Fall Sports Preview
An inside view of trends and people to watch
Compiled by Todd Kennedy

MEN’S CROSS COUNTRY
For the first time in years, men’s cross country coach Willy Wood cannot look at his team and identify a potential individual Ivy League champi-
on. But even if a void exists at the front of the pack, it seems likely the team will win a sec-
on-straight Ivy League title.
“I’m confident that we can be as good as we’ve ever been,” Wood says. “There’s not a kid on this team who doesn’t think we’ll be significantly better.”
Junior Mark Olivier, who finished 14th in the Heptagonal Ivy League Championships, made sec-
tion team All-Ivy last fall.

WOMEN’S CROSS COUNTRY
The LaVern Gibson cross country course may be just a series of hills in the Indiana countryside, but there isn’t a college runner in the nation who doesn’t ache to run at the home of the NCAA Championships.
Seniors online Bierbaum, Tenke Zoltani, Lisa Stublich, and Hillary Rontz, along with junior Justin Meyers and soph-
omore Carmen Ballard, all return from last year’s team, which placed 13th of 31 at the NCAA Championships.
Bierbaum won the Heptagonal Ivy League Championships (the first Columbia woman to do so) and outdistanced all but two runners to finish third of 248 in the NCAA Championships.

FIELD HOCKEY
In just one year with head coach Katie Beach at the helm, the Lions are poised to advance in competitive Ivy League field hockey.
Beach installed a team defense that resulted in the Lions giving up 36 fewer goals, goalkeeper Kristina George sliced her goals-against aver-
age in half from 2003.
The Lions had holes to fill in the midfield, and Beach did just that by recruiting four midfielders to complement senior co-captain Courtney Robinson and honorable mention All-Ivy midfielder Liz Reeve.
In 2004, the Lions more than doubled their goal total from the previous season, and all three forwards will return to action in 2005. Diana Day and Ramie Merrill will lead the Lions’ attack. Day led the team with five goals last sea-
son.

FOOTBALL
The Lions lost five All-Ivy players to graduation includ-
ing NFL signees Wade Fletcher and Michael Quarshie. However, a closely-knit group remains for 2005. “I like the quiet confidence that is developing in this group,” said head coach Bob Shoop.
“This is the most team-orient-
ed bunch we’ve had since I’ve been here.”
The Lions’ defensive backs may be the highlight of the squad. Strong safety Keenan Shaw and cornerback Prosper Nwokocha were honorable mention All-Ivy in 2004, while free safety Tad Crawford made 94 tackles to lead the team.
Senior Joe Winters and sophomore Craig Horrman are in healthy competition for the role of starting quar-
terback. They will throw to a seasoned group of receivers led by Brandon Bowser, Pete Chromiak and Adrian Demko.

WOMEN’S SOCCER
Coming off just the third losing season during head coach Dieter Ficken’s 26-year career at Columbia, men’s soccer had shown a renewed commitment to success. Led by a strong senior class and featuring some of the best young talent in the league, Columbia is a dark horse can-
idate for the league title.
The backline will have the experience of more than 130 collegiate matches Senior co-captain Blake Lindberg earned second team All-Ivy honors and will anchor the defense.

On the other side of the ball, sophomore Tom Davison is the team’s leading returning scorer. Also returning is junior John Mulhern, who earned an All-Ivy honorable mention.
If history is any indicator, the Lions are destined for suc-
cess in 2005; the three Ficken teams that finished with a los-
ing record averaged 11 wins the following season, and won two Ivy League champi-

VOLLEYBALL
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etes and now has them poised for success. Last year, the team tripled its overall win-total. Now, with some experienced sophomores in its ranks along with some new faces, the team expects to see continued improvement in 2005.
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At middle hitter, the Lions return Nikki Learned, who was named All-Ivy last season. The Lions also expect Natalie Gerling to dominate on the right side of the court.
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