, both of which could be national-caliber when all is said and done. Schultz, an eight-time Wisconsin state champion in the 200 and 400 meters, is another name to watch as she begins her career under the Golden Dome.

The distances have traditionally been a strength for the Irish at the BIG EAST meets, but coach **Tim Connelly** will have a challenging task to replace the depth lost after the departure of several top athletes. Still, with the return of fifth-year senior **Molly Huddle**, there is no question who will be leading the way for Notre Dame. A nine-time All-American in cross country and track & field, Huddle returns for her final track season after posting the nation's top college outdoor 5,000- and 10,000-meter times last year, earning All-America honors in both cross country and outdoor track, and collecting Most Outstanding Track Performer honors at the BIG EAST Outdoor Championship. After a runner-up finish in the outdoor 5,000 meters (the best ever for an Irish female in any NCAA Championship event), Huddle has her first career NCAA individual title in her sights.

"Molly came up just short at the NCAA last year," Connelly says. "This year, she will be critical in helping



Junior Brienne Davis (left) and senior Maryann Erigha (right) will help lead a Notre Dame women's sprint group that should play a major role in Irish fortunes this season.

lead the team. (Four-time All-American) Stephanie Madia was our team's unquestioned leader for three years, so replacing her not only on the track, but from a leadership standpoint, will be a huge challenge and a key to our success."

Two-time cross country All-American **Sunni Olding** returns for her junior season on the Notre Dame track, where she has battled injury and struggled to match her cross country success. Doing so will create considerable BIG EAST team scoring opportunities and the chance for multiple Irish representatives at the NCAA Championship meets. "Sunni has had much success in cross country to this point, but she hasn't had the same success on the track as of yet," Connelly comments. "She will obviously need to do that in order to reach her potential as a runner."

Senior **Amy Kohlmeier** and junior **Jacqueline Carter** are poised to do big things after breakthrough track seasons a year ago. Kohlmeier ran the outdoor 5,000 meters in 16:17.16 at the Mount SAC Relays, while Carter broke the 13-year-old indoor 800-meter school record by running 2:08.75 at the Alex Wilson Invitational. With continued improvement, both are potential NCAA qualifiers, while senior **Brianne Schmidt** (the school-record holder indoors at 1,000 meters) and freshman **Lindsey Ferguson** (the national high school record holder in the 2,000-meter steeplechase) are two other names to keep an eye on.

The Notre Dame throws group will have plenty of fresh faces after the departure of Meghan Horn, a staple at the BIG EAST Championship the past few years, and 2006 NCAA Midwest Regional qualifier Laura Huarte (who shattered the school record in the javelin). Sophomore **Anna Weber** looks to ride the momentum from her

freshman year and her summer of competition, which included an All-America hammer throw performance (47.60m, 156-2) at the USA Junior Nationals, into her second season with the Irish.

"Anna is getting better every day in the hammer and shot put," Notre Dame throws coach **B.J. Linnenbrink** notes. "I believe she can be an all-BIG EAST selection and an NCAA regional qualifier this year."

Adding depth to the throws group will be three freshmen, led by Keizer, Ore., native **Jaclyn Espinoza**. A seven-time state champion, Espinoza concluded her prep career with a sixth-place national ranking in the discus during the 2006 season. Fellow freshmen **Julia Avila** and **Elise Knutzen** also will contribute in the shot put and javelin, respectively.

In the jumps, veteran coach **Scott Winsor** is counting on senior **Cassie Gullickson** and sophomores **Lauren Biscardi**, **Mary Saxer** and **Kate Mattoon** to pick up the slack left by departed All-Americans Emily Loomis and Stacey Cowan. Gullickson and Biscardi will lead the way in the high jump, looking to build on their very successful '06 seasons. Gullickson is also the team's top returning triple jumper, earning a fifth-place finish at the BIG EAST outdoor meet last season.

"Cassie had a very good year in 2006," Winsor observes. "She made a huge improvement. I know she would tell you she's looking for big things to happen this year."

Saxer and Mattoon provide a formidable 1-2 punch for the Irish in the pole vault, having combined for a number of invitational titles during the '06 campaign. Saxer left a significant imprint on the school record books in her rookie season, logging eight of the top 20 jumps (indoor/outdoor) in school history, including the indoor school record (4.05m, 13-3 1/2) and all-BIG EAST recognition indoors. She now appears poised to make the leap to NCAA success, while Mattoon will look to continue her ascent in the BIG EAST ranks. Saxer will also comprise one half of Notre Dame's long jump duo, with freshman **Jaime Minor** stepping into the breach in 2007. Minor won two Arizona state triple jump titles as a prep and owns personal bests of 11.935m (39-2) in the triple jump and 5.615m (18-5) in the long jump.

"Our goals in the jumps are pretty much as always," Winsor says. "We want to win BIG EAST and get individuals to NAAs and both can be done with hard work and focus. The minimum goal for everyone on the team is to score at the BIG EAST meet, while others have the goal of getting to NAAs. Anything less would be a disappointment."

In reality, Winsor's sentiments are echoed by all of the Irish coaches. With no particular aspect of the team poised to dominate, Notre Dame's BIG EAST title aspirations will be determined by strong, timely performances across the board. The last time the Irish were defending conference champions, they had to wait four years for a repeat performance. However, with the blend of talent and leadership on its roster, it appears Notre Dame may not have to wait very long before hoisting the hardware once again.

2006-07 Women's Track & Field Roster

Name	Ht.	Event	Class	Hometown	High School
Rebecca Antas	5-6	Distance	Jr.	Wheaton, IL	North
Julia Avila	5-6	Throws	Fr.	Bakersfield, CA	South
Becca Bauman	5-8	Distance	So.	Grand Rapids, MI	Catholic Central
Stephanie Best	5-3	Throws	Sr.	Dallas, TX	Bishop Lynch
Lauren Biscardi	5-10	Jumps	So.	Wading River, NY	Shoreham Wading River
Jacqueline Carter	5-5	Distance	Jr.	Boise, ID	Bishop Kelly
Brienne Davis	5-6	Sprints	Jr.	Grand Prairie, TX	South Grand Prairie
Mary Debevec	5-8	Distance	Jr.	Media, PA	Cardinal O'Hara
Katie DeRusso	5-6	Distance	Sr.	Fairport, NY	Fairport
Kathleen Elverman	5-8	Distance	So.	Hartland, WI	Catholic Memorial
Maryann Erigha	5-7	Sprints	Sr.	Stone Mountain, GA	Chamblee
Jaclyn Espinoza	5-9	Throws	Fr.	Keizer, OR	Regis
Lindsey Ferguson	5-6	Distance	Fr.	Greenfield Center, NY	Saratoga Springs
Cassie Gullickson	5-7	Jumps	Sr.	Palm Beach Gardens, FL	Brentwood (TN)
Dornn Harris	5-11	Distance	So.	Newburgh, NY	Newburgh Free Academy
Alyssa Hasan	5-9	Multi	So.	Williamsville, NY	Williamsville South
Lindsey Hough	5-4	Sprints	Fr.	Harlan, IA	Harlan Community
Molly Huddle	5-4	Distance	Sr.	Elmira, NY	Notre Dame
Katie Jannazo	5-8	Distance	Jr.	Ft. Walton Beach, FL	Choctawhatchee
Amy Kohlmeier	5-5	Distance	Sr.	Sarnia, Ontario	St. Patrick's
Elise Knutzen	5-8	Throws	Fr.	Seattle, WA	Nathan Hale
Erin Locke	5-9	Distance	Jr.	WaKeeney, KS	Trego Community
RikkiLynn London	5-9	Jumps	Fr.	Lakeside, AZ	Blue Ridge
Domenique Manning	5-3	Hurdles	Jr.	Riverside, CA	John W. North
Kate Mattoon	5-4	Pole Vault	So.	San Diego, CA	Rancho Bernardo
Ann Mazur	5-5	Distance	Sr.	Pittsburgh, PA	Seton-LaSalle
Meagan McGinley	5-5	Distance	Jr.	Doylestown, PA	Central Bucks West
Kahki Mealey	5-6	Distance	So.	Meadowbrook, PA	Gwynedd Mercy Academy
Sarah Merriday	5-2	Distance	Fr.	Yorba Linda, CA	Esperanza
Jaime Minor	5-10	Jumps	Fr.	Tucson, AZ	Canyon del Oro
Elizabeth Myers	5-8	Hurdles	Fr.	Kalispell, MT	Flathead
Okechi Ogbuokiri	5-10	Sprints	Sr.	Willingboro, NJ	Willingboro
Sunni Olding	5-9	Distance	Jr.	Minster, OH	Minster
Julie Opet	5-5	Distance	Jr.	Wayne, PA	Radnor
Liz Philipp	5-8	Distance	Jr.	Kingwood, TX	Kingwood
Michelle Ripple	5-2	Jumps	Fr.	Littleton, CO	Arapahoe
Heidi Rocha	5-2	Distance	So.	Palmdale, CA	Paraclete
Analisa Sandoval	5-4	Distance	Fr.	Los Alamos, NM	Los Alamos
Mary Saxer	5-7	Jumps	So.	Lancaster, NY	Central
Brianne Schmidt	5-7	Distance	Sr.	Miles City, MT	Custer County District
Morgan Schulz	5-5	Distance	So.	Centennial, CO	Smoky Hill
Joanna Schultz	6-0	Sprints	Fr.	Holmen, WI	Holmen
Georgia Steenberge	5-7	Distance	Jr.	Granbury, TX	Granbury
Molly Sullivan	5-8	Distance	Fr.	Elmhurst, IL	York
Crysta Swayzer	5-6	Sprints	Jr.	Houston, TX	Westbury Senior
Beth Tacl	5-6	Distance	Fr.	St. Cloud, MN	Cathedral
Dominique Taylor	5-3	Distance	Fr.	Gary, IN	West Side
Emily Wauford	5-8	Distance	So.	Midlothian, VA	Maggie Walker Governor's School
Anna Weber	6-0	Throws	So.	Indianapolis, IN	Roncalli
Samantha Williams	5-5	Sprints	Fr.	Los Altos, CA	St. Francis
Nicole Yergler	5-8	Sprints	So.	Coto de Caza, CA	Santa Margarita

Head Coach: Joe Piane (Loras '69 – 33rd season at Notre Dame; 32nd season as head coach)

Assistant Coach (Distance): Tim Connelly (Notre Dame '83)

Assistant Coach (Sprints/Hurdles): John Millar (Western Ontario '78)

Assistant Coach (Jumps): Scott Winsor (Loras '87)

Assistant Coach (Throws): B.J. Linnenbrink (Florida State '02)



Opportunities Knock For Irish In 2006

Blend of wily veterans and young talent has men's cross country team eager for upcoming season

The 2005 cross country season may well be considered a dream year for the Notre Dame men's cross country team. The Irish romped through both the regular and postseason, winning the BIG EAST Conference title for the second consecutive year and placing third at the NCAA Championship, the best finish by an Irish men's team since 1990. Five runners took home all-BIG EAST honors while three earned All-America citations, highlighted by **Kurt Benninger's** eighth-place effort at the national meet.

In order for this year's Irish incarnation to achieve a similar happy ending — a return to the NCAA finals and a strong placement at the meet — it will have to overcome the graduation of five significant contributors from that outstanding squad of a year ago. Indeed, All-Americans Tim Moore and Kaleb Van Ort, along with top-five harrier Sean O'Donnell and varsity stalwarts Vinny Ambrico and A.J. Andrassy leave a sizeable void to fill. Replacing so much talent will present a considerable challenge to veteran head coach **Joe Piane**, but the chance for a new crop of runners to step up into expanded roles on the team leaves room for much optimism.

"Last year was the result of a group of young men who were determined to bring their best to the table on a daily basis," Piane says. "From the day they started training after the end of the 2004 season, they weren't going to settle for anything less than their very best. We also were fortunate to peak at the right time of the year, and as it turned out, we made the most of our opportunity at the NCAA Championship.

"Now those chances, and the charge of carrying on the tradition of this program, are going to be handed off to the next group of young men," he continues. "Thankfully, we have a couple of veterans to ease that transition, but ultimately, the direction of this season will be determined by how our underclassmen — our freshmen and sophomores — deal with the burden of running at the highest level of collegiate cross country."

Notre Dame's 2006 transformation will be cushioned by the presence of Benninger. A senior All-American from Chepstow, Ontario and the reigning BIG EAST runner-up, Benninger also is the owner of two sub-four minute miles and two school records on the track. He looks to be in the hunt for the NCAA individual title in his final campaign with the Irish. Now one of



Notre Dame placed third at the 2005 NCAA Championship, the highest finish for the Irish since 1990 and matching their best-ever performance under veteran head coach Joe Piane (far right). Three Irish runners also earned All-America honors at the NCAA meet — Kurt Benninger (far left), Kaleb Van Ort (second from left) and Tim Moore (third from left).

the team's two captains, Benninger will be counted on to help guide his younger teammates, many of whom have yet to be tested in championship meets at longer distances.

"We have a pretty good idea of what we're going to get out of Kurt on a daily basis," Piane says. "He's a competitor and is obviously going to be the leader of this team, both on and off the course. When Kurt is at his best, he's a handful and it wouldn't surprise me in the least to see him at the front of the pack when the NCAA Championship rolls around in November."

Assisting Benninger with leadership duties will be fellow senior **Todd Ptacek**. A competitor at last fall's NCAA Championship and a sub-nine minute steeplechaser, Ptacek is a formidable runner who raced four times a year ago. The 26th-place finisher at the BIG EAST Championship in '05, Ptacek will be counted on to raise his performance to another level and lead by example.

Also back in the fold from Notre Dame's NCAA third-place team is sophomore **Patrick Smyth**. Posting one of the most impressive freshman seasons by an Irish harrier in recent memory, Smyth provided the missing piece for a Notre Dame team that desperately needed a consistent fifth runner. After taking home the National Catholic Championship individual title and all-BIG EAST honors with a ninth-place league finish, Smyth ended up in 99th place among the nation's best runners at the NCAA Championship.

"Todd and Patrick both have the kind of experience we'll need to be successful this year," Piane says. "If Todd stays healthy, he's as good as anyone out there and could really lock down a spot in our lineup. As for Patrick, his

freshman season was especially pleasing to me since you never know how a first-year runner will react to racing against the nation's elite. There's room for growth from both guys, and the potential for each of them to make us a real factor by the end of the year."

Among the potential candidates to fill top-seven openings are juniors **Brett Adams, Dan Curran** and **Jake Watson**. Adams took fourth at the National Catholic Championship a year ago and looks to build on his middle distance success on the track. Curran has battled injuries throughout his career with the Irish, but has had some success. At the '05 Notre Dame Invitational, he served as the team's fifth runner and placed 37th overall, helping the team take second in the meet. Watson is an emerging miler and steeplechaser who posted a very strong 18th-place finish at the 2005 BIG EAST Championship. Throw in fellow juniors **James Millar** and **Daniel Bradley**, and these upperclassmen will look to seize the opportunities for which they have waited so patiently.

Several sophomores are also in position to fight for varsity spots this season. Robbie Barany only appeared once during the '05 season after his standout high school career, but following a strong showing in offseason training, he could be poised for a breakout campaign. Similarly, the foursome of **Kevin McFadden, Mark Moore, Chris Rodriguez** and **Kevin Veselik** may produce one or more big-time contributors if it continues to adjust to the division one elite level.

"There are a lot of guys out there who, at times, have shown they can be strong contributors for us," Piane notes. "We're looking for someone, or even a group of guys, to emerge



Junior Jake Watson showed solid improvement for the Irish last season, posting an 18th-place finish at the BIG EAST Championship. With the loss of five key contributors from last year's squad, Watson is expected to have a more prominent role in the Notre Dame lineup in 2006.

from this pack and demonstrate that they can be a consistent threat for us on a week-in, week-out basis."

Notre Dame could receive a lift from its newest members – particularly freshmen **Brock Hagerman** and **Jake Walker**. Hagerman, an in-state recruit from Markleville, Ind. (Pendleton Heights HS), won the 2005 Indiana state cross country title in a 5K time of 15:13.2, finished third at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional and established a mile time of 4:12.24 during his outstanding prep career. Walker hails from Ellwood City, Pa. (Lincoln HS), and has personal bests of 8:21.94 over 3,000 meters and 9:04.31 over 3,200 meters. These two runners, along with **Terrence Egan** and **Matt Tieuli**, could make significant impacts in their debut seasons with the Irish.

"As was the case with Patrick (Smyth) last year, dealing with freshmen can be a bit of an unknown commodity," Piane cautions. "It's quite possible these guys will go out in their first couple of meets and be so excited that they don't run with the kind of pace and strategy that you need to be successful at the college level. I like what our freshmen bring to the table, but until they get a year under their belt, including some time in our training program, it's hard to say what their contributions will

2006 Men's Cross Country Roster

Name	Ht.	Class	Hometown	High School
Brett Adams	5-8	Jr.	Davenport, IA	Assumption
Jamal Afridi	5-10	Jr.	Perrysburg, OH	Maumee Valley
Robbie Barany	5-11	So.	Yakima, WA	Eisenhower
Kurt Benninger	5-11	Sr.	Chepstow, Ontario	Walkerton D.S.S.
Daniel Bradley	5-11	Jr.	South Bend, IN	St. Joseph's
Billy Buzaid	6-1	So.	Verona, NJ	Seton Hall Prep
John Cavanaugh	5-10	Jr.	Granger, IN	St. Joseph's
Thomas Chamney	6-2	Sr.	Tipperary, Ireland	St. Columba's
Blake Choplin	5-11	Fr.	Kansas City, MO	Oak Park
Daniel Clark	5-10	So.	Jackson, MI	Lumen Christi
Dan Curran	5-11	Jr.	Naperville, IL	North
Adam Currie	5-11	Jr.	Verdun, Quebec	Richelieu Valley
John Daly, Jr.	6-1	So.	Louisville, KY	St. Xavier
Colin Diamond	5-11	So.	Wheaton, IL	St. Francis
Cameron Eckert	5-11	Fr.	Markle, IN	Norwell
Terrence Egan	5-8	Fr.	Yorktown Heights, NY	Fordham Prep
Brock Hagerman	5-10	Fr.	Markleville, IN	Pendleton Heights
Jack Howard	6-2	Fr.	Libertyville, IL	Libertyville
Matt Johnson	6-2	Fr.	Newark, NY	Newark
Greg Kiley	5-6	Fr.	Saratoga Springs, NY	Saratoga Springs
Dan Kuzma	5-7	So.	McKees Rocks, PA	Central Catholic
Kevin McFadden	6-1	So.	New Tripoli, PA	Allentown Central Catholic
James Millar	6-3	Jr.	Granger, IN	St. Joseph's
Kenny Minogue	6-2	Fr.	Louisville, KY	Trinity
Mark Moore	6-5	So.	Novi, MI	Novi
Tim Moore	6-1	Sr.	Novi, MI	Novi
Jim Notwell	6-0	Fr.	Upper Arlington, OH	Upper Arlington
Andy O'Connor	6-0	Sr.	Fort Wayne, IN	Homestead
Matt Plaska	6-0	Sr.	Zeeland, MI	Zeeland
Mike Popejoy	5-11	Jr.	Wheaton, IL	Wjeaton Warrenville South
Todd Ptacek	6-1	Sr.	Benton Harbor, MI	Lake Michigan Catholic
Chris Rodriguez	5-10	So.	Kelso, WA	Kelso
Patrick Smyth	5-9	So.	Salt Lake City, UT	Judge Memorial
Matt Tieuli	5-8	Fr.	Upton, MA	St. John's
Ryan Truesdale	5-10	So.	Tinley Park, IL	Andrew
Kevin Veselik	6-2	So.	Clarendon Hills, IL	Benet Academy
Jake Walker	5-7	Fr.	Ellwood City, PA	Lincoln
Tommy Walton	6-0	Fr.	Fort Collins, CO	Mountain View
Jake Watson	6-0	Jr.	Stillwater, MN	Stillwater Area

Head Coach: Joe Piane (Loras '69 – 33rd season at Notre Dame; 32nd season as head coach)

be."

The Irish begin their season at Valparaiso's Crusader Invitational on Sept. 8, followed by their two traditional home meets on the nine-hole Notre Dame Golf Course. After taking a close second a year ago, Notre Dame will look to return to its winning ways at the 27th annual National Catholic Championship on Sept. 15. The 51st Notre Dame Invitational takes place Sept. 29 and will likely mark the debut of Notre Dame's full varsity lineup. One of the longest-running meets in the nation, the Notre Dame Invitational will bring in its usual quality field for a full slate of 8,000-meter races.

After an appearance at the Pre-National Meet in Terre Haute, Ind., on Oct. 14, the Irish will travel to Boston's Franklin Park on Oct. 27 to defend their league title at the BIG EAST Championship. The postseason slate continues on Nov. 11 at the NCAA Great Lakes

Regional in Bowling Green, Ohio, with a training stop at the IC4A Championship in famed Van Cortlandt Park in Bronx, N.Y., on Nov. 18 before concluding (pending qualification) at the NCAA Championship on Nov. 20 back in Terre Haute.

Notre Dame will have its work cut out to get back to the NCAA finals, but one should never underestimate the Irish. The Notre Dame men's cross country program has a proud tradition, from its 46 All-American selections and its 12 NCAA podium (top-four) finishes to a head coach entering his 32nd season who has guided the Irish to no less than 15 NCAA Championship appearances in the past 19 years alone. History indicates that those who doubt Notre Dame's resolve will do so at their peril, for the pieces remain to bring back another championship trophy to the Golden Dome in '06.

Changing of the Guard at Notre Dame

Irish women's cross country squad will rely on new faces to reach old heights



Junior **Sunni Olding** has an opportunity to join an elite club at Notre Dame and become just the third harrier to earn three All-America honors in her career. Olding finished 34th at last year's NCAA Championship, capping off a season that also saw her win the National Catholic Championship and claim her second all-BIG EAST honor.

As is often the case in college athletics, the 2006 edition of the Notre Dame women's cross country team will have a markedly different look. Gone are five of the runners who helped the team place seventh at last fall's NCAA Championship, including three-time All-American Molly Huddle and two-time All-American Stephanie Madia, who will go down as two of the most outstanding runners in the program's history. Gone is the nucleus of a team that has earned three of the last four BIG EAST Conference titles and has recorded four consecutive top-10 finishes at the NCAA meet. Given the significant transition, one might expect 19th-year head coach **Tim Connelly** to resign himself to a reconstruction project. Think again.

"After all the success that we have had the past few years, it would be natural — and probably sane — to sit back and call this a 'rebuilding year,' be satisfied with whatever happens, and look forward to next year when we have more experience and depth," he says. "But I think that would be taking the easy route, and we owe it to our past runners who built this program not to settle for mediocrity."

In 2005, the Irish posted top-three finishes in each of their meets up until the NCAA finals, taking home the BIG EAST title with a dominating effort that saw four of the top seven runners in the field wearing Notre Dame colors. The Irish then posted a runner-up finish at the NCAA Great Lakes Regional before their seventh-place effort at nationals. Along with Huddle and Madia, Notre Dame lost a pair of solid contributors in graduated seniors Elizabeth Webster and Jean Marinangeli, both of whom lent veteran experience and depth to the Notre Dame roster throughout their careers.

However, it is not as if this year's version of the Irish has nothing left to work with. The squad's most-heralded returner and likely top runner is two-time All-America junior **Sunni Olding**. A native of Minster, Ohio, Olding took top individual honors at the '05 National Catholic Championship and earned her second all-BIG EAST nod in as many years before placing 34th at the NCAA Championship. Her continued growth and contribution to the team will be crucial to Notre Dame's postseason performance.

"Sunni has had much success in cross country so far," Connelly said. "She is looking to not only continue that success, but take it to another level this season."

Beyond Olding, the only other Irish athlete with considerable cross country experience is senior **Katie DeRusso**. The Fairport, N.Y., product had sporadic success during the 2005-06 cross country and track seasons, her highlights including a 16th-place finish at the BIG EAST cross country meet, a point-scoring performance in the BIG EAST indoor mile and a regional qualification in the 3,000-meter steeplechase. She could emerge as a key figure on the Irish squad if she is able to put together a more consistent fourth-year campaign.

In many ways, Notre Dame's success will depend on the abilities of several veterans to step up to a higher level of competition. Senior **Amy Kohlmeier** ran 16:17 over 5,000 meters during the outdoor track season and



Senior **Ann Mazur** was Notre Dame's top finisher at last season's Crusader Invitational. Following three years in a supporting role, Mazur is poised for a breakthrough campaign in her final season with the Irish.

appears poised for a breakout cross country season. A recovery from a hip injury will keep her sidelined until later in the year, but she will give the team a huge boost as it heads into its postseason slate. Junior **Jacqueline Carter** was the team's eighth runner at the BIG EAST meet during her freshman year and had a breakthrough on the track last year.

"Jackie scored in both the indoor and outdoor BIG EAST Championships, qualified for the NCAA Midwest Regional meet, and lowered her personal best from 2:13 to 2:08 in the 800 meters," Connelly states. "She had a great track season and really has high hopes to carry that over to cross country as well."

"**Ann Mazur** and **Julie Opet** are two upperclassmen who have steadily improved during their time here, and they appear to be ready to make a big contribution," Connelly

adds. **“Brianna Schmidt** has been a BIG EAST scorer on the track, and we’re looking to see if she can carry that over to cross country. We also have several sophomores, including **Becca Bauman, Heidi Rocha** and **Morgan Schulz**, whom we are hoping can continue to step up to another level.”

As usual, the Irish welcome a strong recruiting class into their ranks this season. In particular, three runners seem poised to make a mark in their initial college campaigns. **Lindsey Ferguson**, a newcomer from Greenfield Center, N.Y. (Saratoga Springs HS), holds the national high school record in the 2,000-meter steeplechase and is a three-time top-30 finisher at the Foot Locker National Cross Country Championship, placing 22nd as a senior in 2005. **Beth Tacl** of St. Cloud, Minn. (Cathedral HS), finished in the top 20 at Minnesota’s Class A state championship all four years of high school, including a second-place finish as a sophomore. And, Elmhurst, Ill., native **Molly Sullivan** (York HS) was one of her state’s top middle distance threats during a standout prep career.

“Lindsey has been one of the top cross country runners and steeplechasers in the nation the past several years, and she is capable of making a big impact,” Connelly notes. “Beth has been one of the top runners in Minnesota the past several years and can be a contributor this fall. And Molly has had success in both cross country and middle distance events, so she will be counted on to contribute this year on the track, if not in cross country as well. We have several other freshmen who appear to have potential but are probably a year or two away from being ready to contribute at this level.”

The uncertainty surrounding the 2006 Notre Dame squad could induce pessimism or optimism, depending on one’s state of mind. Connelly clearly prefers the latter, once again setting his sights on a BIG EAST Championship and a strong finish at the NCAA Championship, but he admits that several things must fall into place to assure such success.

“For that to happen, we will need all of our runners to strive to achieve their full potential and not be satisfied with anything less,” Connelly says. “Our freshmen and inexperienced returners will need to really step up to this level of competition, and, to be honest, some people will need to over-achieve a bit.”

Time will tell if the Irish women can meet the lofty annual standards set by past squads. However, considering the program’s sterling history, it should not be surprising if the team ascends through the national ranks once again.

2006 Women’s Cross Country Roster

Name	Ht.	Class	Hometown	High School
Becca Bauman	5-8	So.	Grand Rapids, MI	Catholic Central
Jacqueline Carter	5-5	Jr.	Boise, ID	Bishop Kelly
Mary Debevec	5-8	Jr.	Media, PA	Cardinal O’Hara
Katie DeRusso	5-6	Sr.	Fairport, NY	Fairport
Kathleen Elverman	5-8	So.	Hartland, WI	Catholic Memorial
Lindsey Ferguson	5-6	Fr.	Greenfield Center, NY	Saratoga Springs
Dornn Harris	5-11	So.	Newburgh, NY	Newburgh Free Academy
Amy Kohlmeier	5-5	Sr.	Sarnia, Ontario	St. Patrick’s
Erin Locke	5-9	Jr.	WaKeeney, KS	Trego Community
Ann Mazur	5-5	Sr.	Pittsburgh, PA	Seton-LaSalle
Meagan McGinley	5-5	Jr.	Doylestown, PA	Central Bucks West
Kahki Mealey	5-6	So.	Meadowbrook, PA	Gwynedd Mercy Academy
Sarah Merriday	5-2	Fr.	Yorba Linda, CA	Esperanza
Sunni Olding	5-9	Jr.	Minster, OH	Minster
Julie Opet	5-5	Jr.	Wayne, PA	Radnor
Liz Philipp	5-8	Jr.	Kingwood, TX	Kingwood
Heidi Rocha	5-2	So.	Palmdale, CA	Paraclete
Analisa Sandoval	5-4	Fr.	Los Alamos, NM	Los Alamos
Brianna Schmidt	5-7	Sr.	Miles City, MT	Custer County District
Morgan Schulz	5-5	So.	Centennial, CO	Smoky Hill
Georgia Steenberge	5-7	Jr.	Granbury, TX	Granbury
Molly Sullivan	5-8	Fr.	Elmhurst, IL	York
Beth Tacl	5-6	Fr.	St. Cloud, MN	Cathedral
Dominique Taylor	5-3	Fr.	Gary, IN	West Side
Emily Wauford	5-8	So.	Midlothian, VA	Maggie Walker Governor’s School

Head Coach: Tim Connelly (Notre Dame ’83 — 19th season at Notre Dame)



Sophomore Heidi Rocha (left) and junior Liz Philipp (right) are just two of the many Notre Dame runners who have shown promise during summer workouts.

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