

# Five women look for A cuts at NSISC

**Two freestyle, one medley relay also are yet to qualify**

BY JACK NICHOLL  
Sports Editor

After two events and one day, the women's swimming team is 12 points off the lead at the New South Intercollegiate Swim Conference taper meet.

The Bulldogs are aiming for their 10th straight conference victory, as well as additional national cuts.

Wednesday's biggest event was the 200-yard medley relay, but the 'Dogs missed an A-cut time by just more than a second. With an A cut, the national roster would have increased to 11 with the addition of junior Carina Pautz.

In the next few days the four women who have B cuts, but no A cuts, will compete: juniors Stephanie Myers and Claire Myers and freshmen Taylor Birsa and Allison Harding.

Claire Myers, who has placed at nationals in the 400-yard individual medley the last two years, was the closest to getting an A cut at the Iowa fall taper meet. She was less than 0.5 seconds away in the 200-yard IM and less than two seconds in the 400-yard IM.

Myers earned her national bid at conference the last two years, which she said is because she



Freshman Stacy Wymer has an A cut in the 200-yard backstroke and B cuts in the 100-yard backstroke and the 50-yard individual medley.

doesn't build up enough of an aerobic base until after winter and spring training. She said she needs to finish strong for the A cut, something she didn't do at the Iowa meet.

"I tended to go out really fast and then just die in the

second half," Myers said. "We talked about ... being able to control the first half, not necessarily hold back, but control it, stay up with people, and then pour it on in the second half."

Stephanie Myers also has qualified at the conference

meet in the past. In 2009, she swam in four events at nationals and placed in the 1650-yard freestyle. Myers said this event is again her best chance at getting an A cut, as she was five seconds away at Iowa.

Myers already has earned

a B cut in the 500-yard freestyle and said she could pick up two more in the 1,000- and 200-yard freestyles.

"We've really nailed their resting for this meet the last couple years," head coach Mark Gole said of both Stephanie and Claire.

Birsa is the third with multiple B cuts, in the 200- and 400-yard IM and 200-yard breaststroke. She was less than three seconds from an A cut in all three events at Iowa.

Both Birsa and Gole agreed that the key for an A cut, especially in the IM events, will be the freestyle and backstroke legs of the event.

"I know in my 400 IM I have to go out a lot faster and bring it home fast, and actually kick in my race," Birsa said. "That's one of my main things — I don't kick in backstroke and freestyle."

Gole said Stephanie Myers, Claire Myers and Birsa have the best chance at an A cut at conference, while Harding is the "wild card." Harding needs to cut 17 seconds in her one B-cut race, the 1650-yard freestyle. She is the defending Iowa high school champion in the 500-yard freestyle.

Gole said he is tapering Harding much more now than for Iowa, as her lack of rest showed in the early events at Iowa.

"The good sign of the Iowa meet with Alison is that her

best event was the mile, which is the last day of the meet," Gole said. "So that alone showed that she got better as the meet went along."

The four swimmers with B cuts are not the only ones shooting for an A cut. The 200- and 400-yard freestyle relays and the 400-yard medley relay have yet to qualify.

Gole said untapered seniors Kate Aherne and Kendra Brunkow will team with Pautz and someone else in the two sprint freestyles. Pautz has qualified for nationals through a sprint relay the last two seasons, but is yet to earn any A or B cuts this season.

However, just because a relay team does not earn an A cut as a whole does not necessarily mean it cannot compete at nationals. According to the NCAA rulebook, "Relay teams may submit the actual, aggregate time if this time is faster than its best actual relay performance." Gole said that in the past, Truman has finished top-eight at nationals in a relay despite not having an A cut in the event.

However, the majority of the team will not qualify through a relay. For those swimmers, conference is the last chance this season for a national bid.

"Everything we didn't have at Iowa, we have now at this point," Stephanie Myers said.

# Men in fifth after first day of conference meet

**Men enter day two of the conference meet with no A cuts**

BY BRENDAN O'BRIEN  
Staff Reporter

Late in August, the men's swimming team took to the pool. Now, nearly six months after that first practice, comes the culmination of every hour of training as they head to the New South Intercollegiate Swim Conference meet and attempt to earn national cuts in Cleveland, Miss.

The men are in fifth place after Wednesday's results. Sophomore Brian Tillis started the meet with a B cut in the 1,000-yard freestyle before Truman was disqualified in the 200-yard medley relay.

The team has not been in competition since it took on Drury University on Jan. 23, but its focus has not waned, head coach Mark Gole said.

"They're excited, I can tell," Gole said Monday. "They've been pushing each other all season long, and they're ready to go. I know we're still two days away from the meet, so we don't want to get too crazy, but I see a lot of excitement in their eyes, and I really enjoy that."

In preparation for the conference meet, workouts have become more individualized, and the focal point has shifted to more minor race aspects. Every dimension of a race is magnified when the Bulldogs compete against what Gole considers one of the two toughest

conferences in the nation. The men finished fourth at conference last season.

Freshman Jerod Simek said one thing that has helped the 'Dogs prepare for the conference meet and throughout the season, is the friendly rivalries that push the swimmers in practice.

"There's a bunch of different in-team competitions," Simek said. "Everyone usually finds someone to go up against and race, and that's really, really helped us have a very successful season, I think, and it'll help us going into conference."

One such rivalry, between Simek and Tillis, has received attention because both swimmers are on the verge of A cuts. Although Gole declined to say the specific events they will swim at conference, both are likely to swim the 500-yard freestyle, in which they are three seconds off A-cut time and the 1650-yard freestyle, in which they must drop less than 1.4 seconds from their times at the Iowa taper meet.

Last year, Tillis missed the A-cut time at the conference meet but qualified at the Last Chance Meet the following week. This year, however, Tillis said he is determined to punch his ticket to nationals at conference.

"I expect to see some A cuts, out of myself, Jerod — we have a few others who have a strong possibility of getting A cuts — and I hope this is not the last meet," Tillis said. "I hope this is not the end yet."

Apart from Simek and Tillis,

only junior Matthew Fletcher and freshman Tony Hernandez have earned B cuts this season. Hernandez was less than 1.5 seconds off the A-cut time in the 100-yard breaststroke at the fall taper meet. Fletcher matched the B-cut time in the 200-yard breaststroke and needs to cut about four seconds at conference for an A cut.

Senior Andrew McCall is the only swimmer with multiple years of experience at nationals, but McCall is yet to earn a B cut this season — partly because he missed most of the fall taper meet. McCall needs to shave less than two seconds off the 50- and 100-yard freestyles for an A cut.

The men will likely not qualify a relay for the first time since 2001. The closest they came to qualifying at Iowa was six seconds away in the 200-yard freestyle and medley relays.

"I'd say we have exceeded expectations," Tillis said. "We lost a lot of people from last year's team, a lot of really good relay swimmers ... but we've had a lot of people step up this year, especially our freshman class."

One challenge for the freshmen that became apparent throughout the season, especially in these past few weeks before the conference meet, is the steep learning curve.

"There might be days where you feel like you're swimming in gravy, like you can't go," Gole said. "Sometimes, it's the younger swimmers that are resting like this for the first time, and after training as hard as they are, they



Freshman Jerod Simek has recorded B-cut times in four events this season, the most of any men's swimmer. He is still seeking an A cut.

don't quite know what to do with it. And the other side effect of resting is you do have a tremendous amount of excess energy, and we always tell them to put the energy away. Save it."

Gole said every bit of energy and each minute of work in the pool can make all the difference in a race that can be decided by hundredths of a second.

"The crazy part about swimming is you can train 20 hours a

week for every week since day one of school ... and you could be training for a race that's going to take 46 seconds," Gole said. "You put in all those hours in the pool — all those minutes in the pool — and all that time lifting and running, doing this, doing that, and the one event you could be going for your cut in can last 45 seconds, 46 seconds. ... Everything's got to be just primed and 100 percent ready to go for that one given moment."

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