

Golden Gopher Swimming & Diving

For Immediate Release

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BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIP PREVIEW

The Big Ten Conference is known for competitiveness in all arenas. From the field to the gym to the pool Big Ten athletes compete at the highest level in college athletics. The 2001 Big Ten Men's Swimming and Diving Championships will be no different. Five of the 10 teams are ranked in the College Swimming Coaches Association Top 25 Poll. 29 individuals are ranked in the top 25 in individual events.

The meet will be held at the University of Minnesota Aquatic Center, February 22-24. The Aquatic Center, which hosted the 2000 NCAA Championships last March, is a prime venue for watching collegiate swimming. And the Minnesota Golden Gophers will be sure to give local fans a good show in their home pool.

As usual the field will be close, but three teams generally vie for the Big Ten Title. This year's regular season has brought the same three teams to the forefront of the conference. **Michigan**, **Penn State** and the hometown boys, **Minnesota**, will likely be the frontrunners to battle to take the championships trophy home to their respective schools.

Michigan and Minnesota are the only two teams to come into the meet with unblemished Big Ten records. Michigan is 4-0, while Minnesota is 5-0. Penn State's only loss came at the hands of Michigan in the middle of January. The three teams are the top three ranked Big Ten teams in the College Swimming Coaches Association Top 25 Poll. Michigan leads the way at No. 9, Penn State is ranked No. 13 and Minnesota comes in at No. 17.

The defending Big Ten Champion Wolverines have had a very successful 2001 campaign. They hold a 5-4 overall record, with their only losses coming to teams ranked in the top 10. Several Wolverine swimmers have had outstanding performances this season. Defending 500 and 1650 freestyle champion and 2000 Olympic bronze medalist, **Chris Thompson**, currently holds the fourth

best time in the country in those events. **Scott Werner**, the 2000 200 individual medley champion, holds three national top 25 times in the 100 and 200 breaststrokes and the 200 IM. 2000 Big Ten Coach of the Year **Jon Urbanchek** also returns 400 IM champion **Tim Siciliano** and 100 breast champ **Jeff Hopwood**. Freshman diver **Jason Coebn** has had a standout rookie season for the Wolverines with 11 first-place performances and three-second place performances in 15 competitions. He has already achieved NCAA zone meet qualifying marks on both the 1-meter and the 3-meter.

The 1999 Big Ten Champion Penn State Nittany Lions are looking to improve on last year's third place finish. **Brian Hostetler**, **John Retrum** and **Joe Peresan** have all scored big points for the Lions in past Big Ten Championships and are returning this season to do the same. Hostetler has been a force in the 50 freestyle the past two years and grabbed a third place finish last season. Retrum was a member of the 800 free relay that earned All-America honors last year and is expected to score well in the 200 freestyle and backstroke. Peresan took second in the 400 IM at last year's championships and will battle with Michigan's Siciliano for top honors this season. **Martin Schierhorn** holds the 18th best time in the country in the 500 freestyle and will be a contender in that event. **Eugene Botes** also has a top 25 time in the 100 fly and will be able to grab some points for the Lions.

The home team returns much of the team that finished second at last year's Big Ten Championships including 2000 Swimmer of the Year, **Alex Massura**, 2000 Freshman of the Year, **Jeff Hackler**, and 2000 Diver of the Year, **Dan Croaston**. Massura, a 2000 Olympian, already holds the 10th best time in the country in the 100 back after only competing in four meets. Minnesota has two other swimmers, **Todd Smolinski** and **Ben**

Bartell ranked in the 100 back and has a good chance to sweep the top three places. **Hackler** is ranked in both the 100 and 200 breast. He along with Michigan's **Werner** and **Hopwood**, Purdue's **Tamas Bessenyei** and Minnesota newcomer, **Martin Gustavson**, should make the 200 breaststroke one of the most exciting events of the championship. **Croaston** has won all but one of the diving competitions he entered this season. He was named Big Ten Diver of the Week three times this season, has easily qualified for NCAA Zone championships and will look to sweep the diving titles at the championships. Minnesota also returns 2000 50 freestyle champion and valuable relay member **Ricardo Dornelas**. 2000 Olympian **Keam Ang** holds the nation's sixth best time in the 200 butterfly. Also looking to contribute big points for the Golden Gophers are **Justin Mortimer** in the distance events, **Chad Krastins** in both the 100 and 200 fly and **Ryan Plummer** in the 400 IM.

The **Purdue Boilermakers** enter the meet with a 4-3 conference dual record and are ranked 21st in the country. **Matt Martin** will be able to pull in some points in both the 500 and 1650 freestyle. He is ranked 23rd in the 500 and seventh in the 1650. **Tamas Bessenyei** is ranked in the top 10 in both breaststroke events and should challenge for the top spots.

No. 22 **Wisconsin** enters the championships with a 2-2 Big Ten record. The highlight of the Badgers' season came at the Texas Invitational in early December. Ranked 20th, at the time, Wisconsin finished fourth ahead of three teams ranked ahead of them, Michigan, Arizona State and Southern Methodist. Wisconsin returns **Brendan Coyne** who placed second in the 100 fly. He currently holds the third-best time in the nation in that event and 23rd in the 200 fly. **Adam Byars** has top 25 times in both backstroke events and **Lance Jones** has the fourth best time in the 100 breaststroke.

Ohio State finished the regular season with a 3-1 Big Ten record and an 11-1 overall record. Their only loss was to Penn State in the final dual meet of the season. Co-captains **Brian Malich** and **Daniel Kelley** along with **Nick Rees**, **Travis Carver**, **Vladi Dusil** and **Ivan Petrovic** lead the Buckeyes. Malich, the two-time defending Big Ten 100 Freestyle Champion, currently holds the eighth-best time in the country. Kelley, a three-time Big Ten finalist, is the team's top breaststroker. Rees was a member of the 2000 Bahamas Olympic team and is the top Buckeye in the butterfly events.

Northwestern is 3-3 in Big Ten dual meets. **Aaron McCracken** holds the 22nd-best time in the country in the 100 breast and will be able to score points for the

Wildcats in that event. Minnesota native **Tony Swanson** of Coon Rapids is one of Northwestern's top all-around swimmers, holding the team's fastest times in the backstroke events and the 200 IM. Divers **Adam Barker** and **Elliot Massuda** have each qualified for NCAA Zone Competitions on the 3-meter.

The final three teams, **Iowa**, **Michigan State** and **Indiana**, each have not won a Big Ten Dual meet this season. Iowa's top performer is **Ales Abersek**. Abersek is the defending champion in both butterfly events. He currently holds the 22nd-best time in the nation in the 200 fly. Michigan State's top performer is **John Munley**. He will be a contender for top honors in the 200 freestyle and currently holds the 21st best time in the country. Indiana's forte is diving. **Tom Davidson** won the 1-meter last year and took second in the 3-meter. He and Minnesota's **Croaston** will battle for the top honors again this season. **Eric Robson**, the 2000 Big Ten Platform Diving Champion, also returns this year.

It is easy to see that the 2001 Big Ten Swimming and Diving Championships will be very exciting. Every race will be close and the Aquatic Center will be full of energy. Everyone will be ready to give their best performances of the season, and best of all, the Minnesota Golden Gophers will be peaked to defend their home pool.

ATHLETES OF LOCAL INTEREST:

Jordan Watland, Junior, Sprint Free, Michigan (Excelsior, Minn., Minnetonka High School)

Mark Atwood, Sophomore, Sprint Free, Minnesota (Alexandria, Minn., Jefferson H.S.)

Dan Croaston, Senior, Diving, Minnesota (Champlain, Minn., Champlain Park High School)

Erik Esbjornsson, Freshman, Freestyle, Minnesota (Alexandria, Minn., Jefferson H.S.)

Chad Kratsins, Junior, Fly, Minnesota (Apple Valley, Minn., Apple Valley High School)

Matt Taylor, Sophomore, Free/Fly, Minnesota (Shorewood, Minn., Minnetonka H.S.)

Adam White, Sophomore, Diving, Minnesota (Hopkins, Minn., Hopkins High School)

Tony Swanson, Freshman, Free/IM, Northwestern (Coon Rapids, Minn., Coon Rapids H.S.)

Christopher Anderson, Freshman, Free, Wisconsin (Princeton, Minn., Princeton High School)

2001 Schedule of Events

Thursday,

February 22

Preliminaries, Noon

500 Freestyle
200 Individual Medley
50 Freestyle

Preliminaries, 1:30 p.m.

1-Meter Diving

Finals, 7:00 p.m.

200 Freestyle Relay
500 Freestyle
200 Individual Medley
50 Freestyle
1-Meter Diving
400 Medley Relay

Friday,

February 23

Preliminaries, Noon

400 Individual Medley
100 Butterfly
200 Freestyle
100 Breaststroke
100 Backstroke

Preliminaries, 1:30 p.m.

3-Meter Diving

Finals, 7:00 p.m.

200 Medley Relay
400 Individual Medley
100 Butterfly
200 Freestyle
100 Breaststroke
100 Backstroke
3-Meter Diving
800 Freestyle Relay

Saturday,

February 24

Preliminaries, Noon

200 Backstroke
100 Freestyle
200 Breaststroke
200 Butterfly

Preliminaries, 1:30 p.m.

Platform Diving

Finals, 4:30 p.m.

1650 Freestyle (all but
last heat of timed finals)

Finals, 7:00 p.m.

1650 Freestyle (final
heat)
200 Backstroke
100 Freestyle
200 Breaststroke
200 Butterfly
Platform Diving
400 Freestyle Relay

2000 Final Standings

1. Michigan 682
2. Minnesota 601
3. Penn State 514
4. Indiana 376
5. Wisconsin 366
6. Ohio State 315
7. Purdue 240
8. Iowa 216
9. Northwestern 211
10. Michigan State 119

2000 Awards & Honors

Swimmer of the Year

Alex Massura, Minnesota

Diver of the Year

Dan Croaston, Minnesota

Freshman of the Year

Jeff Hackler, Minnesota

Coach of the Year

Jon Urbanchek, Michigan

Diving Coach of the Year

Jeff Huber, Indiana