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★ OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY ★ WABASH COLLEGE ★ WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY ★ COLLEGE OF WOOSTER

NCAC Fall Special

**NORTH COAST SCHOOLS CELEBRATE LABOR DAY WEEKEND
ON THE FIELD; NCAC'S 19TH SEASON OPENS FRIDAY**

**For Immediate Release
August 28, 2002**

CLEVELAND -- The NCAC's 19th season of athletic competition opens with a bang this weekend as conference cross country, field hockey, soccer and volleyball teams storm their respective playing fields in contests, stretching from Friday through Monday.

CROSS COUNTRY REPORT

North Coast Conference Cross Country coaches picked the 2001 NCAC champion Kenyon Lords and runner-up Allegheny Gators as the men's and women's favorites respectively in their annual preseason poll. Squads from each school will try to validate the predictions when they line up this weekend. Kenyon will host Denison on Friday, while Allegheny welcomes Hiram on Saturday. Kenyon is also the defending champion on the women's side, as the Ladies edged the Gators in last October's race to claim their second NCAC title.

FIELD HOCKEY REPORT

Defending NCAC champion Wooster opens their 2002 season at Rhodes this weekend. The Fighting Scots face Lindenwood on Saturday and Rhodes on Sunday. They begin defense of their 2001 NCAC championship at home against Ohio Wesleyan on Sept. 10. Wooster may have competition for the NCAC title this year as the league's coaches, in preseason voting, predicted that Wittenberg would earn the top spot this season. The Tigers also open their season this weekend at Rhodes. Wittenberg's NCAC schedule begins Sept. 4, when Earlham travels to Springfield.

MEN'S SOCCER REPORT

The Fred Myers Invitational, running from Friday through Saturday, kicks off the 2002 campaign for 12-time NCAC champion Ohio Wesleyan. The Battling Bishops, who begin their season ranked seventh in the NSCAA/adidas Div. III Preseason National Ranking, host Olivet and either John Carroll or Case Western Reserve in their first contests of the new season. Ohio Wesleyan was unanimously picked to repeat as league champion by NCAC coaches in their preseason poll. The Bishops open their title defense when they travel to Wabash, their first conference opponent, on Sept. 21.

WOMEN'S SOCCER REPORT

Ohio Wesleyan, the defending NCAA Division III National Champions, claimed their sixth league title last fall. The Battling Bishops begin their 2002 campaign ranked first in the country in the NSCAA/adidas Div. III Preseason National Ranking. Ohio Wesleyan faces off against Kalamazoo and Albion on Saturday and Sunday at the Kenyon Classic. The Bishops begin their run toward the NCAC Tournament on Sept. 21, when they host their first league opponent, Wooster.

VOLLEYBALL REPORT

2001 North Coast Athletic Conference Champion Wittenberg enters the 2002 season with its eye on keeping its crown. The Tigers, ranked 11th in the AVCA Division III Coaches Top 20 Preseason Poll, begin a run at their ninth conference title at Mt. Saint Joseph this weekend. The non-conference tournament will serve as a warm-up for Wittenberg, who opens its NCAC schedule on Sept. 21, when it hosts Allegheny and Kenyon. The Tigers return six starters and nine letterwinners overall, including NCAC Player of the Year **Tiffany Keller (Massillon, OH/Tuslaw)**, from a 2001 team which went undefeated in league play last fall.