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## OU swimmer among fastest in nation

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

One of the fastest swimmers in Oakland University history is preparing to make his mark on the national collegiate scene.

Sophomore Chris Sullivan, whose times in the 50 and 100 free of 19.63 and 43.62 set new school, pool and conference records at the National Independence Conference Championships (NICs), qualified with four of his teammates to compete at the **NCAA Men's Swimming and Diving Championships** March 27-29 at the University of Texas in Austin.

Sullivan, a computer engineering major, currently is sixth in the nation in the 50 free, his best event. Of the American swimmers in the top six, only Anthony Ervin, an Olympic gold medallist from Cal-Berkeley, has a faster time.

"In the 50 free, the world record is 19.1 (seconds). Chris is at 19.6, which doesn't sound like much, but every little thing he's doing in training now counts toward reaching it," said OU Assistant Swim Coach Jon Teal, who works closely with Sullivan and the other sprinters. "We work together on developing explosive power, which is especially important in his event. With more experience at national and international events, we think he has a shot (at the Olympics)."

Even though Sullivan has the potential to become a member of the U.S. Olympic team next year, that's not what he's focused on at the moment.

"I'm already in the top eight (nationally) in both the 50 and 100 free, and if I can beat my best times at the NCAAs, then that will lead me to other goals," Sullivan said. "I haven't really thought about the Olympics yet. When the time comes, if I'm ready, then I'll be there. Right now, I'm just focusing on the smaller things. If I accomplish those, it will lead me to the bigger things. If I can improve my times from the NIC meet, then I should do well."

Sullivan qualified for the NCAAs last year and finished 20th in the 50 free and 44th in the 100 free. The experience he gained should prove to be a big asset this year, OU head swim coach Pete Hovland said.

"At the NCAAs last year, Chris swam just a tad off his qualifying times," Hovland said. "It takes a lot to get invited to the NCAAs. From top to bottom it's the fastest meet in the world, and for Chris to go to that stage for the first time ever and come close to duplicating his qualifying times shows that he handled it extremely well.

"Experience will be a huge factor for Chris this year, and we've talked with him about that. It's almost as if you have to lose the first time in order to learn what it takes to win the second time. He's learned to adapt, and I don't think he'll feel overwhelmed. And with four of his teammates also qualifying, there will be a bigger comfort level."

This season, Sullivan won all of his 50 free races and was beaten just once in the 100 free. He's taken his performance level up another notch and already displays some of the qualities that make up the very best swimmers.

"Chris definitely has a lot of talent, but to get to the level he's approaching, you have to do it with hard work," Hovland said. "He came out of Rockford (Mich.) as a talented high school swimmer who made huge strides as a senior. He's still becoming adjusted because our season is twice as long as a high school season. He's trained with us all summer long, and we told him it would pay dividends.

"In an event in which the top swimmers are post-graduates at age 23 to 27, they're more mature physically and emotionally. Chris is still growing and the physical maturation is yet to come. He still has a relatively high ceiling and has a lot of room for improvement."

Sullivan has committed to spending a considerable amount of time training for the high levels to which he aspires. He and his teammates train about six hours a day – three hours of pool time in the morning, and one hour of pool time and two hours in the weight room in the afternoon.

"I think swimming and training year-round will help increase my level of ability," Sullivan said. "I'm still growing and adding muscle. I spend time with my coaches who critique my technique. There's always more to do, and I feel I'm getting closer to my

goals."

As for the Olympics, both Hovland and Teal think Sullivan has a chance of being on the American team.

"If Chris keeps improving at this rapid rate, and if we can get him exposed to the experience of competing at that level, it's not unlikely that he'd be in the Olympics," Hovland said. "To be one of the top sprinters, a lot comes with experience and maturity. Chris is very unassuming, and in that respect, it's a lot of fun to work with him. We're experiencing this with him. We don't know how far he can go – it's really up to Chris. We're just exposing him to the process as best we can without overwhelming him."

Sullivan also will compete in the 100 fly at the NCAA championships after making the consideration time with 48.50 and will compete in OU's 200- and 400-free relay as well as the 200- and 400-medley relay. The teammates joining him at this year's NCAAs are junior Sean Broadbent (Windsor, Ontario), freshman Scott Dickens (Ancaster, Ontario), senior Doug Drazien (West Bloomfield, Mich.) and freshman Eric Lynn (Plymouth, Mich.).

Dickens made the automatic qualifying standard in the 100 breaststroke with a time of 54.17. He also will compete in the 200 individual medley and 200 breaststroke events for making consideration times of 1:49.06 and 2:00.92. In addition, he will compete in the 200- and 400-medley relay and potentially the 400-free relay.

Broadbent will compete in the 100 freestyle after making the consideration time with 44.74. He also will compete in the 200- and 400-free relay as well as the 200- and 400-medley relay. Lynn and Drazien will compete in the relays.

Oakland is one of the top 20 schools in the country to be represented at the NCAA championships. Only 20 schools have four or more entries in the meet including Oakland with five.

Visit the [OU Athletics](#) Web site for the latest news on Oakland's swimmers at the [NCAA Men's Swimming and Diving Championships](#). For a team roster, statistics, records and archived stories, visit the [OU Men's Swimming and Diving](#) Web pages.

#### SUMMARY

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