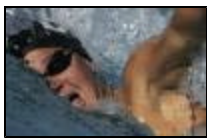

Women's NCAA Div. I Preview (3/8/2007)

By Emily Melina//CollegeSwimming.com

The Women's NCAA Division I National Championships will be held March 8-10 in Minneapolis. Click [here](#) for complete results.

Last season, Auburn and Georgia treated fans to one of the most thrilling finishes in NCAA history. Auburn edged the Bulldogs by a scant three points, but their battle could pale in comparison to what's on tap at this year's women's NCAA Division I Championships. Five teams could find themselves in the running on Saturday night, making last year's meet seem almost pedestrian in comparison. Here's a glimpse of those five.



Auburn University (Last Year: 1st, 518½ Points; Returning individual All-Americans: 8; CSCAA Rank: 3) - Auburn looks to repeat last year's success, not just for themselves, but for head coach Dave Marsh as well. This spring, Marsh will leave his alma mater for the Mecklenburg Aquatic Club, but not before vying for his fifth women's title. This year, Marsh brings one of his strongest squads ever.

Leading the Tigers are returning All-Americans **Hayley Peirsol**, Adrienne Binder, Chelsea Haser, Emily Kukors, Julie Stupp, Tawnie Bethune, Kara Denby and Rachel Goh. Peirsol is the defending champion in the 500 free, and Goh comes in as one of the top returning finishers in the backstroke. Freshman Ava Ohlgren caps a deep and experienced roster that could send Marsh out on top.



University of Arizona (Last Year: 3rd, 415 Points; Returning individual All-Americans: 3; CSCAA Rank: 4th) At the beginning of the season, the Arizona women looked like they might have been the runaway favorites going into this NCAA's, but their roster took a bit of a hit second semester. They still have plenty of talent, though, starting with **Whitney Myers**. After a breakout year in 2006, Myers looks to defend her IM titles and perhaps add a victory in the 200 fly. Lacey Nymeyer returns as one of the nation's top sprinters and

a key contributor to the Cats' relays. Returning Honorable Mention All-Americans Jessica Embick, Jacquelyn Craft and Anna Turner all lend valuable experience to a large group of fresh faces. They'll need it to help newcomers Lara Jackson, Brandy Collins, Joni Zimmerman, Hailey Degolia and Jenny Forster make an impact at night.



University of Georgia (Last Year: 2nd, 515½ Points; Returning individual All-Americans: 4; CSCAA Rank: 9th) – Last year, the Bulldogs came within a whisper of the NCAA title before finishing second, just three points behind Auburn. The graduation of fully a third of their points, including butterfly wiz Mary DeScenza and

breastroker Sara Poewe, leaves a big void to be filled. The good news is that the Bulldog women couldn't ask for a better leader than **Kara Lynn Joyce**. The sprinter is capable of putting 60 points on the board all by herself. Elizabeth Hill, Jessica Cole and Anna Miller will be expected to carry a bigger load, particularly on relays. Backstroke Aleksandra Putra can improve on last year's runner-up performance in the 200 backstroke, while newcomers Kelly McNichols and Anne-Marie Botek will be called upon.



University of California (Last Year: 4th, 291 Points; Returning individual All-Americans: 4; CSCAA Rank 3rd) - In a year of big-

name transfers, Cal's pick-up of Dana Vollmer could prove the biggest. With the addition of Vollmer to the roster, California boasts one of the most talented teams in the field. They have former world record-holder and defending NCAA champion Jessica Hardy. NCAA champion Helen Silver is gone, but sister Emily Silver returns as one of the nation's top sprinters. Senior freestyler/butterflyer Erin Reilly continues to get better and will be angling for a national title. The only question mark for Cal is whether they possess the depth to compete for the top spot. If Rachel Ridgeway, Annie Babicz, Lauren Rogers and newcomer Lauren Boyle make their mark in the big final, the Bears will take a big step towards erasing that question mark.

Stanford University (Last Year: 5th, 209 points; Returning individual All-Americans: 1; CSCAA Rank: 1st) - This year, the young Cardinal squad completed an undefeated dual meet season. Backstroker Brooke Bishop leads the team and ranks among one of the top sprinters in the nation, while Olympian Caroline Bruce returns following a year plagued by injury. Seniors Desiree Stahley and Morgan Hentzen will provide some much-needed experience for this youthful squad. Freshmen Julia Smit (Fly/IM) and Elaine Breeden (Back/IM) are national championship contenders right now, and look for upperclassmen Desiree Stahley, Andrea Axtell and Morgan Hentzen to lend the experience that can help the Cardinal contend for its first title since 1998.

Others: With a meet as wide open as this one, no team should be overlooked. Texas A&M is coming off perhaps its best season ever. Southern Methodist and the University of Texas can never be discounted, nor can Southern California (with new coach Dave Salo) and a fast-rising University of Tennessee. Lone standouts to keep an eye on are sprinter Jenny Bradford from Kentucky, Arizona State flyer Caitlin Andrew and Big Ten contenders Yi Ting Siow from Wisconsin (breaststroker) and Yuen Kobayashi of Minnesota (distance).

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