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Sunday, February 24, 2008

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For North Penn's Tate, it was quite a Maiden voyage

By DENNY DYROFF, For The Times Herald

TOWAMENCIN TOWNSHIP — North Penn High's diving ace Julia Tate has had to face a lot of obstacles this season. Illness and injuries have seemed to conspire against her all season.

But, Tate has persevered and that perseverance paid off Saturday afternoon when she claimed the gold medal at this year's Class AAA Diving Championships. She topped the field in the meet at North Penn High's Rick Carroll Natatorium with a score of 395.35. Pennsbury's Emily Howard was runner-up at 370.00.

"I was so nervous for this meet," said Tate, a junior. "All last night, I was freaking out. It didn't get any better today. I was nervous throughout the whole meet. Even in the final rounds, I didn't think I was anywhere near winning.

"I'm just happy to make it to states. So, I'm really excited. It's been tough because I was sick a lot this season. And, I hyper-extended my knee in a meet about a month ago. My mom is a physical therapist, so I've had a lot of therapy with her — a lot of electrical stimulation therapy. I'm still in pain but I didn't let it bother me today.

"I think my best dive was my inward one-and-one-half pike. I was in a really tight pike. All my other dives were good. I was actually a little surprised how good it went because it's been a month since I competed."

North Penn's Laurie McLaughlin captured the bronze medal with a score of 362.10.

"I'm thrilled," said McLaughlin, a senior. "This is my third year of competing at districts and it's my first time to qualify for states. I was really happy with my double pike in the first round. I waited for the board, was really high and came out at the right time. My front twister was very good, too. It was high and it was really clean."

Norristown's Gwen Utz placed 17th with an eight-dive score of 204.60 while Methacton's Elena Cosenza finished 18th at 202.16 and Plymouth Whitemarsh's Katie Alabanese was 19th at 198.55.

"My back dive went really well but my inward dives weren't that good today," said Utz. "On my back dive, I like to roll. This time, I stood straight up and got 6s."

In the Class AA meet, which was held concurrently with the Class AAA meet, Upper Merion's Gwen Alvord finished fifth with a score of 264.70.

"It was a pretty good meet for me," said Alvord, a Viking sophomore. "It's my first year diving so I didn't know what to expect. My inward one-and-one-half was really good. Usually, I don't kick out soon enough. This time, I was nice and straight. My forward one-and-one-half was good too — a lot of height and it was nice and tight."

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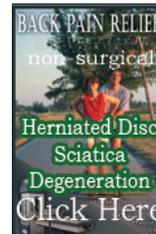
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