



Closing with a bang

Festival concludes amid fireworks and fellowship

The 2006 Division II National Championships Festival came to a close Saturday evening at Flounders Chowder House with the sounds of waves crashing on the beach and fireworks sparkling in the sky.

“Every NCAA championship that we host, there is a winner and there is a loser, we hand out the awards and then everyone goes home,” said Division II Vice President Mike Racy. “With the closing ceremonies, it allows us to get everyone together and celebrate Division II. This can only happen when we have a championships Festival.”

The closing ceremonies opened with the student-athletes playing beach games, including volleyball, soccer and tug of war while also listening to the sounds of LMR2. The ceremonies also featured awards for academic and athletics performance, a

highlight video of the week’s activities, and the chance for fellow student-athletes to enjoy the company of Division II student-athletes from across the nation one last time.

“The location was great,” said Ryan Kerr, a soccer player from Fort Lewis. “The facilities, the hotels, everything was just amazing...Having the top student-athletes from across the country in the same place all with the same goal has been an amazing experience. The closing ceremonies is just one more way to celebrate with our fellow student-athletes.”

The teams with the highest grade-point averages in each sport were honored with academic awards. The winners were: Edinboro in men’s cross country with a 3.13 GPA, Edinboro in women’s cross

country with 3.67, Lincoln Memorial in men’s soccer with 3.2, Grand Valley State in women’s soccer with 3.36 GPA, Bentley in field hockey with 3.34 and Ashland in women’s volleyball with 3.5.

In addition to the academic awards, the national championship teams were presented with their gold first-place trophies. The winners were Abilene Christian in men’s cross country, Adams State in women’s cross country, Dowling in men’s soccer, Metro State in women’s soccer, Bloomsburg in field hockey and Tampa in women’s volleyball.

“Our team has had a phenomenal time,” said Bloomsburg field hockey coach Jan Hutchinson. “From the opening ceremonies at Seville Quarter to the karaoke at the Sand Box the other night to the

closing ceremonies tonight, our team has been absolutely thrilled. Our seniors have made it to the final site all four years, and this is without a doubt the most fun they have had.”

The National Championships Festival for the fall sports will be held again in 2010 at a site to be determined. However, the first fall Festival won’t quickly be forgotten.

“The entire week was a blast,” said Nathaniel Petrich, a cross country runner from Augustana College (South Dakota). “Being around college athletes your age while competing for a national championship was incredible. I have had so much fun. It will be an experience I will remember for the rest of my life.”

— Mark Bedics

