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**WOMEN'S SWIMMING & DIVING Championship Preview - Feb. 17, 2009**      **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **WOMEN'S SWIMMING & DIVING CHAMPIONSHIPS BEGIN FRIDAY AT BOWDOIN** *Williams in Search of Ninth NESAC Crown*

HADLEY, Mass. - Eight-time NESAC Women's Swimming & Diving Champion Williams College will look to add to its legacy this weekend when the Ephs join the rest of the conference at the 2009 NESAC Women's Swimming and Diving Championships. The three-day event begins on Friday, Feb. 20 with preliminary heats in the morning and championship races in the evening at the Leroy Greason Pool on the campus of Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine. Fans unable to attend the event can follow all of the action live via the Internet on JumboCast.

Williams cruised to the 2008 crown with a 1,853-point performance, well above the second-place showing of 1,481.5 points from Middlebury. The Ephs were able to claim six events at the 24-event championship as their depth was once again enough to lift them to the overall title for the eighth year in a row. The Panthers finished as the runner-up for the second time in three years, swapping places with Amherst after the Jeffs placed second in 2007. Connecticut College edged out Tufts for fourth place for the second-straight year, as the Camels had a 17-point advantage over the Jumbos.

In the freestyle events, all eyes will be on Amherst sophomore Kendra Stern (Albuquerque, N.M.) to see if she will repeat the performance at last year's championship that earned her 2008 Swimmer of the Meet honors. Stern already holds the NESAC meet record for the 100, 200 and 500-yard freestyle races and has posted the top times in the conference for those events so far this season. Older sister Meaghan, participating in her final NESAC championship this weekend, will look to team up with Kendra in the hopes of giving Amherst a dominant finish in the mid-distance freestyle events. Youth will once again be on display in the 50-yard freestyle this year, as 10 of the top 11 times in the league belong to first year and sophomore competitors. Last February the top six individuals in the championship final were rookie participants, with Williams' Olivia Card-Childers (Houston, Texas) coming away with the title. Joining Card-Childers in the pursuit of the 50 title will be sophomores Charlotte Green (New Canaan, Conn.) of Bates and Emily McDonald (Glenwood Springs, Colo.) of Middlebury along with Connecticut College first year Erika Fernandes (Westport, Mass.). McDonald was second to Card-Childers in 2008 by four-tenths of a second, while Green placed fifth.

The Ephs may have the advantage in the long distance freestyle events. Sophomore Ryan McChesney (Atlanta, Ga.) will be back to defend her individual titles in both the 1,000 and 1,650-yard freestyle. Joining her in the hunt will be classmate Erin Altenburger (Mendham, N.J.) and senior Mary Wilson Molen (Birmingham, Ala.). Molen has placed in the top four in both events during each of her three previous championship appearances, finishing second in the 1,650 in 2006 and again in 2007.

The backstroke races will feature plenty of competition. Colby senior Kelsey Potdevin (Juneau, Alaska) returns in search of her third 50-yard crown after taking the title in 2006 and again in 2008. Potdevin will face stiff competition from Bates junior Katelyn Drake (Hudson, Ohio), as she finished fifth in the 50 and third in the 100 and 200 last year. The Williams tandem of senior Amanda Nicholson (Chappaqua, N.Y.) and sophomore Ellen Ramsey (Belmont, Mass.) also have their eyes on the 200 title. Nicholson currently holds the fastest time in the NESAC in the 200, while Ramsey is the top returner from the 2008 championship, placing second.

The breaststroke events feature a talented pool of competitors all vying for their first individual title. Williams junior Lisa Cucolo (Glenville, N.Y.) currently holds the inside track on the field as she owns the fastest times in the conference in the 50, 100 and 200-yard breaststroke. Cucolo's competition will include senior teammate Courtney Asher (Berwyn, Pa.), who finished third in the 100 and fourth in the 200 last year. Other swimmers in the hunt for the breaststroke titles will be Bowdoin sophomore Caitlin Callahan (Essex, Conn.) and Middlebury senior Catherine Suppan (Burlington, Vt.). Callahan is the top returner from last year's 50, while Suppan placed in the top eight in the 100 and 200.

Markia Ross of Middlebury dominated the butterfly events for three consecutive years, winning the 50, 100 and 200-yard events at each of the last three conference meets. Looking to usher in a new era will be Williams first year Logan Todhunter (Ithaca, N.Y.). Todhunter holds the fastest times in the conference in all three races, marks that rival the championship record times in the butterfly events.

The top three places in four of the five relay events were held by Amherst, Middlebury and Williams a year ago, with the Jeffs setting the championship mark with their victories in the 400 and 800 freestyle relay and the 400 medley relay. This year, the Ephs appear to have the upper hand as they enter the weekend with the top times in four of the five contested relay events, however Williams will be challenged by Bates, Bowdoin, Colby and Tufts in addition to old foes Amherst and Middlebury.

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).