

## Athlete of the Week

**Kate Aherne**

**Sport:** Swimming  
**Year:** Sophomore  
**Position:** Freestyle  
**Hometown:** Cary, Ill.

Aherne earned a national A cut time in the 200-yard backstroke with a time of 2:05.05. It was the first time Aherne has swum the race since her days as a high school swimmer at Cary-Grove High School. Aherne has earned four individual events and is part of three nationally qualified relay teams. She also has an additional B cut in an individual event.

# Aherne makes national A cuts

BY RYAN TURNER  
Staff Reporter

Sophomore Kate Aherne got a blast from the past at the Miami (Ohio) Invitational. Aherne swam in the 200-yard backstroke last weekend for the first time since high school.

But she didn't just compete in it — she finished in sixth place with a time of 2:05.05, making a national A cut by more than a second.

Head coach Mark Gole said Aherne told him earlier this year that her best time in this event during high school was around 2:11. She shaved nearly five seconds from that in preliminaries and another second in the finals.

"I had no expectations going into it," Aherne said. "And to get my best time and my A cut was just really exciting."

Gole said he was hardly shocked with the result.

"I expected an A cut," Gole said. "Her backstroke has always been strong."

The 200-yard backstroke wasn't Aherne's only strong swim of the meet. She also took home second in both the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyle, seventh in the 200-yard free and a fifth-place finish in the 100-yard backstroke.

Aherne also had team accomplishments, including swimming lead for the 200-yard freestyle relay, which finished first, swimming lead for the 400-yard freestyle relay, which took second and swimming in the 800-yard freestyle, which claimed a third-place finish.

The more important ramifications of this weekend are that these finishes have qualified Aherne for a return to na-

tionals. She is now qualified with A cuts in four individual events and a B cut in another individual event, in addition to being a part of three nationally qualifying relay teams.

Going to the national meet is nothing new for Aherne. She competed there last year as a freshman and placed highly in several events.

"She did a phenomenal job at the national meet last year," Gole said.

Aherne placed seventh in both the 50- and 100-yard freestyle and fifth in the 100-yard backstroke, but she failed to make the finals in the 200-yard freestyle.

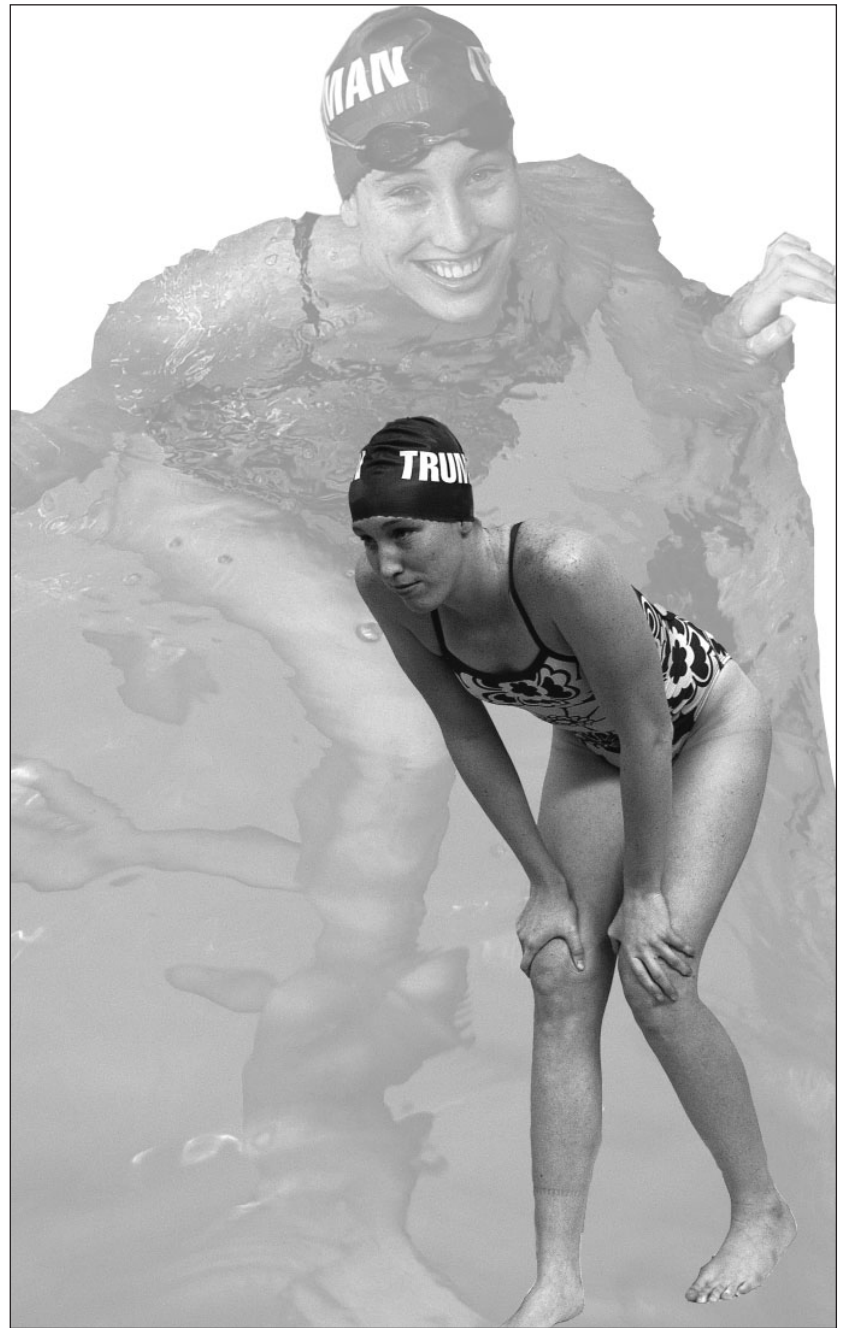
"She also anchored our 200 medley relay," Gole said. "The 200 free was a little too new to her, so she finished about 21st last year. So she didn't make top 16."

Aherne has given a lot of credit for her success to both her coach and her teammates.

"When you're surrounded by good people, they just help you do better," Aherne said. "[Gole's] really been a main factor in everything. I think that the intensity of the practices from what I've had in high school to now is a lot higher. I think that his training has just set the stage for me to do well when we are rested."

Aherne said the hard work pays off, which could be seen by her placing at nationals last year.

"I think that my expectations for this season are just always to swim as hard as we can and hopefully that leads to good times and placing well in nationals," Aherne said.



Photos by Jackson Groves, Design by Mark Hardy/Index

## MIAMI | Women place behind only host school

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dives in for the relay you get so fired up, and you see your team behind the lane and they're cheering you on," Pautz said. "... And then you end up swimming a second and a half faster."

Gole gave high praise to the 200-yard freestyle relay. He said the time can be improved even more because Aherne led off the relay with a time a half of a second slower than her individual 50-yard freestyle time.

"The [200 Free Relay] was the best time that this team has gone since I've been coaching here," Gole said. "So it's the fastest we've gone in three years, and we can go faster in that relay."

Gole said all of the freestyle events were solid, including numerous lifetime bests in the 200-yard freestyle. He said the 200-yard butterfly, which had six B cuts, was one of the strongest events. The 400-yard individual medley and the 200-yard backstroke had the most A cuts of any events with three each.

The meet marked the emergence of freshman Tanya Sylvester. Sylvester

swam for B cuts in the 100- and 200-yard freestyle, the 100- and 200-yard butterfly and the 400-yard individual medley. She also swam the butterfly leg of the 400-yard medley relay. She dropped three seconds off of her previous time in the 200-yard freestyle.

"She had some great times and it was a real eye opener and it was really exciting to see how well she did," freshman Emily Buss said.

For the freshman, adjusting to a long three-day meet at the college level was a first.

Pautz said that even though the races are farther apart than a dual meet, the two kinds of meets are comparable.

"Swimming fast in the morning and then swimming fast in the afternoon and then swimming fast the next morning and then swimming fast the next afternoon — it really wears on your body," Pautz said. "You have more time to relax at longer meets, but also, at the same time, it's a lot more testing."

Truman will compete next at the Tampa Relays on Jan. 5.



Jackson Groves/Index

Sophomore Samantha Cassmeyer throws the shot put during Wednesday's practice. The indoor track squads will begin the season Dec. 7.

## INDOOR | Bulldogs' track teams will feature youth coupled with key returners, such as Sean Bergstedt

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cially important for one major reason. "I think what this meet really does is it takes those younger guys and it throws them out there, and then just see how they can do," Cochran said. "I have absolutely no idea what to expect. I've never run a 60-meter hurdle race before. In high school, you just do the outdoor 110-meters."

After Friday, the team will move into a very different part of its season.

Cochrane said the entire team will take off finals week to focus on studies. After that, it is up to the individual athletes to continue training during the three weeks they have off.

"Coach does give us workouts to use while we are away," Clayton said. "He's told us several times that if you don't do the workouts and take three weeks off, it is going to take a month to get back to where you were."

And the team will need to be in peak physical condition when it comes back in January.

Coach Cochran said that once the season starts up again, there is not much of a lull in the action.

"With the way the meet schedule has gone this year, our schedule is quite a bit tougher than it was last year," he said. "The first four or five meets back will be pretty competitive. But it takes that sort of competition to get better."

## NATIONALS | Women seeking more A cut times

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Gole said that from the limited results he has seen of Drury, the two teams are matching up well.

He said Drury is ahead in a few events, as is Truman. The one event Drury clearly is ahead in is breaststroke, he said.

Sophomore Kate Aherne said the depth of Truman's squad has improved from last year.

"We don't have a ton of really fast girls, but we'll come in second, third and fourth place, so I think that we've just built on that from last year and that it's even better this year," Aherne said.

The 'Dogs will take more than a month off from meets, but practices

still will go on, even through Winter Break. The team increased its training after the rest days prior to the Miami meet.

"You really need that time to really get your training up in order to come down properly and have another good meet at the end of the year," freshman Tanya Sylvester said.

Truman will have one or two more taper meets to qualify more swimmers for nationals.

Gole said anyone who has not made nationals will taper for the conference meet starting Feb. 13 in Cleveland, Miss.

Depending on the results of that meet, Truman might go to the Last Chance meet a week after conference.

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## LIST | More A cut times and better production from men's basketball team among wishes

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fight with Drury. They just need to get some more A cuts.

If Santa is dropping off A cuts, maybe he could visit the men's team as well. Already, the national roster is in a better position than it was last year. Two or three more swimmers — not an unreasonable request — should put the men back in the Top 10 at nationals.

Things seem to be heading in the right direction with the men swimming season bests at the big Miami-Ohio

Invite. If they can do that at the conference meet in February, look out.

I probably should ask the big guy to help out Georgia Mueller, but I don't think she needs it. The junior forward and a first team all-MIAA women's basketball player from last season is not having a down year, which might be the biggest understatement I can make. She is averaging nearly a double-double per game and, from what I can see, is the best player in the MIAA — yes, even better than Empo-

ria State's Michelle Stueve. Mueller has less to work with.

Because I'm not asking for help for Mueller, maybe he could help junior wrestler Blake Peterson instead. Peterson is by no means struggling, but he is the Bulldogs' best hope to be a national champion. He has come close, and probably doesn't need help from a mythical North Pole dweller, but I would like nothing more than to see Peterson end his Bulldog career as a national champ.

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