

Notre Dame Men's and Women's Cross Country Look to Add to 2000 Valparaiso Invitational Success

2000 SCHEDULE			
SEPTEMBER			
9	Saturday	Valparaiso Invitational Valparaiso, Ind.	M-1st W-1st
22	Friday	National Catholic Notre Dame, Ind.	4:15/5 p.m.
OCTOBER			
6	Friday	Notre Dame Invitational Notre Dame, Ind.	4:15/5 p.m.
14	Saturday	Pre-National Meet Ames, Iowa	TBA
27	Friday	BIG EAST Championships Boston, Mass.	TBA
NOVEMBER			
11	Saturday	NCAA District IV Ypsilanti, Mich.	TBA
20	Monday	NCAA Championships Ames, Iowa	TBA
All home meets run at Burke Memorial Golf Course			
All times local to site			

2000 MONDO Men's Cross Country Preseason Poll

Aug. 29, 2000

Rank	Team	Region	Points	Last Yr.
1.	Arkansas	SC	392	1
2.	San Jose State	W	379	4
3.	Colorado	MT	367	7
4.	Iona College	NE	302	9
5.	Arizona	W	301	10
6.	Wisconsin	GL	294	2
7.	Georgetown	MA	285	11
8.	N.C. State	SE	265	3
9.	Oregon	W	252	6
10.	Michigan	GL	221	5
11.	Arizona State	W	214	14
12.	Minnesota	MW	199	15
13.	William & Mary	SE	186	13
14.	Providence	NE	174	19
15.	Northern Arizona	MT	165	12
16.	Southern Utah	MT	163	21
17.	Oklahoma St.	MW	156	16
18.	Michigan St.	GL	149	--
19.	Alabama	S	112	23
20.	NOTRE DAME	GL	109	8
21.	South Florida	S	89	25
22.	Villanova	MA	78	17
23.	Weber State	MT	64	18
24.	Penn State	MA	57	--
25.	Missouri	MW	46	28

The Notre Dame men's and women's cross country teams opened up their 2000 season with convincing team and individual victories at the Valparaiso Invitational Friday, September 8th.

Valparaiso Invitational Review:

The women's team more than halved their 1999 Valparaiso Invitational score (2nd place, 40 points) to take first place with only 17 points, 28 points ahead of second-place Western Michigan (45 points). Equally impressive were the team's individual finishes.

Sophomore **Jennifer Handley (Barrie, Ont.)** took the title for the second straight year, with a time of 17:58, shaving two seconds off her '99 time in the process. Junior **Hillary Burn (Ottawa, Ont.)**, who did not run last year due to a bout with mononucleosis, finished second in 18:16. **Megan Johnson (Seattle, Wa.)**, one of the Irish's competitive freshmen, snagged the third spot with a time of 18:18.

But it was several sophomores and juniors who showed the greatest improvement. Senior **Chrissy Kuenster (Wheaton, Ill.)** took fifth with a time of 18:28, an improvement from last year's 18:48 and 11th-place finish. Junior **Anne McGrath (Belmont, Mich.)** did not run in the 1999 Valpo Invite, but claimed the sixth spot with a time of 18:37. Sophomore **Muffy Schmidt (Miles City, Mont.)** improved from a 12th-place, 18:56 in '99 to this year's ninth-place 18:50, and classmate **Jennifer Fibuch (Leawood, Kan.)** brought herself up from 23rd to 10th, and knocked almost a minute off of her time, going from 19:49 to 18:51.

The women were not the only Irish harriers to make the move into top-10 finishes. Two juniors led the way to the Notre Dame men's victory as **Luke Watson (Stillwater, Minn.)**, who did not compete in last year's Valpo Invite, captured first with a time of 25:08, and **Marc Striowski (Toronto, Ont.)**, last year's winner, took second in 25:24. **Sean Zanderson (Poway, Calif.)** climbed up from last year's 14th-place finish to earn seventh in 2000, and **Patrick Conway (Springfield, Virg.)** slipped from sixth to eighth. Sophomore **John Keane (Winona, Minn.)**, who did not run in the 1999 edition of the Valpo Invite, took ninth in 26:09, and freshman **David Alber (Dayton, Ohio)** earned tenth in 26:18. Also notable was sophomore **Kevin Brown's (San Jose, Calif.)** dramatic leap from forty-first to eleventh, as he turned in a time of 26:30.

National Catholic Invitational Preview:

The Irish, however, will not be content with resting on the accomplishments of last weekend. Roughly 30 teams, both men's and women's, will run on September 22, in the National Catholic Invitational, run at Notre Dame's Burke Memorial Golf Course. The first race will start at 3:30 with the junior varsity competitions.

Last year's Irish squads both earned first place

team finishes at the National Catholic, with scores of 17 for the women, and 20 for the men. Each team also took the top three individual places, with finishes from Ryan Shay, Watson, and Ryan Maxwell for the men, and JoAnna Deeter, Alison Klemmer, and Handley for the women. But Maxwell, Deeter, and Klemmer have graduated, leaving behind them a group of talented young harriers eager to prove themselves the equal of their predecessors. The upcoming National Catholic could prove to be just the chance for which they've been waiting.

In the last ten years, the men's team title has left Notre Dame just twice to BIG EAST rivals -- in 1991 to Providence and in 1994 to Boston College.

In the 20 previous runnings of the National Catholic, Notre Dame owns 12 of the 20 team titles, and eight of the 20 individual titles.

With two of the Irish's top three National Catholic finishers back, the Notre Dame men aim to add to their titles. Sometimes overlooked due to running alongside Irish star Shay, junior Watson is one of the Notre Dame leaders in his own right. Watson, who took second in last year's National Catholic meet with a time of 25:04, was a consistent solid finisher for the Irish, bringing home three top-10 finishes, as well as a 22nd finish at Pre-Nationals and a 12th-place at the District IV Championships. This year looks to be another year of excellence for Watson, a high school All-American in track (4x800 meter relay and 2,000 meter steeplechase), and cross country honorable mention All-American, as well as the 1999 US junior cross country champion, and school recorder holder in the steeplechase.

The women's squad, who own seven out of 16 possible team titles and six of the 16 individual titles, look to make up for the losses of senior team leaders Deeter and Klemmer to graduation. Like their male counterparts, 1994 was the last time the Irish did not take first in the both the team and individual competitions.

From 1996 to 1999, the Notre Dame women won first in both the individual and team categories, behind the strong running of Deeter. Now the Irish women must find a new face to lead them onward to victory, and sophomore Handley could be just the leader. Handley is a former junior national team member for Canada, who maintained a national ranking all four of her high school years north of the border. As a freshman, she took third in 18:01 behind Deeter and Klemmer at last year's National Catholic. After placing first at last weekend's Valparaiso Invitational, the 2000 season could prove to be a break-out season for the talented harrier.

Both squads are aware of the level of competition, including men's head coach Joe Piane's alma mater, Loras College, but with team and individual titles within reach, the Irish look to make a strong showing.

