



# STANFORD— THE PROHIBITIVE FAVORITE

STORY BY DAN D'ADDONA  
PHOTO BY PETER H. BICK

**Not even a relay disqualification—which hurt Stanford's chances of winning last year's NCAA Division I Women's Swimming and Diving Championships—can prevent the Cardinal from taking the title at this year's meet.**

The Stanford women's swimming and diving team lost a heartbreaker at last year's NCAA Championships. The Cardinal lost 40 points after they were disqualified for a 4-hundredths of a second false start in the women's 200 free relay. Georgia ended up winning the meet by 19 points over Stanford.

However, Coach Greg Meehan's team has reloaded for 2017 like none other. The Cardinal add freshman Katie Ledecky—the most dominant swimmer on the planet—and also return Simone Manuel, who red-shirted last season to train for the Olympics. Both were Olympic gold medalists and should lead Stanford to this year's title, March 15-18, at Indiana University Natatorium in Indianapolis.

## SWIMMING WORLD MAGAZINE'S TOP 10

SCHOOL	LAST YEAR'S FINISH	LAST YEAR'S POINTS	POINTS RETURNING	POINTS LOST	SCORERS RETURNING
1. Stanford	2	395.0	323.5	71.5	9*
2. California	3	358.0	245.0	113.0	8
3. Georgia	1	414.0	253.5	160.5	9*
4. Texas A&M	4	309.0	307.0	2.0	11
5. Texas	15	79.0	79.0	0	10
6. USC	6	244.5	209.5	35.0	7
7. Virginia	5	264.0	195.0	69.0	8
8. Michigan	10	150.0	113.0	37.0	7
9. Louisville	8	220.0	130.5	89.5	7
10. NC State	9	155.0	126.5	28.5	7

\* = includes Olympians who sat out last season, but scored two years ago



### 1. STANFORD CARDINAL

Last year: 2nd (395 points)  
Returning points: 323.5

If it isn't enough that the Stanford women return more points than the rest of its competition (16.5 more than last year's fourth-place finisher, Texas A&M, and 70 points more than defending champion Georgia), the addition of freshman Katie Ledecy and redshirt junior Simone Manuel could add 100-plus points on their individual events alone, not to mention their relay contributions!

Ledecy and Manuel are two of the biggest names in women's swimming after their Olympic performances in Rio. Ledecy won four gold medals and a silver. Manuel took home two gold and two silver medals while becoming the first African-American woman to capture gold in an individual event (tie for first in the 100 free).

And there's more—much more! Stanford returns Olympic diver Kassidy Cook after a redshirt season; Olympic sprinter Lia Neal; defending NCAA champion in both individual medleys Ella Eastin; and 11-time All-American and four-time NCAA relay champion Janet Hu. Ally Howe, Lindsey Engel, Nicole Stafford and diver Gracia Leydon Mahoney also scored points last year.



### 2. CALIFORNIA GOLDEN BEARS

Last year: 3rd (358 points)  
Returning points: 245

The Golden Bears are at a crossroads. It sounds silly to say that about a team that finished third in the nation last year and could finish second this year, but it's true. This is a much different team than in previous years. Gone are some of the biggest names in swimming—Missy Franklin, Rachel Bootsma, Caitlin Leverenz and Elizabeth Pelton.

But Cal was able to reload last year with two freshman stars, Kathleen Baker and Amy Bilquist, who are primed to lead the Golden Bears as sophomores. Baker made the Olympics last year, capturing silver in the 100 back and gold on the 400 medley relay. She was the NCAA runner-up in the 200 IM in 2016, and made the consolation finals in both backstroke events. Bilquist was the anchor of the champion 200 freestyle relay, and finished fourth and fifth in the 100 and 200 backstrokes.

Coach Teri McKeever also welcomes sprinter Abbey Weitzeil, a freshman Olympian who's set to challenge Stanford's Simone Manuel at NCAAs and anchor some relays.

Senior Farida Osman, an Olympian from Egypt, has been huge on relays and has scored in individual events, as has senior Celina Li. Cal is loaded with top-level talent.



### 3. GEORGIA BULLDOGS

Last year: 1st (414 points)  
Returning points: 253.5

Coach Jack Bauerle's Bulldogs took advantage of a Stanford relay DQ to claim last year's NCAA women's title by 19 points. But to repeat as champions and claim their fourth championship in the last five years and eighth overall, they'll need to do so without graduating seniors and national champions Hali Flickinger and Brittany MacLean.

Still, Georgia has nine returning scorers, led by senior Olympian Olivia Smoliga, who won the national title in the 50 and 100 freestyles and posted the second fastest 100 backstroke time (although it came in her ninth-place finish to win the consolation final).

The Bulldogs also return scorers Kylie Stewart, Meaghan Raab, Emily Cameron, Stephanie Peters, Olivia Ball, Rachel Zilinskas and Megan Kingsley, along with Canadian Chantal Van Landeghem, who redshirted last season and won an Olympic bronze medal in the 400 freestyle relay.



### 4. TEXAS A&M AGGIES

Last year: 4th (309 points)  
Returning points: 307

The Texas A&M women's team roster has plenty of names of whom you have probably never heard! Then again, the Aggies prefer to remain under the radar—but it's going to be difficult to be considered underdogs this year after their fourth-place NCAA finish in 2016.

Coach Steve Bultman's Aggies return 307 points (second most behind Stanford's 323.5) from their 309 total last year, and have 11 returning scorers—more than any other team.

Junior Lisa Bratton finished fourth in the 200 backstroke, tied for fifth in the 200 IM and placed seventh in the 400 IM last year to become just the second swimmer in team history to final in all three of her individual events at NCAAs. She also is coming off a strong U.S. Olympic Trials that saw her miss out on Rio by 31-hundredths of a second, finishing third in the 200 backstroke.

Junior Bethany Galat also just missed out on Rio, finishing third at Trials in the 200 breast (by 13-hundredths) and the 400 IM (by 88-hundredths). At last year's NCAAs, she finished fifth in both of those events.



### 5. TEXAS LONGHORNS

Last year: 15th (79 points)  
Points returning: 79

The Longhorns have been the toughest team to figure out. Texas fell far short of expectations in 2016, missing out on the top 10 at NCAAs, but started off the new season by knocking off Auburn and Georgia in dual meets in early January.

Their win over Georgia (ranked No. 2 at the time) ended the Bulldogs' 103-meet home win streak! The Longhorns won every event but the 100 backstroke—and they were even briefly ranked No. 1 in the nation after their stunning victory.

Freshman Claire Adams and senior Madisyn Cox will provide a balanced scoring effort for Coach Carol Capitani's Lady Longhorns. Adams is a backstroker and freestyler from the nation's No. 1 high school team for the last four years, Carmel High School of Indiana. Cox is coming off a U.S. Olympic Trials in which she finished fourth in both individual medley events. She was fourth at NCAAs in the 200 IM and ninth in the 400 IM in 2016.

If returning scorers Brooke Hansen, Remedy Rule, Rebecca Millard, Jordan Surhoff and Tasija Karosas can get to the next level, Texas will turn some heads and have a huge turnaround season after finishing 15th at last year's NCAAs.



### 6. USC TROJANS

Last year: 6th (244.5 points)  
Returning points: 209.5

The USC women had a successful season in 2016, finishing sixth at NCAAs. The Trojans have a slew of points returning, but have remained under the radar since they are in a conference (Pac-12) that includes teams that could go 1-2 in the nation.

Coach Dave Salo's Trojans are led by freshmen Louise Hansson and Becca Mann along with senior Anika Apostalon. Hansson is an IMer and butterflyer who competed for Sweden in the Rio Olympics. She adds big-meet experience, as does Mann, who has been a member of the U.S. national team in distance freestyle and IM. Apostalon was a five-time All-American last year, which included a national championship in the 400 freestyle relay.

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Leah Smith, Virginia

All-America breastroker Riley Scott, along with Hansson, give the Trojans a huge boost in the medley relays. And USC returns three of the four swimmers who won the school's first-ever NCAA title in the 400 freestyle relay last year: sophomore Kirsten Vose plus seniors Chelsea Chenault and Apostalon.



### 7. VIRGINIA CAVALIERS

Last year: 5th (264 points)  
Returning points: 195

Virginia has been on the rise for the past five years, culminating with a top-5 finish in 2016. But if they want to continue that trend, they'll need to replace some major points following the graduation of Courtney Bartolomew, who was the NCAA runner-up in both backstroke events, took 10th in the 200 IM and contributed to multiple point-scoring Cavalier relays.



### 8. MICHIGAN WOLVERINES

Last year: 10th (150 points)  
Returning points: 113

The Wolverines are coming off an excellent season in 2015-16, winning the Big Ten championship and placing 10th at NCAAs. While losing Ali DeLoof to graduation, Michigan still returns a strong group of All-Americans who will try to keep the Wolverines among the nation's elite.

Siobhan Haughey, an Olympian from Hong Kong, was the Big Ten Swimmer of the Championships last year as a freshman and an All-American in the 200 freestyle. She currently ranks among the nation's top five in multiple events.

Coach Mike Bottom also expects the Wolverines to receive a scoring boost from Rose Bi, Gabby DeLoof, Catie DeLoof and Clara Smiddy.



### 9. LOUISVILLE CARDINALS

Last year: 8th (220 points)  
Returning points: 130.5

The Cardinals scored in all five relays at last year's NCAAs and will have strong relays again at this year's championships. However, losing Kelsi Worrell to graduation will hurt Louisville considerably—not only did she contribute to four of those five relays, but she also won the 100 and 200 fly, and placed fourth in the 50 free.

Coach Arthur Albiero has seven swimmers on his roster who scored 130.5 points last year, and he'll need them to have repeat performances for Louisville to stay in the top 10.



### 10. NORTH CAROLINA STATE WOLFPACK

Last year: 9th (155 points)  
Returning points: 126.5

The Wolfpack made a statement in late January when they upset Virginia (then ranked No. 5) in a dual meet, 153-147. NC State proved then that it is a contender—not only for the ACC title, but also for a spot among the nation's top 10.

Much like their nickname, the strength of the Wolfpack is in the pack, and NC State's relays will be their driving force at NCAAs. Coach Braden Holloway's squad scored points in all five relays last year, and seven swimmers from those events return this season. Leading the Pack are three seniors: backstroke Alexia Zevnik (sixth and seventh last year, respectively, in the 100 and 200 back), breastroker Kayla Brumbaum and flyer Natalie Labonge (16th in the 100 fly). ❖

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