

2004 UPA High School Ultimate Championships - Girls Division: Preview

by Jones Oliver

Note: Thank you to the coaches and players that contributed via email to these articles; my apologies for any omissions and errors.

One year ago, in Birmingham, Alabama, the Amherst girls displayed to the nation why they have won more national tournaments than any other team. Simply, they have depth.

Last year, the finals game was Amherst Varsity versus Amherst Junior Varsity. The Varsity squad won that game 13-5.

In fact, they have won the trophy the last five years. In 1998, the only year they didn't bring home the brass ring, they placed second.

This year, there are eleven other teams from around the country placing their sites on the Amherst squad as the action moves to Corvallis, Oregon.

How does **Amherst** plan on defending their title? This season Amherst has eight returning players from last year's championship team with the rest of the roster backfilled by last year's second place squad. They were winners of their own invitational tournament in early May and had a spring season record of 10-4. Amherst is led by the hot throws of juniors Emily Baecher and Brittany Kaplan and the speed of junior Southey Saul, freshman Amber Sinicrope, and sophomore Chelsea Murphy. Defense is anchored by sophomore Dory Ziperstein's hot layout D and junior Spring Greeney's tireless efforts. The coaches are Susan Morello and Jason Stevens.

The **Amherst Junior Varsity A** squad (this year Amherst has added a junior varsity B squad) is poised again to make noise in this year's tournament. In its sixth year, the team is not just an on-ramp to the Varsity squad, this is a hungry group looking to play against their teammates in the final game.

From Massachusetts, hail the **Andover Golden Gophers**. Returning for their third year to the big dance, they are joined by the girls of Hotchkiss. The Golden Gophers are looking to improve on their strong quarterfinals performance from last year against Cincinnati.

Corvallis Storm is making its first Nationals appearance. Storm has played primarily co-ed disc, with players from the Crescent Valley High School team finishing third at this year's Oregon High School Championships, Philomath High School, winners of the 2002 and 2003 High School State Trophy, and Corvallis High School. Juniors Shannon McDowell and Emily Chi anchor Storm. McDowell is defensive-minded and a solid handler while Chi brings speed and determination to every point. Danielle Leiske, the current Oregon State University women's coach, leads Storm along with Lora Liegel, a former Crescent Valley High School Ultimate standout who currently resides on the Beaver's roster.

Eugene Lilith will find themselves in their first Nationals tournament. The team is a collaboration of Sheldon, South Eugene, and Churchill High Schools. The Eugene schools have traditionally been strong in Oregon, with Churchill and South Eugene in the finals game of the co-ed Oregon Championship in April. Jeremy and Jen Washburn coach this young, unassuming, and talented team.

From Madison will arrive the **Mahadivas**. This season marks their fourth trip to the big event, and every year has been an improvement over the previous. With a victory at Mudbath this year, the Mahadivas will be in the hunt at this year's tournament.

The **Minnesota Misces** (pronounced miss-kiss) will be traveling to Nationals for the second year. Last year, their first year as a team, they were awarded the SOTG trophy in Birmingham. Though they lost most of the team last year to graduation, they're bringing an enthusiastic team to Corvallis this May.

In Nashville is the **University School of Nashville**. Too Brutal is making a return to Nationals in 2004 after a quarterfinals appearance in 2003. This last year has been busy as they've competed in a handful of tournaments, including a win at MTSU's Evan E. Buckner Memorial tournament and second at Juniors Terminus, both as a co-ed team. Though they appear to be a roster filled with undergraduates, they'll make their arrival known in Oregon.

Seattle Deluge consists primarily of students from The Northwest School. Returning almost the entire squad that placed third last year in Alabama, this Seattle squad has played everywhere it could get a bid, including club sectionals and local college tournaments. They're hungry, more experienced, and will likely be playing on Sunday.

Northwest School Girls also carries student body cards from The Northwest School in Seattle, Washington. This team has a history going back to 1996, where it began with the co-ed game. Just this year, the program has separated into single-gender programs and is eager to play against other programs from around the country.

The **Stuyvesant Sticky Fingers** from New York, New York, will be returning after their quarterfinals appearance last year in Alabama. This is a team with solid newcomers and steady seniors. As apparent from their season record, they've posted more wins than losses against mostly local college women's teams.

From Abbotsford, British Columbia will travel **Yale Secondary Ultimate**. Traditionally, a very strong co-ed team, Yale Secondary will form single gender teams for this year's Nationals tournament. This team brings resilient and tenacious defense every point with a steady, patient offense to balance their game.

Wrapping it up, it's easy to see that the road to the top will not be easy. Not until Sunday afternoon, after two days of great high school disc, will we see who walks away with the 2004 trophy.