

Simon Fraser Seeks Sixth Title

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NAIA swimming begins its third decade of national competition as the 21st NAIA Swimming and Diving Championships will be held for the third straight year at Southwest State University in Marshall, Minnesota.

The Canadian team, Simon Fraser, became the first team in the history of NAIA to win five consecutive national titles as they gathered 412 points to assume a commanding point margin over second place Central Washington.

Each year the record books have been rewritten and 1976 had 14 of the 18 events finished in record times. The 1977 season will be the toughest and perhaps most evenly balanced competition that the NAIA has seen.

Simon Fraser is again favored to repeat for an unprecedented sixth straight title in spite of losing eight members of their 1976 team through graduation. Included in the losses will be four-year national champion John VanBuren, who won national titles in all events he ever swam in national competition, Gary McDonald who won the 50 and 100 yd. freestyle titles, Larry Steele and Pat McClosky, both finalists in the IM and mid-distance events, respectively.

Returning for the "Canadians" will be 1976 200 yd. breaststroke champion Dave Heinbuch, 200 yd. backstroke champion Anders Sandberg and IM finalist John Trotter. Also returning will be 1975 distance freestyle champion Doug Martin, who sat out competition in 1976 to prepare for the Olympics.

Coach Paul Savage will have a host of new talent to build around, including Bruce Robertson, 1972 Olympic silver medalist and 1973 World Games champion; D'Arcy Hamilton, a 52.5 backstroke; Rob Gunderson, a 1:55 IM swimmer. As is traditional, Simon Fraser will be hard to beat.

The teams in contention for the top ten in the NAIA look to be as follows: 2nd, Central Washington; 3rd, Drury; 4th, University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire; 5th, Pacific Lutheran; 6th, Southwest State University; 7th, Claremont Mudd; 8th, Southern Oregon; 9th, Fairmont State; and 10th, Bemidji. Other teams that will be strong contenders to break into the top ten are Hamline University, University of Wisconsin-Stout and Monmouth.

Central Washington will be the strongest contender for the championship as six All-Americans will be returning, including Ed and Mike Walstead, finalists in the IM and 200 free events, Jerry White, Craig Weishaar, Eric Tracy and Russ Ferguson. Added to the excellent nucleus of last year's team will be several of the best freshmen and transfers to attend, including Craig MacDonald, transfer from University of Houston who is a 200 backstroke and a 1:54 butterfly; and freshmen Craig Benson, Roger Coburn, Perry Garso and Scott Shake who will give excellent strength in the mid-distance, free, the fly and backstroke events.

Drury College predicts its best team ever, with returning national place winners, Bob Weddel and Milo Scott in the mid-distance freestyle events; Chris Wunderlich and Tom Shaper in the sprint events of the freestyle and 100 back; breastroker Massimo Podnecca; and flyers Vic Arnold and Jeff Eggers. Several outstanding freshmen, Mike McElhaney, a second place finisher in Missouri in the 100 back, and Kevin Bilyen, a third place finisher in the 100 breast, along with Mark Chelusky, a transfer from the University of Florida who swims

the breast at 1:01, will give Jack Steck's crew real depth.

The fourth through sixth place teams should be closely contested as the 1976 Eau Claire team coached by "Coach of the Year" Tom Prior will have their hands full attempting to replace their top performers who will not be returning this season: Richard Eberhardt, Kurt Embecker, Steve Forrer, Milo Jajtner, Scott Stridde and Riff Yeager. The Blue Gold's have recruited Minnesota state champion sprinter, Leif Helling and Wisconsin State sprint champion, Jim Harmon, along with a nest of other strong freshmen. Along with the freshmen will be returning national finalist Andy Antonitz who finished second in the 200 fly. Todd Lauerty who was third in the 1650 free and fourth place finisher Nate Nevid in the 400 IM, also return.

Always strong Pacific Lutheran will have a majority of its fifth place finishing team of 1976 returning.

The Southwest State University Mustangs should be able to attain their sixth place finish of 1976, as they have all three of their relay teams still together, with the exception of second place NAIA 50 freestyler, Tom Moehn and butterflyer, Randy Brezina. Also lost through graduation are All-American divers Dave Garman and Randy Huff, a breastroker Deam Hawks and mid-distance All-American Greg Higdem.

Junior Jon Stewart, who won national titles last season in the 200 freestyle, the 500 freestyle and the 1650 free (national records in the 500 and 1650) will be returning to defend his titles against the 1975 titlist from Simon Fraser in these events, Doug Martin.

Transferring from Brigham Young University is Jim Martin, former high school All American diver from Illinois who should gain national points for Southwest along with returning All Americans Jim Norton, Steve Binder and Pat Doar.

Seventh through tenth place could vary considerably. The 12th place 1976 finisher Bemidji returns all of last year's team including five All Americans, Trip Hedrick, Tim McCarthy, Dennis Prosen, Randy Hull and Al Pendleton. They'll be a strong contender to move up solidly in the top ten. Bemidji's strongest individual finisher will be sophomore Dennis Prosen, who last year finished fifth in the 200 yd. freestyle.

Claremont Mudd will be an improved team with their mostly freshmen team of last year returning, including William Morrow, who won the 100 yd. fly.

Making a bid for the top ten will be Fairmont State of West Virginia. Coach Steve Mahoney will return three All Americans in John Ferenti in the 1650 free, Jef Nau in the 200 yd. back and Steve Parlett, also a 1650 freestyle point getter.

Perhaps Fairmont has had one of its most outstanding recruiting years with freshman Steve Newkirk who swam for the Virgin Islands in the Olympics and has set three national records as well as being a 1975 Pan Am finalist. Joining Newkirk are John Orhard, a top high school sprinter (1:46 and 48 free); Chris Lubie, a state backstroke champion from West Virginia; and Kevin Williams, a state finalist in the 100 fly in Michigan. This will be quite a move up from last year's 18th place finish.

Wisconsin-Stout has also had several excellent swimmers enroll who should help Stout gather points this season. They are Brigham Young transfer Joe Brown, who has had times of 47.9 in the 100 free and a 1:45 in the 200 free, along with Randy Trowbridge who swims the 200 and 500 free events in times of 1:47 and 4:51. Coach "Red" Blair also has two freshmen in Dan Jesse (1:01 breast) and Tom Ferris (53 fly) who will help make a national contending medley relay team.

Although the pipers of Hamline University, coached by Marty Knight, lost four 1976 All Americans, they will return three All Americans in Shawn Fischer, Chip Kinnunen and Paul Lundsten. Along with several excellent freshmen, Bill Durbahn (IM and fly), Vince Linders and Tony Novak, Hamline could gain a top place finish.

South Carolina State College is beginning to make itself known in NAIA swimming as last year they entered the championships for the first time, bringing divers Tom Collins and Darall Moore (7th in 3 meter diving). This year, Coach Bob Bradley recruited two "top notch" sprinters in Duwayne Scott and Ricardo Taylor who could get additional points for the South Carolinians and move them up in the NAIA ratings.

Year after year the NAIA times have dropped and 1977 should again prove to be a banner year for the records.

Marshall, Minnesota will be the site where once again the U.S. teams attempt to dethrone the dominating Canadians of Simon Fraser.