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Most Recent Featured Male Athlete

SEARCH

Name: Brendan Hatfield



School: North Penn

Swimming

Favorite athlete: Chase Utley

Favorite team: Phillies

Most embarrassing thing that happened while competing in sports: "When I was 10, I dove in and swam the wrong stroke in a medley relay at a summer club meet."

Music on iPod: "Wide variety from rock to rap"

Future plans: "Hopefully go to either the University of Delaware, West Chester or Susquehanna University and possibly swim. I would like to major in secondary education with a social studies focus."

Favorite motto: "It's not how you start, but how you finish that matters."

One goal before turning 30: "Graduate from college and get a job."

One thing people don't know about me: "I used to be an avid snowboarder."

Brendan Hatfield joined the North Penn swim team as a freshman with decidedly modest expectations.

"I have always been impressed with the excellent tradition of North Penn swimming, and a lot of my friends were getting into it," he said. "I was like, 'I'll swim, do my best, probably won't make much of an impact, but I'll have fun.'"

Hatfield was right on several counts. He's done his best, and he's had fun. The North Penn senior was dead wrong about not making 'much of an impact.'

Hatfield has qualified for districts in four events and is a potential point scorer for the highly regarded Knights, but it's the leadership the senior captain brings to the pool that has made Hatfield such a valuable member of the squad.

"Brendan has this unique combination of a seriousness of purpose but also just a great attitude and a fantastic sense of humor," coach Brian Daly said. "He's got a way to motivate the team very positively."

"He's not just one of the seniors who will bark out orders, telling them to go do this, go do that. He really leads by example and treats the younger guys the way they want to be treated but also sends a message about what this team and this sport is all about. He's going to be very difficult to replace in terms of team leadership when he graduates."

It's an ending neither coach nor swimmer could have imagined when Hatfield was contemplating trying out for the team as a freshman.

"His family goes to the shore in the summer, and they're big into skiing," Daly said. "He's big into music events over the weekends."

"I said, 'There are going to be some conflicts.' Brendan said this is what he wanted to do."

Hatfield's maintained that commitment to swimming, although a lot has changed since those early days when the Knight senior admits he didn't weigh more than 80 pounds.

"He was certainly not the biggest kid I had ever seen or one of the strongest kids I'd ever seen," Daly said. "It looked like a good gust of wind would blow this guy right over."

"Over the last four years, he's grown significantly, and he's filled out quite nicely."

Asked to assess Hatfield has a swimmer in his rookie season, Daly admits he wasn't near the top of his depth chart. As a matter of fact, just the opposite was true.

"His freshman year, I don't even know if he broke a minute in the 100 freestyle," the Knights' coach said. "In order to find Brendan's name in any event, you had to go pretty far down on our depth chart, but he's always worked hard."

"Over the years, he's steadily crept up in a lot of events."

Hatfield had been swimming on the community teams since he was six years old, but nothing he had experienced prepared him for North Penn swimming and the expectations that went with it.

"I'll admit it was a little bit overwhelming at times," Hatfield said. "Looking at some of the sets on the board, I'd be like, 'Oh my gosh, I don't know how I'm going to do that.'"

"Once I saw the older guys do it, I was like, 'I'll give it my best shot and see what happens.' Sometimes it worked out, sometimes I didn't quite make it. I was a little overwhelmed, but I didn't have any thoughts of quitting. I liked it."

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Jenna Phillips
Hatboro-Horsham



Brendan Hatfield
North Penn

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And Hatfield worked hard to improve.

"He's not the most talented athlete I've ever coached, but he's certainly one of the most motivated, most dedicated kids I have ever come across," Daly said. "I always thought if a kid commits themselves to our program they can certainly make improvements.

"I thought maybe someday he would make a district cut, but the times he's posting and the momentum he has going into the post-season this year – this is just a great accomplishment for him. Brendan's success has been through dedication and hard work."

While Hatfield couldn't break a minute in the 100 free in his early days, he's now posted a time of 55 seconds in the 100 butterfly and a 1:51 in the 200 free. He was at five minutes even in the 500 free in the league meet.

The Knight senior will be competing in the 100 fly and 500 free at districts.

"They're both really close to my heart," Hatfield said when asked to choose his favorite event. "I'm not really a sprinter, and I like swimming the longer distances because I have a lot of stamina.

"The 100 fly – I just like to get up and race that."

Hatfield's improved times have coincided with his decision to make some serious sacrifices. Last summer he did not go with his family to its shore home in Delaware, opting to stay home to work with his team instead.

"At districts last year, I didn't really drop much time, and that kind of left a bad taste in my mouth," he said. "I really wanted to get back in the pool and start working as soon as I could because I didn't want that to happen again.

"It was nice getting to spend the summer with my teammates. I had a lot of fun."

The summer included competing in several U.S. meets. It also included 6 a.m. practices.

"That was the rough part, getting up at six, and the weather was kind of cold outside," Hatfield said.

The results have made it well worth the effort.

"In the Upper Dublin meet, I really dropped a lot of time," Hatfield said of his team's early-season meet against the Flying Cardinals. "That's when I really started getting excited.

"Everything I've done to this point is completely worth it. It's been great. I would do it again in a heartbeat."

Ask Hatfield if he could have imagined a script that would see him elected captain and qualifying for districts in four events, and he laughs.

"Oh my god, no," he said. "If somebody had told me that, I would have told them they were crazy."

But that's exactly what's happened.

"It wasn't necessarily a setback or a poor performance that motivated him," Daly said. "He's really bought into our program. He wants to be part of the North Penn program, and he's allowed himself to be coached.

"Here's a guy who's done everything we've asked. If he's going to be two minutes late for practice, he'll call you and let you know he's running late. He takes the responsibility of being on the team very seriously."

An excellent student, Hatfield is in the top 25 percent of his class of 1,070. His college list includes Albright, Susquehanna and Bloomsburg with his top choice the University of Delaware. He hopes to continue his swimming career if he attends Albright, Susquehanna or Bloomsburg, and he plans to major in secondary education with a focus on social studies.

But for now, there's the not so little matter of closing out his high school career at North Penn on a high note.

"It's been really great," Hatfield said. "I have been really proud to have North Penn on the back of my sweats. It means a lot to me. I'm going to miss it."

Just as Daly and the Knights are going to miss him next year.

All Featured Male Athletes - 2008-2009

Brendan Hatfield - North Penn

Alex Myers - Hatboro-Horsham

Marcus Robbins - Norristown

Julien Dinerstien - Upper Moreland

Jamil Brown - Upper Dublin

Derek Brooks - North Penn

Justin Deeter - Neshaminy

Matt Rust - Quakertown

Matt Johnson - Pennsbury

Stephen Parker - Norristown

Devon Passman - Central Bucks East

Tom Conaway - North Penn

- Paul Carrezola - Neshaminy
- Josh Mastromatto - Upper Dublin
- Dan Wallace - Council Rock North
- Cody Muller - Souderton
- Rob Basile - Quakertown
- Brad Miles - North Penn
- Marcus Noel - Pennridge
- Sheldon Mayer - Norristown
- Andrew Keeling - Neshaminy
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