



## Leading a perennial talent pool

### North Penn's swim team takes a long winning tradition into the district title hunt.

By Don Beideman

Inquirer Staff Writer

North Penn captains Ryan Coupe, Brandon Ward and Dan Dingman weren't born when the Knights launched their current streak of 19 consecutive District 1 Class AAA boys' swim championships.

> But when it was their turn to join the North Penn team, Coupe, Ward and Dingman quickly learned what it takes to keep such a well-oiled program running: hard work, dedication, and a respect for history. It's a winning philosophy third-year coach Brian Daly holds true.

> "I'm very spoiled," said Daly, only the fifth coach in program history, "because the four coaches before me are still very much involved in the program. They're among the best in the state. It's a real luxury."

> For example, Rick Carroll, who began the Knights' swim program, stops in to see how things are going, even though he's retired.

> "We can tap into history," Daly added. "When the kids are tired of hearing from me, they can hear it from other guys who have been here. They have the kids in the palm of their hands. The kids have learned respect for the program."

> That dedication and respect have led to some impressive numbers for the Knights over the years. At the end of this month they will be going after a 20th straight district championship. They have won 36 straight league championships, as members of the former Bux-Mont League and in the National Conference of the Suburban One League. They also have eight PIAA championships to their credit.

> The Knights are 11-2 in dual meets this season, the losses coming to two-time defending PIAA champion Emmaus and La Salle, which is seeking its 20th straight Catholic League title.

> North Penn appears ready for another run at a district crown. The squad has 23 swimmers and four divers. Twenty-one made district qualifying times in at least one event, but the district roster has been pared to 17.

> "There's a real sense of pride on the team," said Dingman, winner of the 200 individual medley and the 100 freestyle at the conference meet last weekend. Dingman plans to swim or play water polo next

year for either Harvard, Brown, Bucknell or Carnegie-Mellon.

> Coupe is another four-year freestyler and backstroker.

> "We've always had a great coaching staff," said Coupe, an honor student who wants to be a lawyer. "We have some standouts, but even the guys who don't make districts are pushing everybody else."

> The team captains credit the popular North Penn Aquatic Club with helping to prepare young swimmers for the high school team.

> Ward transferred from La Salle to North Penn after his freshman year, so he is in only his third year with the high school team.

> "I was impressed with the tradition," said Ward, who won the 500 free at the conference meet and is hoping for his first trip to states. "Everyone does their job and is focused on the same goal."

> Daly says he not only has talented swimmers, but smart ones, too.

> "Dingman and Ward have perfect SAT math scores," Daly noted. "We have guys looking at some of the most selective colleges in the country. That keeps me on my toes. If I calculate the wrong yardage in workouts, they call me on it."

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> The North Penn girls don't have quite the district record that the boys do, but they are no slouches. The Maidens have won consecutive district crowns and a couple of state titles.

> Two of the Maidens' strengths this season - they are 11-2 and champs of the Suburban One National - have been divers Julia Tate and Laurie McLaughlin.

> Coach Kristen Bartlewitz said the Maidens were looking for a top-10 finish at states.

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Contact staff writer Don Beideman at 610-701-7613

> or [dbeideman@phillynews.com](mailto:dbeideman@phillynews.com).

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