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Most Recent Featured Female Athlete

Name: Casey O'Neill

School: North Penn

Swimming

Favorite athlete: Kevin Kelly of Penn State football

Favorite team: Pittsburgh Steelers

Favorite memory competing in sports: Pasta parties and spending time with my teammates

Most embarrassing/funniest thing that has happened while competing in sports: "After our swim meets last year, the whole team would get up on the blocks and sing and dance to 'Don't Stop Believing."

Music on iPod: Variety (Country, Rock, Hip-Hop, Alternative)

Future plans: Study Viticulture and Enology at either Cornell or Oregon State
Words to live by: "Never give up; you can make the best of any situation."

One goal before turning 30: "To own and run my own vineyard"

One thing people don't know about me: "I love to cook and bake."

By Alex Frazier

There are certainly some swimmers that are faster than Casey O'Neill, but it would be hard to find any more competitive

The competition is what makes swimming her favorite sport.

In fact, that was what attracted the North Penn senior to swimming in the first place.

"I'm very competitive," she said. "I think everyone can attest to that. I always want to keep improving. I never want to let the person next to me beat me."

And that goes particularly for her sisters, Tess, 15, and Erin, 11. The family often has races with each other on Friday evenings or in the summer at the Towamencin pool.

"We have relays, me and my dad or my sisters and my dad against the two of us," she said. "We're always racing each other."

When she was nine, her father, who had also been a top-notch swimmer at North Penn, took her to the Towamencin pool.

At first, the cold water turned her off, but not for long.

"I loved the swimming aspect, the racing and being with my friends," she said.

O'Neill also plays water polo, where she is a driver, but it doesn't hold the same kind of excitement for her as swimming.

"I love water polo, but swimming is definitely my favorite," she said. "The way the swim season works is so much better for me. I love the practices and getting the chance to race."

Although she likes the team aspect of the relays, the individual event is more alluring.

"Getting to improve for yourself is the best part," she said.

O'Neill began her swimming career doing backstroke and breaststroke. She missed her first year at North Penn due to a shoulder injury she incurred during medicine ball training when she was 12.

"I had a dislocated scapula," she explained. "It was from a previous injury. I had torn my trapezius muscle when I was 12. It put me out for a long while and (required) a lot of physical therapy."

As a sophomore, she focused on the 200 freestyle and the 100 breaststroke.

Last year she swam the 100 free and the 200 individual medley.

This year it was the 50 and 100 free.

"She's a very versatile swimmer," said coach Matt Weiser. "This year we needed her in some freestyle events, so she stepped up there. She's worked at all aspects."

"I swam a different event each year at districts (except butterfly, (which she hasn't been able to do because of her shoulder)," she said. "I really like to swim different things at different meets. It's a great chance to diversify







Casey O'Neill North Penn

Nick Joerger Central Bucks South







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in the strokes, but I'd have to say the 100 free is my favorite event."

At last week's Continental Conference league meet, she finished third in the 50 and the 100 free with unexceptional times.

Her 100 time of 55.97 was a second and a half off her best.

"That was not a very good time for me," she said. "We were worn down. We just started our taper this week."

She's hoping the taper will kick in at districts. Last year she missed qualifying for states in the 100 by .01 of a second. Fortunately, she went to states as a member of the 200 medley and 400 free relays.

But she would definitely like to go in an individual event. Because of the nature of the 50, that event is up for grabs, but the 100 is a bit more predictable.

"This year I have a pretty good chance (in the 100), especially with my time drop from last year," she said. "My first year I was just happy I made it to districts. Last year being able to medal and seeing what it's like to be up there, it's definitely pushed me to get into the top heat."

O'Neill is also a leader of her team. Her competitiveness and hard work definitely set her off as a role model.

"She'll battle through anything, whether it's studying in school, illnesses, injuries, just being sore and beat up," said Weiser. "She's the kind of person who doesn't get a whole lot of attention, but steps up in a really big way for the team."

It's not by accident that Weiser uses her as the anchor on both free relays.

But she doesn't just lead by example.

"She really came together for us as a team before the league meet," said Weiser. "She put together a little team get-together at her house, which was nice. She certainly helps in pulling the team together."

Besides swimming, O'Neill is a member of the National Honor Society Cabinet and the German Club. She decided to take German because her grandmother and father are German and her aunt also speaks it.

"I thought it would be a great language to take," she said. "I got really involved with the German Club because of my teachers."

When she's not involved in school activities, O'Neill works as a waitress in a retirement home

O'Neill's other consuming interest is wine.

No, she doesn't imbibe yet.

"I haven't really tasted it yet," she said. "I'm more interested in the process."

She became fascinated by the wine industry from a show she saw on the Food Channel.

"I got very into the show and started to do more research about it," she said. "I found out that's what I wanted to do."

She will major in viticulture, the science of growing grapes, and enology, the process of wine making.

There are only eight programs in the country, four of which are teaching schools. The others are strictly research.

"I would like to go to a school that is teaching," she said.

Getting into a top-notch college isn't a problem as she is ranked 93rd out of 1,023 students in her class.

She has already been accepted at Oregon State University and has to wait until April to hear from her first choice—Cornell.

"I want to own and run my own vineyard one day and I've started to take the necessary steps to do that," she said.

Cheers to that.

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Abby Mitchell - Council Rock North

Kierstan Ryan - Harry S. Truman

Martina Drew - Neshaminy

Featured Female Athletes - 2008-2009

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Lauren Purvis - Hatboro-Horsham

Alicia Detweiler - Pennridge

Lyndsay Hepler - North Penn

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