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Four local swimmers earn individual state medals

By KEV HUNTER, Staff Writer

LEWISBURG — At the state swim championships, it's okay to not be much of a morning person.

Take for instance Souderton Area's Angela Severn, who had a disappointing prelim time early on Wednesday, but then came back at night to place third in the championship race and earn herself a bronze medal in the 200 freestyle.

"The morning was kind of shaky. I usually don't do as bad as I did," Severn said. "I went up two seconds in my time and I was really scared. I almost didn't make the finals. I don't really know what went wrong. I'm not much of a taper person. I don't know if it's the mental or the physical part that I don't really get. (Wednesday night) I was better, I was more confident in myself."

Confidence is one of the things you can't forget to pack for the trip to Bucknell University, and Severn's confidence fueled her past five other swimmers in the championship race. The only two swimmers to go faster were Jaime Malandra of Parkland, who won gold in the event with a state-record time of 1:48.18, and Wilson's Caitlyn Carr won silver with a time of 1:50.60.

Severn touched at 1:51.37, almost two seconds better than her prelim time that was seventh fastest, and a time that put her in lane one for the final. Advertisement

"I was in lane one — I had nothing to lose," Severn said.

On her right was the side of the pool, on her left was motivation.

"I kept looking to my left to see where the other swimmers were, and that's what kept me going," the junior said.

Severn goes back to work today in the 100 free and 400 free relay, with plenty of momentum. There was a feeling that she overcame her biggest adversity.

"Angela had a very tough swim this morning," Indians coach Todd Bauer said on the deck later in the evening. "She didn't look herself. I think the nerves got to her. I was so proud of her (Wednesday night), to watch her bounce back the way she did. I don't know if it was her training, or if it was just heart and determination, but she looked like she struggled through that first swim and still came back to have her best time that night. To come from lane one and get third place is pretty impressive."

Bauer was also thrilled with Paige Whitmire, who came into the meet seeded eighth in the 50 freestyle but placed fifth. The competitor that she is, Whitmire was not satisfied. Asked if she was happy with her performance, Whitmire said "no, not at all," she said with a laugh.

"I came here in the morning, and I was like 'alright, I want to win the 50.' I did my best time by almost half a second, and then (in the final), I don't know what happened. It's upsetting."

The junior actually swam a scorching 23.84 in the prelim, the second fastest time, but then dropped a bit with a 24.03 at night. But she gets right back in the pool today.

"I'm excited for (the 100 back), but I'm kind of just mad right now," Whitmire said. "I was so ready (for the 50 free). I usually have really good starts, but as soon as I dove in (Wednesday night), I thought 'oh no, that wasn't a good start.' It's not like I gave up, I just wasn't the better swimmer (in that race)."

It was a tough field, led by Bethel Park's Charlotte Brackett (23.46). Severn and Whitmire's production helped vault Souderton to sixth place in the team scoring in Class AAA with 62.5 points — they teamed up for another medal, joining Missy Doll and C.J. Corcoran to place fourth in the 200 free relay with a 1:36.81, which would have won a state title last year, but this year's field was much faster. Wilson won the event with a state-record time of 1:35.81.

North Penn finished up the opening day by medaling in that same 200 free relay, as a team of Sam Deana, Mary Morris, Nicole DiBonaventura and Lauren French placed fifth with a time of 1:37.33, putting the Maidens in the top 10 teams heading into today, as they sit in ninth with 53 points. Bethel Park leads with 130 points, followed by Wilson (115), Emmaus (110), Hershey (109.5) and Parkland (68) to round out the top five.

That free relay capped a day for the Maidens that started with diver Julia Tate medaling with a fifth-place finish, as the junior earned a score of 383.45 up on the board. What a finish Since coming back from a hyperextended knee, Tate has been at her best, winning the district title and then finishing up a season of perseverance and poise on the medal stand at Bucknell.

"It was nice to get fifth today because of my knee - for once, things worked in my direction," she said with a big smile.

She nailed her front two-and-a-half in a strong performance. It was a young top five, four of which could be going at it again at the state meet next year. Franklin

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Regional sophomore Samantha Pickens defended her title, scoring a 465.60, followed by Upper St. Clair senior Amanda Lohman in second with a 440.10, Parkland junior Chay Malvasio in third with a 403.65, and Parkland junior Erika Bilenki in fourth with a 401.30. Tate made it to states for the second year in a row, improving on her ninth-place finish of a year ago. "Julia was what I always tell all of my divers to be - consistent," Maidens diving coach Sue McDonald said. "That's what she was, all the way through." Dingman gets fourth North Penn senior Dan Dingman improved from his prelim time of 1:42.06 to swim a 1:41.87 in the 200 free finals and earn a trip to the medal stand. "The excitement level in the natatorium is unbelievable," Dingman said. "It's enough to get anybody up to swim fast. This team just always feeds off the energy at states, and I think as a whole we're doing real well."

The Knights also got a medal in the 200 medley relay, as a team of Ryan Coupe, Nick Ortlieb, Jeff Smallwood and Stephen Hoch finished eighth with a time of 1:37.71.

The North Penn boys finished the day in eighth in Class AAA. And... Also of local interest, the Methacton foursome of Blaire Kinsey, Erika Rodman, Michelle Konkoly and Kristen Rodman medaled in the 200 free relay, placing eighth with a time of 1:38.62.

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