



MEN'S SWIMMING & DIVING

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Swimming & Diving Set For 2005 Horizon League Championships

Flames seek school-best finishes throughout four-day event.

Feb. 22, 2005

Chicago, Ill.- A year of preparation. A season of tests. A pathway to a goal.

The 2004-05 campaign heads into the final lap for the University of Illinois at Chicago men's and women's swimming and diving teams, as the Flames battle for conference supremacy at the 2005 Horizon League Swimming & Diving Championships beginning this Wednesday.

This year's title meet is hosted by UW-Milwaukee at the Schroeder YMCA in Brown Deer, Wis. The event will take place from Wednesday through Saturday, with preliminaries starting at 10:00 a.m. each day and the event finals kicking off at 6:30 p.m. every night of the championships.

Diving trials take place on Wednesday and Friday afternoon, and the board finals are on tap for Thursday and Saturday.

The goal-oriented mantra engrained into the team's focus by UIC head coach [Paul Moniak](#) has always centered on finishing in the top three in the Horizon League. After a fourth-place finish for both the men and the women last season, now is the time for the Flames to stake their claim into the upper tier of the league.

It won't be easy, as reigning men's and women's league champion Wright State will not relinquish their titles so quickly. Cleveland State, UW-Green Bay and UW-Milwaukee are very much in the hunt as well.

But the Flames have plenty of firepower on their side, and big-time motivation to boot as they seek the school's best-ever league finish.

For the men's team, sophomore [Blake Booher](#) leads a sprint-freestyle corps that ranks among the fastest in the league.

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Junior LeRoy Stevens and his UIC teammates look to make school history at the Horizon League Championships this week.

Booher has led the Horizon League in the 50-yard freestyle every week of the season, saving his best for the end of the regular season with a career time of 20.77 at Cleveland State on February 5th. The Barrington, Ill., native has consistently posted sub-21-second times more than any other swimmer in the league.

Anchoring the sprint-free committee with Booher is junior [LeRoy Stevens](#). Nicknamed "the Hurricane," Stevens has been a force in the 50, 100 and 200 freestyle events while becoming a key cog in the Flames' outstanding relays.

It doesn't end there for the speedy men, as [Bill Hare](#) and former Missouri Valley 50 free champion [Athanasios Lamprou](#) give UIC some lightning-quick depth.

On the women's sprint side, sophomore [Kelly Hyatt](#) came on strong in the second half of the season to win her last three 100 freestyle races, posting team-leading times of 24.54 in the 50 and 53.69 in the 100.

Freshman [Colleen Dougherty](#) was stellar in her rookie season, winning the 100 free six of the eight times she competed in the event and finishing a close second in the two races in which she barely missed first place.

[Jenny Gessford](#) and [Aisha Williams](#) are also contenders to place in the top tier of the sprint events.

The 200 and 400 IM for both the men and the women will be interesting races to watch as a wily veteran and a fresh face look to make a splash among the league's medley masters.

Senior [Vanessa Segovia](#) looks to cap her career in style by winning the IM races and breaking the 200 and 400 school records, with the latter mark already her own. Segovia placed third in last year's 200 IM and was near a victory in the 400 IM in a back-and-forth ending that saw the Brookfield native finish just .08 behind the winner. An off-season of training and a strong senior season has Segovia in line to make history.

For the men's IM, freshman [Dan Hare](#) has made an immediate impact as the team leader in the IM and 100 breaststroke events, proving to be another speedy and versatile product of the Hare family genes. Dan joins brother Bill and sister Christine, a senior, as UIC swimmers with championship sights this week.

The women will rely on their young talent and experienced veterans to keep them in the hunt. Rookies [Andrea Giczewski](#), [Caitlin Sullivan](#), [Leslie Bustos](#) and [Rachel Funk](#) will be relied on heavily, while returnees [Emily Biancalana](#), [Stephanie Murphy](#), [Laura Martensen](#) and [Lisa Nelson](#) will also play huge roles in securing points.

Senior [Alicia Perry](#), a holder of multiple school records, will compete in her final league championship with top finishes in the breaststroke events on her radar.

[Ari Bernstein](#) will be in the mix across the board for the men, while seniors [Stefan Staev](#) and [Chris Kaczor](#) give UIC some breaststroke punch.

Senior [Brian Kroes](#) will play a huge role in the distance events for UIC, while freshmen such as [Dominic Barraco](#), [Jason Dews](#) and others have a chance to make steady contributions in their first-ever conference title meet.

The backstroke slate will be manned by sophomore [Edi Georg](#), fresh off his finest season as a Flame, along with usual standout and 100 backstroke school record holder [Adan Jimenez](#).

Sophomore [Jessica Darud](#) came on furiously strong at the latter stages of the season, putting up awesome times in the backstroke competitions for the ladies.

[Kris Simos](#) and [Mike Conroy](#), two strong performers at last year's championship meet, will need to be on top of their games to help UIC make a mark.

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A vital part of UIC's chances are the Flames' diving depth. [Ryan Fitzer](#) and Mark Pappalardo lead a strong group that now includes former UIC gymnast Matt Musielak, who turned in an excellent performance in his first collegiate meet against Cleveland State a few weeks back.

For the women's divers, NCAA Zone qualifier [Sarah Economides](#) heads a well-rounded squad with [Tara Goodwin](#) and freshman [Miranda Ambuske](#).

There's no better time than this week for the Flames to make the impact that Moniak and Co. have envisioned.

Follow the Flames at the Horizon League Championships right here at [uiclames.com](#). For more information on the championships, event schedules and real-time results during each session, click [here](#).

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