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Locals make waves at states

By **BILL KEEN**
 The Intelligencer

Good, better, best.

That just about sums up how North Penn's Zac Nees felt after he staged a tremendous rally in the final round of dives, to finish third Thursday at the PIAA Class AAA swimming and diving state championships at Bucknell University in Lewisburg.

Winning the bronze medal felt good; how he won it felt better, but passing his arch-rival, District One champion Brian Gemberling of Neshaminy — who began the final round of dives with an 11-point cushion over Nees — felt the best.

"I wanted to show him I had better dives in me and that I could do better than him," said Nees, who finished second, three points behind Gemberling at districts. "Finishing ahead of him at states really felt great, but winning the bronze sure felt good, too."

Last season's bronze medalist at states, Gemberling was third again entering the final round with 311.35 points to Nees's 300.20 which left him in sixth. What Nees termed, "pretty much a perfect final round," started with a relatively new dive.

"I just learned my reverse 21/2 in December over the holiday break," Nees said. "It has a 3.0 degree of difficulty, so it was the first dive in my final round because I felt I could do well on it and if I did, that would give me momentum. Once I hit it, then the others were a lot easier."

The judges rewarded him with 6's and 6 1/2's and that began Nees's march to the bronze, 435.20 to 427.05 for fourth place Gemberling.

Nees's North Penn teammate Nico Gimenez recorded a career-best 58.93 seconds to finish fifth in the 100 breaststroke; while Hatboro-Horsham's Matt Holland dropped his personal best in the 100 free to 47.07, good for eighth place. Holland then teamed with Joe Bickel, Dan Bolstein and Steve Topper to finish sixth in the 400-free relay; North Penn was ninth, Central Bucks West 13th in the consolation final.

In Thursday's final events of the girls' championships, Souderton's Angela Severn was in familiar waters in the 100 free final as the seventh seed, matching the seventh seed she earned Wednesday in the prelims of the 200 free. Wednesday she finished third, but her personal best of 51.79 in the 100 was only good for fourth.

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"At the finish (of the prelim) I saw my time," Severn said. "Then when I found out I made finals but was seeded seventh again I said, 'Hey, my old lane number one,' but I knew it worked out for me Wednesday and I was hoping it would again...I had nothing to lose."

Hatboro-Horsham's Jess Healy swam in the consolation final and finished second, good for 10th overall.

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In the 100 backstroke, two area swimmers enjoyed competing against each other so much that they tied for fourth. Souderton junior Paige Whitmire and William Tennent freshman Melanie Busch had identical times of 57.42.

After Souderton sophomore Mariel Kush made the final when she knocked a stunning 10 seconds off her district time in the prelims, she finished seventh in 5:04.60.

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Then, in the 400 free relay, Souderton again finished ahead of North Penn, the Indians fifth (3:33.21) and the Maidens seventh (3:35.07).

Among other area boys, Hatboro-Horsham's Bickel was 17th in the 100 free. Just like the 50 free, he missed the consolation finals by .02-seconds; Souderton's Jake Radcliff, CB West's Pierre LeCorre and North Penn's Jack Else were 19th, 22nd and 26th, respectively, in the 500 free; in the 100 backstroke West's Sean Cook was 21st, CB East's Jeremy Frey 26th; Souderton's Tim Dorsch was 18th in the 100 breaststroke.

For the girls, North Penn's Lauren French was 17th in the 100 freestyle with teammate Becca Hannings 23rd in the 500 free.

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