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Five Athletes to watch

(listed in alphabetical order)

Melanie Busch, William Tennent: Her chief tormenters for the last two seasons, Paige Whitmire and Angela Severn of Souderton, have graduated, leaving Busch as a potential threat to dominate at the District One meet and perhaps beyond. She was fourth in both the backstroke and individual medley last spring at states, so the top three is well within her grasp.

Bridget Casey, Germantown Academy: The Patriots have an extremely talented junior class, but Casey has arguably the best chance to win two individual events at the Easterns Meet in March. As a sophomore she finished second in the butterfly on day one and second again in the 500 free on day two. Two golds this time are a distinct possibility.

Sam Deana, North Penn: After finishing fourth in District one in the 50 free, she qualified for the consolation final at states and finished 15th. That only made her determined to go back and make the finals this time and chances are she will. She is very quick off the blocks and with a solid turn she has the speed to bring home a win at any level.

Missy Doll, Souderton: She already has a pair of state gold medals in her trophy case as a member of the Indians' 200 and 400 free relays last season. Now the hard working senior looks to add more honors in her final season after finishing sixth in the 50 and seventh in the 100 free in her individual events last March. Two, top threes are not out of the question.

Natalie Szopo, Upper Moreland: It's been a long time since anyone burst on the area scene with as much of an impact as this diminutive diver did last season. She won the SOL American diving title, led all the way in winning the District AA crown, and after missing badly on her first dive of the final round at states, sizzled in her last two to finish fourth. The sky's the limit.

Five Teams to watch (listed in order of strength)

Germantown Academy: Take five truly outstanding juniors, add one ultra-talented sophomore, sprinkle liberally with seniors determined whatever is necessary to win, and you have the team that should be No. 1 this season.

Souderton: A second at states kept the Indians from the league/district/state championship triple play. This year's team has hammers in Missy Doll and Chloe Thomas and a lot of determination to at least win the first two stages again, but can they be No.1 in Lewisburg?

North Penn: They saw Souderton walk off with titles they used to call their own; now the Maidens are ready to earn them back and they just might, thanks to a lot of quality depth and some strong freshmen to add to the mix.

Central Bucks East: Can the Patriots contend in the SOL Continental? Their chances are better this year than they were last, when they were left to battle for No. 2. Early season momentum will be crucial to their chances.

Central Bucks West: The biggest problem the Bucks face is a lack of depth that will cost them points in the regular season. But there is enough talent among the returning athletes to make them a classic tournament team, one that could finish high at districts.

Five Meets you need to go to

Germantown Academy at Episcopal Academy

Thurs. Dec. 10, 3:45 p.m.

One day before the start of the PIAA winter season, the Patriots face their toughest challenge in years as their top five swimmers will be at junior nationals. The rest of the squad will have to come up big, because GA has *never* lost a girls' dual meet in the Inter-Ac League.

North Penn at Souderton

Wed. Jan. 13, 3:30 p.m.

Last season the Indians won this meet with little trouble, but this season the teams appear to be very evenly matched. The SOL Continental title and momentum at the District meet will be on the line, so don't miss this one.

Lansdale Catholic at Archbishop Wood

Fri. Jan. 15, 6 p.m.

The fact that this one is a night meet is a good indication of how big it should be. Both teams have excellent, quality depth and appear to match up extremely well. Don't be surprised if this one is decided by a couple of points.

Hatboro-Horsham at Upper Dublin

Fri. Jan. 22, 3:30 p.m.

Many of the girls on these two teams are neighbors where Horsham and Upper Dublin Townships lines meet, and some are teammates on the same community swim club teams. That plus the SOL Continental/American rivalry makes this a natural.

Central Bucks East at Central Bucks West

(at Central Bucks South)

Wed. Jan. 27, 6 p.m.

It's the original rivalry in the Central Bucks school district. The fact this, too, is at night, should mean a very big crowd will be on hand, so anybody planning to go to this battle of arch-rivals would be advised to get there early.

- Bill Keen

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