



MEN'S GYMNASTICS

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Men's Gymnastics To Host 33rd Annual Windy City Invitational

Flames eager to start season against the nation's best on Saturday at 7:00 p.m. at the UIC Physical Education Building

Jan. 10, 2003

Chicago, Ill. - Once a year, America's finest collegiate gymnasts and teams gather for one classic event, compete for one trophy and kick start their seasons in search of the National Championship come April.

That special time of year is Saturday, January 11, as UIC hosts the 33rd edition of the Windy City Invitational. Competition begins at 7:00 p.m. at the UIC Physical Education Building (901 W. Roosevelt Rd.).

Each of the six teams competing on Saturday are ranked among the preseason College Gymnastics Coaches Association's Top 15 poll, including five of the top eight.

Headlining the field is #2 Ohio State, #3 Illinois, #6 Michigan, defending champion and #7, Iowa, #8 Minnesota and the host Flames, who enter the tournament ranked 13th in the nation.

This event serves as the unofficial kickoff to the gymnastics season, and the Flames hope to get things started on the right note. Head coach "CJ" Johnson's squad is young, but has tons of talent and is expected to be improved from last season.

This season, the Flames are looking to [Matt Musielak](#) and [Neil Faustino](#) to lead the way.

Musielak, a junior, has been solid for the Flames in his first two seasons as an all-rounder and is looking for more in 2003.

Faustino exploded onto the scene last year, as he hailed as the ECAC Rookie of the Year, and finished 24th on vault at the NCAA individual event prelims.

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Neil Faustino and the Flames start their season on Saturday by hosting the 33rd Annual Windy City Invitational

Another sophomore, [Keith Kerrigan](#) is back after a knee injury last season and will be relied on for big scores, while [Jonathan Joyce](#), [David Livingston](#) and [Mason Vernon](#) are seasoned veterans for the Flames.

Highly-regarded newcomers [Eric Novick](#) and [Nick Stavros](#) will make their debuts for UIC, as well.

As far as the individual competition, the field is stacked once again. This year's competition includes four-time NCAA Champion Clay Strother (Floor Exercise, Pommel Horse; 2001, 2002) of Minnesota and two-time national champ Raj Bhavsar (Parallel Bars, 2001; All-Around, 2002) of Ohio State.

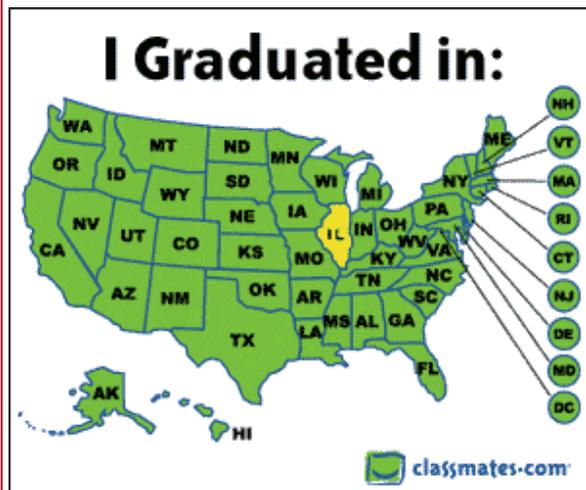
History

The "Windy" was originally first held in November to coincide with the start of the gymnastics season, but when the NCAA pushed the starting date of the season back, the meet was moved to the start of the calendar year.

Over the years, both Ohio State and Iowa have seen the most success at the Windy City, with each program garnering seven titles apiece, as the Hawkeyes are this year's defending champions. Running close behind are Nebraska, Iowa State and Indiana State with four titles each. The Cornhuskers had an impressive string of four consecutive championships between 1980-83. The other schools that can lay claim to a Windy City title include Southern Illinois, Minnesota, Illinois and Michigan.

A large number of outstanding national and regional champions have performed at the Windy City Invitational - including several members of the Olympic and National Teams. This year's field includes four-time NCAA Champion Clay Strother (Floor Exercise, Pommel Horse; 2001, 2002) of Minnesota and two-time national champ Raj Bhavsar (Parallel Bars, 2001; All-Around, 2002) of Ohio State.

Previous meets have included notable gymnasts such as U.S. National Team members Ron Gallimore, Jim Hartung, Phil Cahoy, Scott Johnson and Charles Lakes. John Roethlisberger, Kip Simons and Blaine Wilson competed for the USA in the 1996 Summer Olympics, while UIC alum Barry McDonald was a member of the Irish National team. Roethlisberger later returned for the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia.



Men's Gymnastics

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