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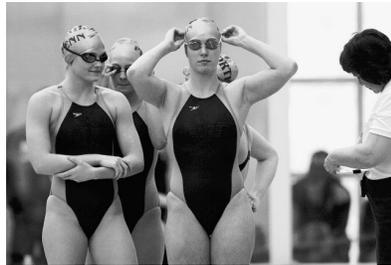
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## More medals for North Penn, Souderton

By KEV HUNTER, Staff Writer



CHRIS STANLEY / THE REPORTER The North Penn girls 100 freestyle relay team prepares to compete at Bucknell.

LEWISBURG — In football and basketball, it's all about playing four solid quarters.

In baseball, it's nine innings.

Hockey - three periods.

And when it comes to the state diving championships, every one of your 11 dives can be crucial.

North Penn's Zac Nees made the most of his on Thursday afternoon.

"When you watch, some of the kids that come of the kids that come here, it's like deer in the headlights," said Nees' coach, Sue McDonald. "I don't know why. A lot of them dive for US Diving, you'd think they'd be used to it, but Zac knew what to expect. He really understands that it's an 11-dive meet. So if you blow a dive, you don't give up. You just keep plugging away. And that's what does it for him all the time."

Nees' consistency provided a bronze medal for him at the state championships at Bucknell University, as the Knights' junior scored a 435.20 to finish as the top competitor from District One. North Allegheny freshman Connor Kuremsky won the gold with a 495.85, and Wilson's Ryan Kuser won silver with a 464.85.

Nees vaulted all the way from a 13th place last year at states to a third-place finish this year.

"I wasn't so sure about it after my second round," he said, "but I had a strong third round and it worked out well for me."

Nees had a pretty reverse two and a half, and also nailed his front twist in the third round to pile up the points.

Nees has only been diving for four years, but is improving at a rapid pace. A state title is a possibility next year.

The junior appeared a far more mature competitor this time around at states.

"It was a little of everything," he said of what made the difference. "Just extra training, new dives, and the experience of being here relieved some of the pressure."

The Knights actually had all three of their divers score - Michael Kohler placed 15th and Frankie Murray took 16th.

Nees seems right at home at Bucknell. "It's pretty nice," he said. "I like the experience here, and it's pretty fun."

Nees will now dive for the Liberty club in the offseason, and during that offseason he has a lot to look back on and feel good about.

"He stepped it up right there at the end when he needed to," McDonald said. "I know he was a little down on himself in the beginning, but he pulled it together at the end."

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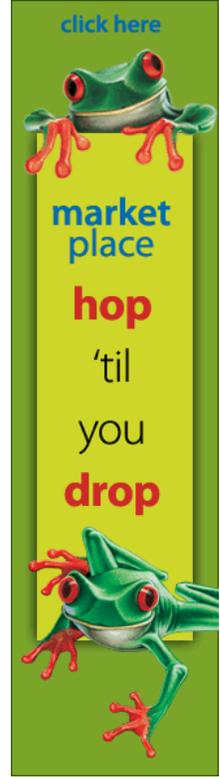
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The Souderton Area girls won four more medals on Thursday to give them 132 points for the meet and a fifth-place finish in the Class AAA team scoring, the Indians' highest finish since they earned runner-up in 1995.

"Every kid that swam (on Thursday) made finals, and we were really proud of that," Indians coach Todd Bauer said. "Every girl on the team had at least one best time this weekend, and most of them had two, so I can't be disappointed."

The Indians finished fifth in the state with a small but powerful nucleus of swimmers, and the Big Red were the top District One team at states. It was a tight top three, with Emmaus winning the title with 212 points, followed by Hershey in second with 208.5, and Bethel Park in third with 201.

Wilson took fourth with 171, followed by Souderton with 132 and Parkland with 121.

The Indians' emotions were mixed afterwards, as they were happy about getting in the top five but they expected more of themselves in their events.

"I'm extremely disappointed right now," said junior Paige Whitmire, who tied for fourth in the 100 back. "I guess I came in expecting too much, and I didn't accomplish what I wanted to. It's disappointing because I got second to a senior last year (Gettysburg's Tricia Weaner), and I didn't come back and win it this year like I wanted to. But it's okay, there's always next year."

Fellow junior Angela Severn placed fourth in the 100 free.

"I felt great in the water - it's just the times didn't really come out," she said of her Thursday swims. "But I came in seeded seventh, and again I was in lane one (like on Wednesday), and I said 'alright, I don't have too much pressure on me right now. There's not that many people that are gonna be looking in my direction.' I just took that as an advantage for me, and I just said 'hey, do what I can do,' and I came in fourth. So I finished ahead of all the people that were right near me."

Sophomore Mariel Kush placed seventh in the 500 free for the Indians, and Severn and Whitmire joined Missy Doll and C.J. Corcoran to place fifth in the 400 free relay in the final event of the night for the girls. North Penn also medaled in the event, as a team of Lauren French, Heather Fellmeth, Becca Hannings and Nicole DiBonaventura placed seventh.

The Maidens placed in the top 10 as a team, getting ninth with 77 points. By the end of the meet, teams could already look ahead to next season.

"Everybody comes back next year -we do lose a great senior leader and swimmer in C.J., but the rest of these girls that were here today are coming back, so we're excited about that," Bauer said. "Angela and Paige were both disappointed (with their prelim swims on Thursday), and they came back at night and gave it a 100 percent, and they moved up and scored points for the team, and as it turned out, we needed those points to overcome Parkland to get top five. So I was very proud of them. They naturally are disappointed, because as a competitor, you always want to do better, but I'm so proud of them, and they should be proud of themselves."

North Penn senior Nico Gimenez finished his high school career in strong fashion, placing fifth in the 100 breaststroke.

Gimenez swam a time of 58.93 seconds in the final, improving on his sixth-seed time of 59.50.

"He had the swims of the night," coach Brian Daly said. "He came into the meet, hot having broke a minute, and he went 58.93 tonight. I'd have to look at our top times, but I know that puts him up in some pretty elite company in our history. And he led the 400 free relay off with a 47.5 split, which is his best time by about a second. He set the tone. He's a senior, it was his last meet, and he came in and set the tone for everybody."

Gimenez helped the Knights finish eighth in the team scoring. Wilson won the team title, followed by Cathedral Prep.

"I came into this meet with really high goals and really lofty expectations," Gimenez said. "I definitely can't complain with my swims. I went my best time and I'm really happy with the results."

Swimming kind of grew on him over the years.

"I came in as a freshman, and swimming wasn't really my passion," Gimenez said. "Throughout these last four years, I developed a love for the sport. I'm gonna be swimming next year at Johns Hopkins and continuing swimming and I'm looking forward to continuing time drops in the future."

The senior excelled in the North Penn atmosphere.

"I've been on many teams - soccer, track - and by far coach Daly has been the best mentor," Gimenez said. "He's a great coach, he's really close with his athletes, and he's played a really big part in my passion for the sport."

North Penn finished up the night by cranking out an All-American time in the 400 free relay, as a team of Gimenez, Jeff Smallwood, Ryan Coupe and Dan Dingman won the consolation heat, finishing ninth overall with a time of 3:12.01.

It was a perfect way for the senior foursome to wrap up their careers.

"The other three guys have been here before, but this is my first time here at states," Coupe said. "We came back for the consolation swim and gave it our best shot. Some of us are gonna go on to swim in college, but this was the last time we were gonna swim together at North Penn. It was great to swim together in an important relay and get a great time. Districts is intense, but the state finals, especially the 400 free relay, there is nothing else like it."

The Knights celebrated at meet's end, for one last time this year.

"I'm thrilled for these guys," Daly said. "All of their hard work payed off."

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