

2004 UPA High School Ultimate Championships - Open 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.

The High School Ultimate Championships in Corvallis, Oregon will host sixteen of the best open teams from around the country to compete for the 2004 trophy. Judging from each team's depth, this could be the best field yet.

For the first time in the history of the High School National Tournament, the same school went home with both the open and girl's trophy in 2003. The **Amherst Hurricanes** will be traveling to Oregon this year in search of their third national title, after also winning it in 1998. The almost famous Tiina Booth coaches the Hurricanes, who will bring a deep and talented team to Corvallis.

Alameda Dark Meat, in from Alameda, California, brings a strong senior squad to this year's tournament. They've been playing in local California tournaments and are anxious to play in this year's Nationals.

The **Beacon Blue Devils** from NY, NY claims to have learned tough defense from playing on dirt baseball fields every morning at 6:30 throughout the spring. The green grass in Corvallis will hopefully be more inviting. Either way, this team has a single focus to win the 2004 trophy. The team in blue is led by senior Matthew "Trigger" Troy-Regier with jumps, throws, and cuts. He's the spark plug in the huddle. Senior Ignacio Yz will be the player with the disc in the red zone, and seniors Ricky Charles and Jonah Stevens are by no means just placeholders with their athletic, blue-collar games. The rest of the starting line-up is made of guys with names like "Gonzo" (the "glue guy"), "Squeak" (great handler and a great popper), and "The Eraser" (Mr. D). Their list of tournament successes this year is lengthy. Look for Beacon deep in bracket play on Sunday.

Midwest Express, from Madison Memorial High School in Madison, Wisconsin, will roll into Corvallis for their fifth trip to Nationals. Their best finish came in 2000 where they placed third. This year, with a senior-heavy squad, they're ready and hungry to improve on their quarterfinals appearance last year.

From Maplewood, New Jersey, **Columbia High School** is looking again to bring their game to Nationals. With the longtime question, "Where was Ultimate invented?" this team happily maintains their stake on history as the home of Ultimate. This year, CHS is looking to add to that Ultimate history.

Nashville's team history, submitted along with their roster to the UPA, says it all: *"There are forces in this world besides evil, so in 1999, Brutal Grassburn fought off strong challengers to win the coveted Junior Nationals trophy. Many years passed, and history became legend, legend became myth, and until now the trophy passed out of all knowledge. Until when chance came, it ensnared new bearers. The championship trophy came to the creatures of MOHO, Gruel, and Amherst, who took it deep into their tunnels of the Misty Mountains. And there, it consumed them. The National Title brought these teams unnatural long life. For years it poisoned their minds. And in the gloom of their caves, it waited. Rumor grew of a shadow in the East, whispers of a nameless fear, and the trophy perceived. Now the trophy seeks its former owner, a brave and cunning fellowship: Brutal Grassburn."* The report continues, *"We've been searching for our National championship; and now you offer us a chance to take it? We do not deny that our hearts have greatly desired this. We shall take the trophy; the rightful kings shall be crowned. Now come to pass the days of Brutal Grassburn, and may they be blessed."*

The **Northfield Mt. Hermon** squad calls Northfield, Massachusetts home. This team has been established for six years and has attended the national tournament for four

years, last year competing in the semifinals in Alabama. This year, they return eleven players from that squad and are looking again to make a run at the trophy.

The **Nathan Hale Raiders** of Seattle, Washington will be making its first trip to Nationals this year. The squad is led by senior Sam Harkness with his big D and solid handling. A young team, the Raiders are looking to establish some tradition for years to come.

Northwest School Varsity from Seattle, Washington arrives in Oregon after winning the co-ed Spring Reign tournament in April and the open Washington Trophy in early May. With a program that beckons back to 1996, the school switched from co-ed disc to the single-gender game in 2004. This is a young and talented team; with only three seniors on the 21-player roster, Northwest School is looking forward to the competition in Corvallis.

Cretin-Derham Hall High School is the home of **Raging Safari**. With a long history, including the SOTG trophy at nationals in 1998, this squad is looking to make some noise in Corvallis.

St. John's-Ravenscourt 1812, from Winnipeg, Manitoba, may have more frequent flyer miles than any team in the tournament. They've attended tournaments in Seattle, Minnesota, Madison, Atlanta, and all across Canada. Two of their players will be representing Canada in Turku, Finland this summer at the Juniors World Championships. Juniors Josh Magnusson and David Bryngelson will break from their practices with the Canadian National team to bring their game to Corvallis.

The open team with the shortest commute, **South Eugene Axemen**, brings a gritty game to this year's National tournament. The core of this team is senior Breeze Strout. He has throws, speed, and jumps. Senior Dusty Becker brings his up-tempo D, and his resilience, to the 2004 dance. After breaking his throwing thumb earlier in the season, Dusty didn't rest, and instead, played the entire fall season

throwing with his left hand. Just completing a win at this year's Oregon High School Championship, this squad has a single focus of winning the national title.

The other team from Madison, Wisconsin, **West Ultimate**, is coming from wins at Madison Fall Classic and the Madison Mudbath. Defensive minded senior Bob Sanders and senior Tom Annen, a competent handler, lead the squad. Senior Garrett Mortenson, or Mort, rounds out the team with height and athletic ability. The coaching tandem is John Hugget, who helped launch the Madison Summer League, and Dan Ackerstein is the former Duke coach.

Wissahickon High School from Ambler, Pennsylvania has had a strong fall and spring and is looking to line up against the top teams in the country in Corvallis.

Woodward Academy Ultimate from College Park, Georgia has been around for seven years. This year's squad is primarily juniors, however, based on their fall and spring success, teams won't want to underestimate Instant Karma.

Yale Secondary, from Abbotsford, British Columbia, brings a long list of tournament victories to their first single gender tournament. Those W's include four provincial championships, four league championships, and four Spring Reign Tournament trophies. This team executes well on offense and plays synchronized defense. Yale very well could be playing into Sunday.

So, there you have it. These are sixteen of the most spirited and competitive high school teams around. Regardless of the final standings, this year's national tournament has all the ingredients of a classic.