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**MEN'S SWIMMING & DIVING Championship Preview - Feb. 25, 2009**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MEN'S SWIMMING & DIVING CHAMPIONSHIPS TAKE PLACE THIS WEEKEND** *Wesleyan Hosts Ninth-Annual Event*

HADLEY, Mass. - Williams College, winners of seven of the last eight NESCAC Men's Swimming and Diving titles, will be in pursuit of another conference crown this weekend when the Ephs take part in the 2009 NESCAC Men's Swimming and Diving Championships. The three-day meet begins Friday, Feb. 27 at the Wesleyan Natatorium on the campus of Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn. Fans unable to attend the event can follow the evening finals live via the Internet on JumboCast.

Williams earned last year's championship with a 1,860.5-point performance, while Tufts finished as the runner-up for the second time in three years, recording 1,489.5 points. Amherst, which placed second to the Ephs at the 2007 NESCAC meet, came in third with 1,399 points, and Middlebury - the only team besides Williams to win the NESCAC Championship (2002) - was fourth with 1,181 points. Connecticut College secured fifth for the second year in a row with an 832-point showing.

The freestyle field is full of challengers and could feature multiple first-time winners. Among the returners defending their titles this weekend will be Connecticut College junior Grant Moryan (Westfield, N.J.), who came away with 100-yard freestyle title and was second to Middlebury junior Schuyler Beeman (Guilford, Conn.) in the 50 at last year's championship. Beeman's senior teammate Kevin O'Rourke (Chagrin Falls, Ohio) posted pool records in the 200 and 500-yard events to earn individual honors. Looking to claim victories in the short and mid-distance freestyle will be the Lord Jeffs, as Amherst currently has a plethora of swimmers that rank among the top times in the conference. Senior Christian Witzke (Jacksonville, Fla.), who finished seventh in the 100 and third in the 200 a year ago, boasts the fastest mark among NESCAC swimmers in both the 50 and 100. Sophomore Alex Fraser (Willowbrook, Ill.), the runner-up to Middlebury's O'Rourke in the 200 and 500 last winter, has the second-best time this season in the 100 and 200 while holding down fourth in the 500. Other individuals performances to watch include rookies Owen Rood (Branford, Conn.) of Tufts and Nathan Mecray (Cumberland, Maine) of Bowdoin in the 50 and Hamilton sophomore Jake DeConinck (Windsor, Conn.) in the 200.

In the long-distance freestyle events, the top three finishers at last year's championship were all freshman with Williams sophomore Gary Roberson (Tigard, Ore.) taking both the 1,000 and 1,650-yard crowns. Another first year participant may be poised to capture the title in both events this weekend, as Amherst freshman Ryan Lichtenfels (McLean, Va.) has the fastest times in the conference in not only the 1,000 and 1,650 but also the 500. Hoping to improve on their 2008 showing will be sophomores Ryan Colby (Birdsboro, Pa.) of Amherst and Joe Lessard (Framingham, Mass.) of Tufts. Colby was third in both events a year ago, while Lessard was eighth in the 1,000 and 10th in the 1,650.

Williams senior Tyler Bonewell (Burnsville, Minn.), the Swimmer of the Meet at the 2008 NESCAC Championships, hopes to put on a repeat performance this weekend after racing to the individual title in all three breaststroke events, setting a new meet standard in the 50. Among those in the hunt to dethrone Bonewell will be the Tufts tandem of senior James Longhurst (Swampscott, Mass.) and junior Lawrence Chan (Fresh Meadows, N.Y.) along with Bowdoin's Mecray. Longhurst placed fourth in the 50 and 100 while Chan was right behind in fifth in both events. Mecray currently holds the third-best time in the conference in the 50 along with the fourth-best in the 100.

Looking to earn his first victory in the backstroke at the NESCAC championship will be Middlebury senior Zach Woods (Monroe, N.Y.). Woods owns the best performance in the 50-yard backstroke so far this season and has finished as the runner-up in the 200 at each of the last two conference meets. Woods will have to fend off a competitive field that includes Connecticut College rookie Tim Walsh (Lincoln Park, N.J.) and Williams sophomore Worth MacDonald (Atlanta, Ga.). Both swimmers are among the league leaders in the breaststroke this year.

Williams senior Norman Scott (Elmsford, N.Y.) will be in pursuit of all three butterfly crowns this weekend. Scott has won the 50-yard butterfly at each of the last three championships but has yet to claim all three events at the same meet. Although he set the championship record for the 50, 100 and 200 a year ago, his 100 record-setting time - the only title to elude him during his career - came in the preliminary races as he finished second during the evening finals. Among the challengers for the fly races will be Connecticut College junior Pat Troy (Bradford, N.H.) who currently sits behind Scott's conference-best times in the 50 and 100.

Amherst senior Kai Robinson (Vashon, Wash.) returns to defend his titles in the 1-meter and 3-meter diving events. Robinson broke the meet record in the 3-meter and was less than six points away from also setting the 1-meter standard during last year's championship. Three of the five relay events went to Williams in 2008, the 200 and 400-yard medley relay along with the 800-yard freestyle relay. Amherst, Connecticut College, Tufts, Middlebury and Williams have posted some of the best times in the relays this year and will look to gain valuable points during those events.

Competition will get underway each day with preliminary heats at 10:00 a.m. Finals will begin at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, 5:50 p.m. Saturday, and 5:30 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets are \$6 per session or \$10 for a day pass for adults and \$1 per session for children and students. Doors will open two hours prior to the heats and finals. A complete championship schedule along with real-time results will be available at [www.nescac.com](http://www.nescac.com).

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