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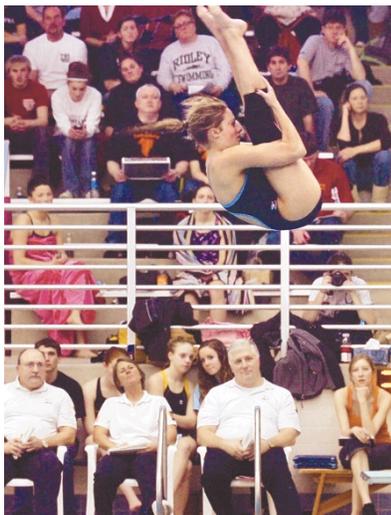
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A heart of gold

NP'S TATE BATTLES THROUGH INJURY TO WIN DISTRICT DIVING CROWN

By KEV HUNTER, Staff Writer



GEOFF PATTON/THE REPORTER *Julia Tate of North Penn won the Class AAA District 1 girls diving title on Saturday.*

TOWAMENCIN — Julia Tate was the best diver at Saturday's District One Championships, just a couple days after it was uncertain if she'd even be able to compete.

"She's tough," said her coach, Sue McDonald. "She is such a competitor. Nothing was gonna stop her."

Tate was wearing two new items this year at the district championships - a knee brace, and by the end of the meet, a gold medal.

Her score of 395.35 topped the 370.90 posted by Pennsbury's Emily Howard, who earned the silver, and Tate's teammate, senior Laurie McLaughlin, won the bronze with a score of 362.10.

Tate, a junior, was looking to make it back to states for the second year in a row, but hadn't dove in a competition since January, when she hyperextended her knee at Ridley.

"I was so nervous," Tate said. "All last night, I was freaking out. I had to go to bed early."

But Tate was as composed as ever, nailing her inward and a half pike in the first round to help put her ahead. To settle her nerves in between dives, she tried to get away from it all.

"I sat in the back and listened to my Ipod the whole time," she said.

Tate becomes the first district champ for the North Penn girls diving program in quite some time, and the first for coach Sue McDonald in her 10 years with the Maidens.

McDonald coached two girls to states this year, and both had to overcome knee injuries - McLaughlin had surgery last summer.

"The work ethic of those two is just incredible," McDonald said. Advertisement

Because of her sore knee, Tate did not get to practice all of her dives until Thursday, and leading up to the meet, her mom, a physical therapist, had her doing Stim treatment, which involved electrodes being hooked up to her knee so they could contract the muscles and make the knee stronger so it doesn't give out.

By the end of the meet, her knee was sore, but it stayed strong for her.

"I've been through a lot this season - I'm just getting over being sick," Tate said. "It was really nice to win today."

Tate had the highest score at the meet - Class AAA or Class AA. Merion Mercy's Erin Rademaker won AA with a score of 353.15.

The dream season for North Penn diving continues, and nobody is enjoying it more than McLaughlin, whose day wrapped up on the medal stand.

"I think my face was bright red because I was so excited," she said.

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