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## 2008-09 Girls Swimming Preview Neighbors become rivals

By KEV HUNTER

Staff Writer

Every year it's the biggest regular-season meet of the season for both teams.

North Penn and Souderton.

But this year there's more than just bragging rights on the line.

Due to realignment of the Suburban One League, the Maidens and Indians will now compete against each other for the Continental Conference title. And they help comprise what should be the fastest conference in the state.

Souderton is coming off a breakthrough season.

"We would like to improve on our second-place finish at districts last season as well as our fifth-place finish at the PIAA Championships," coach Todd Bauer said. "So we're looking to build on the successes of last year, and a district title would be great, but we hope to improve, and you can't control what the other teams are gonna do."

The Indians went undefeated in the Continental last year, and the Maidens dominated the National. So something has to give this season.

Whoever wins the conference title could wind up winning districts, and possibly challenge for a state crown as well.

North Penn and Souderton always have great team success, and Penridge is trying to build the same kind of thing over in Perkasio.

"We started drilling home the team concept," coach Ryan Griffiths said. "We started the year with a camping trip, where all the kids were forced to work together as a unit the whole weekend. And that set the tone. Swimming is a sport with a lot of individual events, but it still comes down to the team working together."

The Rams are also in that tough Continental Conference, and there is change in some other conferences as well.

Methacton moves over to the PAC 10, and the Warriors open the season with a big challenge - a nonleague meet at North Penn on Tuesday.

Lansdale Catholic moves from the PAC 10 to the Philadelphia Catholic League, which should push the Crusaders even more during the regular season.

Following is a team-by-team look at the area:

CB West

Coach: Zibeke Swanson (18th season)

Last year's record: 9-5

Key losses: Ellie Nolan, distance/fly; Kelly Dugan, breast/distance free

Key returners: Colleen McMillan, sr., free; Allie Roth, jr., IM/fly/free; Angela Stoehr, jr., back/breast/distance free; Molly Fitz, so., back; Erica Peters, so., back/fly/free/IM; Sarah Staudenmeier, so., back/free; Shannon Dugan, jr., breast; Lucy Burrage, sr., diver; Rachel Place, sr., IM/fly/breast; Kara Black, sr., distance/free/back

Others to watch: Taylor Nolan, breast/fly

Outlook: It will be tough for the Bucks to challenge Souderton and North Penn for the conference title, but they should have plenty to smile about in the postseason.

Coach Swanson says: "We're looking to have a nice squad at districts, and we're focusing on getting more swimmers to districts this year. We should have some team records in the relays."

First meet: at the CB East Relays on Friday

GMA

Coach: Heather Clarke (5th season)

Last year's record: 5-6

Key losses: Molly Aristiniak, breast; Charlotte Greenwood, free

Key returners: Catey Nunnari, sr., IM/back; Susan Merlini, sr., 200 free/fly; Katie Hee, jr., 50/100 free

Outlook: The Monarchs should be pretty competitive in the Catholic Academies League and send some girls to districts.

Coach Clarke says: "We're looking good. We have a young team, so I'm pretty excited about that. The seniors have stepped up to lead. We're swimming some nonleague meets so that should give us some more good competition."

First meet: Dec. 3, at home against Springside (GMA home meets are at LaSalle High School)

Lansdale Catholic

Coach: Bob Birnbauer (15th season)

Key losses: Scholastic All-American and All-District One Class AA Christine Gorge; All-District One Class AA Kelsy Husk; Natalie Kulik

Key returners: Bridgett Augustine; Victoria Gaweł; Jessica Gidzinski; Allison Husk; Jen Matylewicz

Others to watch: Maura Conley; Morgan DeVaney; Katie Murphy; Caroline Rahmlow; Dana Salanik; Julia Young

Outlook: The Crusaders have a small but solid squad that should make some noise in the Philadelphia Catholic League, and in District 12.

Coach Birnbauer says: "Although the team is small and young, it is not without experience. Led by LC's first female to qualify for states as a freshman, Jess Gidzinski, and All-District One Class AA swimmer Bridgett Augustine, the young team will again look for a strong postseason showing. The dual meet season will suffer because of the lack of depth, but will see strong relay and individual event competition in both the dual meet and the District 12 Championship Meet."

Methacton

Coach: Ben Yoder (4th season)

Last year's record: 8-4

Key losses: Kristin Rodman, sprint free/relays; Jesse Mahon, back/fly; Dana McGee, back/fly

Key returners: Blaire Kinsey, so., breast/IM/relays; Samantha Lawley, sr., fly/IM; Erika Rodman, jr., distance; Michelle Konkoly, jr., sprint/free

Others to watch: Melissa Nelson, jr., sprints; Kellye Foulke, jr., sprint/free

Outlook: The Warriors should be competitive in the PAC 10 in their first season in the conference, and they also look to qualify a number of relays to states, along with some individuals.

Coach Yoder says: "We're a pretty balanced team - we have some big losses from last year but we're hoping that people can step up and fill those shoes. If we do that, we can be competitive. We're pretty deep - hopefully our depth can carry us."

First meet: Relay Carnival at Upper Merion on Friday

North Penn

Coach: Matt Weiser (1st season)

Last year's record: 6-1 in the SOL National (now in Continental)

Key losses: Lauren French, sprints/fly; Becca Hannings, distance/free;

Key returners: Julia Tate, sr., diver; Nicole DiBonaventura, sr., free; Sam Deana, jr., sprints/back; Heather Fellmeth, sr., sprints/free

Outlook: The Maidens look solid overall and should challenge Souderton for the conference title.

First meet: Tuesday at home against Methacton

Pennridge

Coach: Ryan Griffiths (Third season)

Last year's record: 3-13-1

Key losses: Lauren Maurone, sprint free; Ellen Liebenow, fly/sprint free; Haley Werkheiser, distance free

Key returners: Erica Redmond, sr., free/IM/back; Alicia Detweiler, jr., sprint free; Megan Hahn, so., 500 free; Erica Smale, jr., diver

Outlook: The Rams have a little bit fewer girls out this year, but the quality is better. The team has now had its own pool for five seasons, and an improved aquatic club has the girls swimming year-round. Six freshman that are out also look solid.

Coach Griffiths says: "We're in the fastest conference in the state, and we're trying to mirror ourselves with those programs."

First meet: Friday at the CB East Relays

Souderton

Coach: Todd Bauer (2nd season)

Last year's record: 7-0 in the Suburban One League Continental Conference, 11-2 overall, Second at District One 3A Championships, Fifth at Class AAA State Championships

Key losses: CJ Corcoran; Alyssa Kichline; Kate Evans

Key returners: Paige Whitmire, sr., back/fly/free; Katie Curzon, sr., back/fly; Angela Severn, sr., free; Ashley Kichline, sr., back/free; Lauren Peachey, sr., breast/IM; Arielle Fry, sr., free; Hannah Cross, jr., back/free; Mariel Kush, jr., fly/free; Missy Doll, jr., free; Chloe Thomas, so., free

Others to watch: Julia Penkal, sr., free; Christine Neville, sr., free; Sarah Kesack, fr., breast/IM; Jill Whitmire, fr., back; Molly Clement, jr., breast

Outlook: The Indians have a loaded senior class. The team should challenge North Penn for the Continental Conference title and is one of the top teams in District One.

Coach Bauer says: "Individually, we have some seniors that I would like to see go out on top - Severn and Whitmire should challenge for state titles. This is also our first year with North Penn (due to realignment), so it will be great to have such a classy team and a high-caliber program to compete with. It should be fun this year."

First meet: at Pennsbury on Friday

Wissahickon

Coach: Meredith Falatek (3rd season)

Last year's record: 6-4

Key losses: Laura Berardelli; Rachel Walega; Juliet Chou

Key returners: Gretchen Andreson; Ryan Marie Conway; Becky Gilpin; Lori Jefferson; Whitney Walsh; Kristen Wieland; Kelsey Tarzia; Serena Xu

Others to watch: Rachel Bohr; Carrie Johnson; Lizzie McKenna; Melissa Rudolph; Sammy Ruser

Outlook: The Trojans should be up near the top in the Suburban One League's American Conference.

Coach Falatek says: "We continue to increase our depth, and hope to improve on last year's record, place higher at suburbans and send more girls to the district and state competition."

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