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Friday, February 22, 2008

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## North Penn could dominate district diving

By KEV HUNTER, Staff Writer



North Penn's Laurie McLaughlin is one of the favorites heading into the District 1 diving championships after winning the Suburban One National title. Photo by Mark C. Psoras

LaSalle University.

Tomorrow's diving gets underway at 10:30 a.m.

The Maidens' Laurie McLaughlin is coming off a championship performance at the Suburban One League National Conference diving last week, teammate Shauna Hannings won the bronze at that competition, and Diana Vose earned a spot in districts at that meet.

But the big question for the Maidens is this: will Julia Tate be able to dive?

Tate is the Maidens' best diver, having finished fourth at districts last year, ninth at states, and she was having another stellar season until she hyperextended her knee a few weeks back. She missed the SOL National Meet, but is hoping to be back on Saturday.

"If you ask Julia, (her knee is) a hundred percent," Maidens diving coach Sue McDonald said after the SOL National diving championships at Abington on Feb. 14. "I'm a little more pessimistic, but I think she'll dive. I need to know that her knee won't give out. We won't know until (Saturday). I have her entered. But I don't want to risk permanent injury. I need to be sure it's not gonna go out on her, and if I'm sure of that, then she should do well."

Tate has been up on the board the past week or so, doing certain dives and easing her way back as her knee strengthens.

The Maidens don't believe the layoff from injury will affect her.

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"She's the kind of person that, not having dove for a couple weeks shouldn't hurt her," McDonald said. "She's so practiced, and so tough. Laurie (McLaughlin) would be the same way, and I think Julia can easily come back."

It will also be a big meet for McLaughlin, who finished ninth last year, just missing states by one place - she finished fourth tenths of a point behind the eighth and final spot.

So Saturday is all about taking the final step.

"I have pretty high hopes this year," McLaughlin said.

"I'd love to see the two girls on top of the medal stand (on Saturday), going to states," McDonald said of Tate and McLaughlin.

McDonald is also thrilled with the performances of Hannings and Vose. Vose had a following at the league meet - not only all the girls divers were there but also all of the boys divers made the trip that night to see her make districts and give her encouragement.

"Everyone was pulling for her," McDonald said. "It was so heartwarming that she made it."

All of North Penn's divers - boys and girls - qualified for districts this year, including Zac Nees, Frankie Murray and Michael Kohler, who went 1-2-3 at the SOL National Meet in the boys competition.

Nees is looking to make it back to states, and could have one or more of his teammates making the trip with him to Bucknell. The Knights' multitude of divers in today's competition, which starts at 5:30 p.m. at North Penn, could give them a big boost in the team scoring, and a head start towards winning a 20th straight district title.

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