



# The Dolphin Digest

November 3, 2005

**SPECIAL EDITION: WOMEN'S SWIMMING PREVIEW ISSUE**

## 2005-06 SCHEDULE:

DATE:	OPPONENT:	TIME:
11/6	College of New Rochelle <sup>^</sup> (at Sarah Lawrence)	2:30 p.m.
11/7	at Marymount <sup>^</sup>	7:30 p.m.
11/8	at St. Elizabeth <sup>^</sup>	7:30 p.m.
11/11	at Sarah Lawrence <sup>^</sup>	7:00 p.m.
11/12	at Purchase College <sup>^</sup>	1:00 p.m.
11/16	at Hunter	7:00 p.m.
11/19	Skyline Conference Championships (at USMMA)	11:00 a.m.
12/2	HVWAC Championships (at Sarah Lawrence)	7:00 p.m.
2/4	at Maritime College <sup>*</sup>	1:00 p.m.
2/9	at John Jay	6:00 p.m.
2/11	vs. Mount Saint Mary/Old Westbury <sup>*</sup> (at Mount Saint Mary)	TBA
2/17-2/19	Metropolitan Championships at Rutgers University	TBA

\* Skyline Conference Meet  
<sup>^</sup> HVWAC Meet

## Women's Swimming set to make a splash

By Mike Spinner – Sports Information Director

It seems like just yesterday that Mount Saint Vincent Women's Swimming Coach Pat Cullen would wonder if he would have enough team members in the pool to run a sufficient practice. There were days he could count the number of swimmers at practice with one hand, and showing up for meets with a full-sized team proved to be a chore. Such is the life of a coach trying to develop a program, it's a story that is told by many, but with a possible ending this season that is only shared by a select few. If Cullen and the Mount Saint Vincent Swimming team has their way, one month from now the tribulations will end with the first Conference Championship in Dolphin history. According to Cullen, if ever a team was built virtually from scratch one year to winning a championship 24 months later, this is the team.

"I cannot begin to express how excited I am to start this season," said Cullen, who is entering his third season at the Mount Saint Vincent helm. "We had an amazing run last year, and the amount of talent we return combined with the best team work ethic I have ever seen here gives us a team to be very excited about. We were the runner-up a year ago, so it's hard not to think that a Championship is the goal this year."

The Championship Cullen is referring to is the Hudson Valley Women's Athletic Conference (HVWAC), and a year ago, the Mount came within a hair (in swimming terms) of bringing the crown back to the Mount. Last year's HVWAC Championships resulted in a second place finish in which the Dolphins trailed Marymount by only 44 points. Coming that close to a championship gave Cullen a taste of what could have been, but also left the Coach thinking about what could be if things come together this season.

"Marymount was excellent last season, and I think the biggest difference between the two teams was that they had more swimmers on their team. I think we've addressed that this season, and I think it is very realistic that we can go 5-0 in the HVWAC and win this thing. It won't be easy, but with this team it is very possible," Cullen said.

Cullen was quick to point out that he circled December 2, 2005 on his calendar the moment last season came to a close. That is the date that Mount Saint Vincent will once again compete for the HVWAC Championship, and Cullen said that the December date has been a hot topic of conversation during virtually every practice this Fall.

"December 2 is for all of the marbles," Cullen said. "After finishing runner-up last year, there is only one place we can go. I have faith that with talent and dedication we can get to the next level. We have both."

## 2005 ROSTER:

NAME	EVENTS	YEAR
Kristen Avolio	Freestyle	Soph.
Christina Burke	Freestyle	Soph.
Megan Clark	Freestyle	Freshman
Elizabeth Clark	Backstroke	Senior
Laura Delargy	Freestyle/IM	Junior
Robin Forcelli	Breaststroke	Junior
Marie Garcia	Freestyle/IM	Soph.
Melissa Garganta	Butterfly/IM	Soph.
Elise Henrich	IM/Breaststroke	Freshman
Angela Hernandez	Breaststroke	Junior
Nicole Manolakis	Freestyle	Soph.
Maggie McGowan	Breaststroke	Junior
Trisha Ollquist	Butterfly/IM	Junior
Megan Rohan	Freestyle/Backstroke	Soph.
Sarah Sheridan	Backstroke	Junior
Jillian Stark	Freestyle/Backstroke	Freshman
Christine Tracey	Backstroke/IM	Soph.
Marybeth Ward	Freestyle	Senior
Nora Wylie	Freestyle	Freshman

HEAD COACH: Pat Cullen (Third Season)

The talent Cullen is referring to is six key members of last season's team that return for the 2005-06 season, along with three excellent freshmen. Having a core of nine top-notch swimmers gives Cullen the depth he feels the team needs to win.

"We have good reason to be optimistic. We lost two outstanding seniors from last year's team, but we filled those voids and then some. Our skill positions are very strong, and they're going to be for a while. Plus, we're versatile. Everybody on this team is interchangeable. The size of this team has made us much stronger, and the fact that everybody can swim their specialty and something else as well has us in a place to be very competitive." Cullen said.

The 2005-06 Dolphin line-up features two HVWAC individual champions and three runners-up from a year ago. Leading the way is senior **Elizabeth Clark** (Silver Spring, MD), a team captain and four-year member of the team who captured the HVWAC Championship in the 50-yard backstroke, and finished second in the 100-meter backstroke a year ago. Cullen said that Clark's talent in the water is only surpassed by her character and leadership in terms of Clark's impact on the development of the program since he took over as Head Coach.

"Elizabeth is like having an Assistant Coach here. She has this spirit about how she does things that trickles down to the rest of the team. She is a special swimmer who is going to have a fantastic senior season and is very important to this program. I am excited for what should be a terrific year for Beth, but I'm also sad because we'll miss her after this year," Cullen said.

Joining Clark at the winner's circle last year was **Maggie McGowan** (Brooklyn, NY), who enters her junior year as the defending HVWAC 50-meter breaststroke champion, who is as close to unbeatable as a Mount Saint Vincent swimmer will be. McGowan has a nearly unblemished record through two seasons, and is set to be one of the top juniors in the HVWAC.

"Maggie is one of the fastest breaststrokers I have ever seen," said Cullen. "She has an unbelievable record here because she refuses to lose. She brings a great competitive spirit to this team that I think will be key if we're going to win the HVWAC."

While Clark and McGowan have reached superstardom as specialists in the backstroke and breaststroke, respectively, it is a group of four swimmers who could succeed in any event at any time that will be called upon to make or break the Mount's season. Cullen said that the versatility of the Mount's IM swimmers is going to determine how far this team goes. Sophomore **Marie Garcia** (Medford, MA), sophomore **Christine Tracey** (Tappan, NY), sophomore **Tricia Ollquist** (Brooklyn, NY) and sophomore **Melissa Garganta** (Kearney, NJ) are all versatile enough to race in any event, and their flexibility could put the team over the top come December 2.

"Those four can swim any race in an event at a very high level," Cullen said. "Their versatility and willingness to do whatever it takes to win is a credit to our whole team. They alone can swing an event from one extreme to another, so they are the key if there is one."

The final piece of the puzzle from last year's team is sophomore **Kristen Avolio** (Forest Hills, NY), who is the team's top sprinter. Cullen described Avolio as, "one of the fastest freestylers in the league" and a crucial element to the team's relay events.

#### **THE DOLPHIN DIGEST:**

The Dolphin Digest is the official Athletics Newsletter at the College of Mount Saint Vincent.

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"The relay events are important because they're worth twice the points, so if we can start off a meet with a win in a relay it's like returning the opening kickoff for a touchdown in football. Kristen is vital for our relays because she's the anchor, and with her speed she can put us on top," Cullen said. "I think our biggest area for improvement is the relays. We've always had one strong relay team and one team that's been a step or so behind. I'm hoping for this year that we'll have two fairly equal and competitive relay teams that can both give us a chance to win. The relays are going to be the key to the bigger meets we have coming up."

Cullen also has the luxury of depth for this season's team as he returns several members who he considers to be the spirit behind the team. Without their efforts during the last two years, Cullen said that building the program to this point would have been next to impossible. Now that the team is in a championship hunt, Cullen said that the efforts of returning veterans **Angela Hernandez** (Brooklyn, NY), **Sarah Sheridan** (Hicksville, NY), **Laura Delargy** (Lynbrook, NY), and **Christina Burke** (Queens, NY) will be called upon even more.

The Mount also has a strong recruiting class to boast as three talented freshmen joined the mix. With only two seniors lost to graduation, Cullen did not need to bring in many newcomers, but he said the new faces are excellent swimmers.

"We had some major holes to fill, and I think we filled them with a group that will ultimately be stronger than what we lost. I am very excited about our freshmen." Cullen said.

Freshman **Megan Clark** (Silver Spring, MD) is set to be the next great Clark to join the team, Cullen said. While her sister, Beth, is one of the best swimmers to ever compete for the Mount, Megan is likely to be just as strong when all is said and done.

"Megan is cut from the same cloth as Beth. She loves to be in the water. She'll compete in the 500-meter freestyle and 200-meter freestyle, and I think before long she'll surpass some of the best 500-meter freestyle times we've had here since I arrived." Cullen said.

Joining Clark are fellow freshmen **Elise Henrich** (Brooklyn, NY) and **Jillian Stark** (Brooklyn, NY). Henrich, a breaststroke specialist, comes from a powerhouse program at Bishop Kearney High School in Brooklyn, while Henrich, a freestyle swimmer, can pretty much swim anywhere, and is a potential x-factor for the team, Cullen said.

Cullen added that the team's challenge in 2005 is not only to win the HVWAC Championship, but to be competitive in the Skyline Conference as the Mount will compete in the Skyline for the first time. With the higher level of competition offered in the Skyline Conference, Cullen said that preparation is going to be key.

"I'm a little nervous about competing in the Skyline Conference, but I'm confident," Cullen said. "We have a competitive team and a bunch of two and three-sport athletes on our team. They're always up for a challenge, and I think they'll be ready for the Skyline Conference. It's a litmus test of sorts. The Skyline season begins with the Conference championships, so we'll gain a sense that day as to what we're up against. I'm not sure what to expect in the Skyline, but competing in the Conference will give us a sense of what we need to do to get to the next level. If anything, the fact that we now are in the Skyline Conference is a testimony to how far this program has come during the last three years."

A year ago, Mount Saint Vincent lost a very close 138-106 meet to St. Joseph's (LI), a strong Skyline Conference program. Cullen said that experience left him with a sense of the fundamentals that need to be stressed for the Mount to succeed this season.

"We have to focus on the non-swimming things. I think that starts and turns are going to be just as important as the speed with which we race," Cullen said. "World class swimmers constantly say how races are won or lost on starts and turns, so we're not going to be any different. I think we're fast and skilled enough to do very well, but whether or not we're HVWAC Champions and competitive in the Skyline Conference will probably come down to how well we start races and turn during races."

After a 3-2 finish in 2003 and a 4-4 finish a year ago, Mount Saint Vincent will embark on its most competitive schedule, ever, this season when they compete in 11 meets and both Conference championships. The 2005 season will actually extend into 2006 as the Mount will have four meets during the month of February, a first for the program. Cullen added that his team is up for the challenge, but right now solely focused on December 2, and the HVWAC Championship.

"I still think about the 44 points we lost the HVWAC Championship by last year," Cullen said. "We were very close, and we're much better this season. We have a real opportunity to bring a championship to Mount Saint Vincent. If we continue to work as we have between now and December 2, I am confident we can make it happen."