

Irish Cross Country Pursues BIG EAST Glory This Weekend

2001 Schedule

SEPTEMBER

7 Sat. Valparaiso Invitational M-1st
Valparaiso, Ind. W-2nd
Top Finishers:
M - Todd Mobley (first)
W - Christi Arnerich (fourth)

21 Fri. National Catholic M-1st
Notre Dame, Ind. W-2nd
Top Finishers:
M - Ryan Shay (first)
W - Jen Handley (first)

29 Sat. Central Collegiate M-1st
Kalamazoo, MI W-2nd
Top Finishers:
M - John Keane (second)
W - Hilary Burn (18th)

OCTOBER

5 Fri. Notre Dame Invitational M-1st
Notre Dame, Ind. W-1st
Top Finishers:
M - Luke Watson (first)
W - Lauren King (first)

13 Sat. Pre-National Meet M-4th
Greenville, SC W-11th
Top Finishers:
M - Luke Watson (fourth)
W - Lauren King (15th)

26 Fri. BIG EAST Champ. W - 10:30 a.m.
Van Cortlandt Park, NY M - 11:10 a.m.

NOVEMBER

10 Sat. NCAA Great Lakes Region TBA
Terre Haute, Ind.

19 Mon. NCAA Championships TBA
Greenville, SC

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

With solid finishes at the Pre-National meet behind them, Irish focus on conference championship: This is the time of the year that the Notre Dame men's and women's cross country teams have been working toward throughout the 2001 season. The championship season has arrived, with the 2001 BIG EAST Championships this weekend at Van Cortlandt Park in Bronx, NY.

The BIG EAST meet will be one of the top conference events in the nation this year, featuring numerous ranked teams in both the men's and women's field. On the men's side, Notre Dame (#5), Providence (#8) and Villanova (#14) are currently in the MONDO men's cross country rankings. Georgetown also has appeared in the rankings this year. The women's race will feature #3 Georgetown, #5 Boston College, #8 Providence, #16 Villanova and the Irish (who have been ranked as high as 24th this season).

After the BIG EAST race this weekend, the Irish will get one week to rest up for the Great Lakes Regional Championship in Terre Haute, Ind., on Nov. 10. Both teams are in position to earn a bid for the NCAA Championship meet (Nov. 19, Greenville, SC), but solid efforts at the BIG EAST and Great Lakes Regional meet will be crucial to earn a spot in the NCAA field.

Notre Dame BIG EAST cross country history: In one of the top cross country conferences in the nation, the Notre Dame cross country program has been able to leave its distinctive mark in just six years of competition. The men's team has finished no lower than fourth in six races and have claimed two team titles ('99 and '97). The women's team peaked at fourth in 1997 and own four top-five finishes in the championship meet.

The men's team boasts 13 top-10 finishes in the cross country championship, including Ryan Shay's individual title in 1999. Current Irish senior Luke Watson has finished in the top-10 all three previous years of competition in the event (third, 1999, seventh in 1998 and 2000).

The last time the BIG EAST Championship was run at Van Cortlandt Park, the men earned the team title with 43 points (Georgetown finished second with 57 points). Shay ran the third-fastest time recorded at the Van Cortlandt course (24:22) in the race, while Watson's seventh-place effort (24:36) is ranked as the ninth-best time in Van Cortlandt history. The BIG EAST cross country meet has been run at Van Cortlandt eight times since 1988.

The men's team finished fourth last season, led by Watson in seventh place. Marc Striowski took eighth place, followed by Pat Conway (21st), Todd Mobley (26th), Sean Zanderson (38th), David Mertens (48th) and Tom Lennon (49th). Striowski, Conway, Mobley, Watson and Zanderson all will return to run for the Irish in 2001.

The women's team took sixth place in 2000, led by Chrissy Kuenster (18th). Jennifer Handley (31st), Rachel Endress (32nd), Megan Johnson (39th), Jennifer Fibuch (40th), Kari Eaton (41st) and Hilary Burn (44th) rounded out the Irish field. Endress, Fibuch, Handley and Johnson will be in the race for Notre Dame on Friday.

Analyzing the Irish rosters in 2001: The Notre Dame men's cross country team is enjoying one of its most successful seasons in school history. The #5 spot the Irish have earned in the MONDO poll is the highest the team has ever been ranked during the regular season. Returning all five top runners from the 2000 team that ended up ninth at the NCAA Championship, Notre Dame has won four meet titles this season and finished fourth in the combined results of the Pre-National meet in Greenville, SC, two weeks ago (Oct. 13).

The fourth-place finish is impressive, but upon further review the men's team ended the race without two of its top runners. All-Americans Ryan Shay and Pat Conway were forced to drop out of the race due to illness and Notre Dame's five, six,

seven and eight runners were suddenly forced to race to the front of the field. Marc Striowski and Todd Mobley were in their accustomed positions at 12th and 14th, but Sean Zanderson stepped up to take 51st while Mario Bird came through with a 91st-place effort as Notre Dame finished second in the gold division race.

It was a great showing for the men's team, which eventually was computed to finish fourth in the combined field of the top two races at the Pre-National meet. Irish fans, coaches and runners alike cannot help but think, though, of what is in store for the NCAA Championship race with the addition of two All-Americans in the final team results. Shay has finished first and second in the two races he completed this season (National Catholic and Notre Dame Invitational) while Conway took eighth at the National Catholic and a tough 70th-place effort at the Notre Dame Invitational while suffering from the same symptoms that made him drop out of the Pre-National race.

Both Shay and Conway have recovered enough to be put on the travel roster for the BIG EAST Championship this weekend.

The women's team received a boost last month with the addition of freshman Lauren King to the roster. King, who finished 26th at the World Junior Cross Country Championships, did not run with the team until the Notre Dame Invitational. She made quite an impression in her rookie race, though, taking first and leading the Irish to the team title.

In just her second collegiate race, King finished 15th at the Pre-National meet on Oct. 13. Combined with the steady performance of junior Jen Handley and sophomore Megan Johnson, Notre Dame's top three runners can compete with anyone in the field at the BIG EAST Championship this Friday.

Handley was among the top 20 runners in her race at the Pre-National meet before developing a cramp that forced her to drop back in the field. Jennifer Fibuch was cruising along until she suffered a wasp sting halfway through the course that affected her performance.

King is not the only freshman to have an impact on the roster this season. Christi Arnerich has three top-20 finishes on her resume (fourth at Valparaiso

Invitational, 19th at National Catholic Invitational and 20th at Notre Dame Invitational).

In the combined results of the two women's races at the Pre-National meet, Notre Dame was placed 21st, although the Irish finished 11th in their race.

Notre Dame's lineup for Friday's race:

Men's team

(2000 finish in parenthesis):

David Alber (--, 26:18)

Mario Bird (--)

Pat Conway (21st, 24:23)

Brian Kerwin (--)

Todd Mobley (26th, 24:38)

Ryan Shay (--)

Marc Striowski (8th, 23:50)

Luke Watson (7th, 23:44)

Sean Zanderson (38th, 25:12)

Women's team:

Christi Arnerich (--)

Rachel Endress (32nd, 18:18)

Jennifer Fibuch (40th, 18:22)

Jen Handley (31st, 18:15)

Megan Johnson (39th, 18:22)

Lauren King (--)

Megan Peterson (--)

Melissa Schmidt (--, 19:03)

Julia Schmidt (--)

Notre Dame BIG EAST Championship

Team Finishes:

Men

1995	third	83 points
1996	fourth	81 points
1997	first	50 points
1998	third	91 points
1999	first	43 points
2000	fourth	100 points

Women

1995	seventh	175 points
1996	fifth	123 points
1997	fourth	126 points
1998	fifth	144 points
1999	fifth	98 points
2000	sixth	160 points

2001 MONDO

Men's Cross Country Poll

Oct. 16, 2001

Rank	Team	Region	Points	Prev.
1.	Colorado (14)	MT	398	1
2.	Stanford	W	378	2
3.	Arkansas (2)	SC	369	3
4.	Wisconsin	GL	341	4
5.	NOTRE DAME	GL	331	5
6.	NC State	SE	328	9
7.	Portland	W	293	6
8.	Providence	NE	282	7
9.	N. Arizona	MT	251	8
	Air Force	MT	251	--
11.	UC Santa Barbara	W	221	--
12.	Michigan	GL	214	12
13.	Arizona	W	202	24
14.	Villanova	MA	193	9
15.	E. Michigan	GL	171	19
16.	Brigham Young	MT	160	17
17.	Duke	SE	141	13
18.	Michigan State	GL	122	16
19.	Arizona State	W	115	15
20.	Oregon	W	114	18
21.	Wake Forest	SE	89	14
22.	Colorado State	MT	84	11
23.	Indiana	GL	39	--
24.	Washington	W	27	--
25.	Utah State	MT	25	23

Also receiving votes: Butler 14, Washington State 14, William & Mary 7, Dartmouth 5, Alabama 4, Florida State 4, Georgetown 4, Nebraska 2, Penn State 2, Weber State 2, Iona 1, Miami (Ohio) 1, Oklahoma State 1.

Italics indicates BIG EAST Conference team.

2001 FinishLynx

Women's Cross Country Poll

Oct. 16, 2001

Rank	Team	Region	Points	Prev.
1.	Stanford (1)	W	324	2
2.	Brigham Young	MT	311	4
3.	Georgetown	MA	299	11
4.	NC State	SE	283	3
5.	Boston College	NE	260	6
6.	Michigan State	GL	256	13
7.	Arizona State	W	242	4
8.	Providence	NE	228	7
9.	North Carolina	SE	224	8
10.	Colorado (12)	MT	220	1
11.	Arizona	W	191	9
12.	Arkansas	SC	190	10
13.	Washington	W	167	16
14.	Wisconsin	GL	147	14
15.	Virginia	SE	143	15
16.	Villanova	MA	127	--
17.	N. Arizona	MT	125	21
18.	Colorado State	MT	105	12
19.	James Madison	NE	86	23
20.	Duke	SE	74	--
21.	Yale	NE	70	22
22.	UCLA	W	54	18
23.	Cornell	NE	42	20
24.	Marquette	GL	33	19
25.	Boston Univ.	NE	19	17

Also receiving votes: Georgia Tech 3, NOTRE DAME 1, Texas A&M 1.

Italics indicates BIG EAST Conference team.