

# TEXAS—NOBODY BETTER

STORY BY DAN D'ADDONA • PHOTO BY PETER H. BICK



University of Texas at last year's NCAA's

**After dominating the last two NCAA Division I Swimming and Diving Championships, the University of Texas is poised for a three-peat...and they have the talent to win big again!**

Two years ago, Coach Eddie Reese tied former Ohio State Coach Mike Peppe (1931-62) for the most men's NCAA Division I swimming and diving team titles (11). After last year's meet, Reese stood alone at the top with 12 national titles.

With a team that has 11 scorers back from last year that accounted for 465.5 points—200 to 300 more returning points than their closest competition—Title No. 13 appears well within Reese's reach. To no one's surprise, Texas is the heavy favorite for a three-peat at this year's championships, March 22-25, at Indianapolis.



**1. TEXAS LONGHORNS**

Last year: 1st (541.5 points)  
Returning points: 465.5

The Longhorns have dominated the last two NCAA Division I Championships. In 2015, Texas scored 528 points on their way to a 129-point margin of victory. Last year, the Longhorns scored 541.5 points for a 190.5-point margin of victory.

The question this year isn't whether or not they'll win, but by how much? Texas returns national champions Townley Haas (200-500 free), Will Licon (200 breast-200 IM) and Joseph Schooling (100-200 fly) as well as American record holder Jack Conger (runner-up in the 200 fly).

**SWIMMING WORLD MAGAZINE'S TOP 10**

SCHOOL	LAST YEAR'S FINISH	LAST YEAR'S POINTS	POINTS RETURNING	POINTS LOST	SCORERS RETURNING
<b>1. Texas</b>	1	541.5	465.5	76.0	11
<b>2. Florida</b>	3	334.0	288.75	45.25	6
<b>3. California</b>	2	351.0	208.75	142.25	5
<b>4. NC State</b>	4	314.0	217.5	96.5	11
<b>5. Georgia</b>	5	239.5	165.5	74.0	9
<b>6. Indiana</b>	9	180.5	150.0	30.5	11
<b>7. Missouri</b>	8	184.0	152.5	31.5	8
<b>8. Alabama</b>	6	225.0	151.5	73.5	9
<b>9. Louisville</b>	11	164.5	141.5	23.0	7
<b>10. Auburn</b>	10	167.0	137.5	29.5	7

Its NCAA, American and U.S. Open record-setting 800 yard freestyle relay returns intact (Conger, Haas, Clark Smith and Schooling) as does its NCAA and U.S. Open record-setting 400 medley relay (John Shebat, Licon, Schooling and Conger). And three of the four swimmers on last year's winning 200 free relay are still competing (Brett Ringgold, Schooling and Conger).



## 2. FLORIDA GATORS

Last year: 3rd (334 points)  
Returning points: 288.75

Florida has been building up its sprint corps the past two years, and that group—led by junior Caeleb Dressel—should continue its success at this year's meet.

Dressel won two Olympic gold medals on relays last summer and has been one of the most dominant sprinters in collegiate history. He's the defending NCAA champion in the 100 yard free and two-time defending champion in the 50. He also is a central part of Florida's relays, which, along with its sprinters, is another strength.

Coach Gregg Troy welcomes back top-eight scorers Mitch D'Arrigo, Jan Switkowski and Mark Szaranek as well as Jack Blyzinskyj and Ben Lawless. The Gators are also excited to see how top recruit Maxime Rooney will do at his first NCAAs.



## 3. CALIFORNIA GOLDEN BEARS

Last year: 2nd (351 points)  
Returning points: 208.75

Coach Dave Durden has guided his Cal men's swimming team to top-two finishes at NCAAs for seven straight years—including championship teams in 2011, 2012 and 2014. The Golden Bears have the potential to finish second again—as they've done the last two years—but they only have five returning scorers who accounted for 208.75 points last year.

Among those five is superstar Ryan Murphy, who won three Olympic gold medals last summer (100-200 back and 400 medley relay) and set a world record in the 100 meter backstroke. And his NCAA credentials are also impressive, having won both the 100 and 200 yard back for three straight years. Oh...and he's the American, NCAA and U.S. Open record holder in both events as well!

Joining Murphy from last year's point scorers are Long Gutierrez, Connor Hoppe, Justin Lynch and Andrew Seliskar. The Bears should also get a huge boost from freshman freestyler/flyer Michael Jensen, who should help ensure that Cal's relays continue their high placings from last year. In 2016, Cal finished second twice, fourth twice and was DQ'ed in the 400 free relay (but had the fifth fastest time).



## 4. NORTH CAROLINA STATE WOLFPACK

Last year: 4th (314 points)  
Returning points: 217.5

North Carolina State returns 11 swimmers who scored at last year's NCAAs—tied with Texas and Indiana for the most returning point scorers. The Wolfpack may not have many household names leading the way, but it has a slew of swimmers who should contribute big-time relay points and ensure another top-five finish.

Topping that list is Olympic 400 free relay gold medalist Ryan Held, a junior who placed fourth, seventh and ninth in the 100, 50 and 200 freestyles, respectively, last year. Along with Lithuanian Olympian Simonas Bilis, Andreas Schiellerup and Danish Olympian Soren Dahl, Held also helped NC State earn its first NCAA relay title—and the first by any ACC team—with a victory in the 400 free relay. All but Bilis return to defend their title.

Coach Braden Holloway also welcomes back top-eight finalists Hennessey Stuart (100-200 back, seventh and third) and Anton Ipsen (500-1650 free, seventh and fifth).



## 5. GEORGIA BULLDOGS

Last year: 5th (239.5 points)  
Returning points: 165.5

The number of returning points for Georgia may be a little deceiving. That's because it doesn't include Chase Kalisz, who redshirted last season to train for the Olympics. Two years ago, the Olympic 400 IM silver medalist scored 29 points at NCAAs by finishing second in the 400 IM and 15th in the 200 IM. He also helped his teammates place 10th in the 800 free relay.

Coach Jack Bauerle will also have nine other returning point scorers, including Olympic 800 free relay gold medalist Gunnar Bentz and the Litherland triplets—Jay (fifth at Rio in the 400 IM), Kevin and Mick. Add in Pace Clark, and the Bulldogs appear ready for another top-five showing.



## 6. INDIANA HOOSIERS

Last year: 9th (180.5 points)  
Returning points: 150

Being ranked No. 1 by the CSCAA for part of this season has Coach Ray Looze's Hoosiers believing they can become a national power. And with 11 returning point scorers from last year's ninth-place team, Indiana not only should stay in the Top 10, but move up a few spots as well.

Blake Pieroni will be the key to the team's success. The sprint freestyle specialist captured an Olympic gold medal in Rio by swimming prelims of the men's 400 freestyle relay. And last December at the FINA Short Course World Championships, he won two silver medals and one bronze (all relays), and finished fourth in the 100 meter free.

He also was a five-time All-American at last year's NCAAs. His best individual finish was eighth place in the 200 yard free.



## 7. MISSOURI TIGERS

Last year: 8th (184 points)  
Returning points: 152.5

Led by Fabian Schwingenschlogl, Missouri is looking for another strong NCAA finish. Last year, the Western Kentucky transfer became the first Tiger to win an NCAA title in program history when he captured the 100 yard breaststroke. He also finished third in the 200 breast and swam on Mizzou's fourth-place 400 medley relay.

In addition to the senior swimmer from Nuremberg, Germany, Coach Greg Rhodenbaugh welcomes seven more returning scorers from last year's NCAAs. At the top of that list is senior sprinter Michael Chadwick, the most decorated swimmer in Missouri history with 15 All-America citations to his credit. Last year, he placed fourth in the 50 free and sixth in the 100, and he swam on all five scoring relays.

Another major contributor to the Tiger relays will be senior flyer/freestyler Andrew Sansoucie.



## 8. ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE

Last year: 6th (225 points)  
Returning points: 151.5

One of the biggest surprises of last year's NCAAs was Alabama. After six years of finishing between 21st and 29th (2008-13), Coach Dennis Pursley's Crimson Tide has steadily moved up the ladder, finishing 12th in 2014, 10th in 2015 and sixth last year. It was their best showing at NCAAs since 1983 when they finished fifth.

Alabama plans to stay in the Top 10, and it has the depth to do it, which especially bodes well for their relays. Among the talented Tide athletes are Matthew Adams, Alex Gray, Laurent Bams, Robert Howard, Luks Kaliszak, Anton McKee, Connor Oslin, Christopher Reid and Pavel Romanov.

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Oslin (backstroke), Romanov (breaststroke) and Kaliszak (butterfly) were NCAA champions last year as part of the Crimson Tide's 200 medley relay—Alabama's first NCAA relay title.



### 9. LOUISVILLE CARDINALS

Last year: 11th (164.5 points)  
Returning points: 141.5

The Cardinals are loaded with relay depth. They scored 96 points last year on their five relays alone—and every single relay swimmer returns except for one!

Trevor Carroll, Grigory Tarasevich, Matthias Lindenbauer, Zach Harting, David Boland, Carlos Claverie and Josh Quallen are the returning scorers. Three of those seven scored individually, including two Olympians: Venezuela's Claverie (100-200 breast, tie for fourth and sixth) and Russia's Tarasevich (100-200 back, third and ninth). At Rio, Tarasevich placed ninth in the 100 back; Claverie finished 15th in the 200 breast.

Coach Arthur Albiero also has a third Olympian on this year's roster: sophomore distance freestyler Marcelo Acosta of El Salvador. He was the first swimmer from his country to qualify for the Olympics with an "A" cut.



### 10. AUBURN TIGERS

Last year: 10th (167 points)  
Returning points: 137.5

Auburn placed 10th at last year's NAAs to extend its streak of Top 10 finishes to 24 straight years! From 1993 to 2016, the Tigers

have won eight NCAA men's titles, finished second three times and third twice.

Coach Brett Hawke is in his ninth season as head coach and was an Auburn swimmer from 1996-2000, so he knows all about the tradition of great swimming in Auburn, Ala. And it looks like he has the horses—uh, Tigers—with seven returning scorers (137.5 points) to help keep the streak alive.

Auburn is led by junior Peter Holoda, a 2016 Hungarian Olympian from Budapest who anchored his country's 12th-place 400 freestyle relay in Rio. At last year's NAAs, he finished 13th in the 50 free and swam on four relays—all of which finished in the top eight.

Senior Joe Patching of England is Auburn's record holder in the 200 and 400 IM and is the third fastest 200 backstroker in school history. He placed 11th last year in both IMs and just missed qualifying for the "B" final of the 200 back, placing 18th. ❖

*Dan D'Addona is the lead college swim writer for Swimming World. He has covered swimming at all levels since 2003, including the NCAA Championships, USA Nationals, Duel in the Pool and Olympic Trials. He is a native of Ann Arbor, Mich., and a graduate of Central Michigan University. He currently lives in Holland, Mich., where he also is the sports editor of The Holland Sentinel.*



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