

Elias shoots for the top — and other notes from Continentals

By Bill Keen Staff writer | Posted: Friday, February 24, 2012 12:00 am

There were an inordinately large number of “storylines” at the Suburban One League Continental Conference Championship meets.

One was a diver, **North Penn** senior Erica Elias. She finished third, nine points behind the winner, Lindsay Schmidt of **Central Bucks South**, and five behind runner-up Rachel Saunders of **CB West**.

Those results might have been dramatically different had she managed to hit her second dive of the first round, a reverse 1 1/2 somersault pike. She flat-out nailed it in warmups, which was why the 5 and the four 6s she received from the judges did not make her happy.

They turned out to be a blessing in disguise because of the higher scores that followed, especially two second-round dives.

“I was really excited after my inward 1 1/2 tuck — I got 7s on that and I was really pumped for the next dive — and I got 7s on my reverse dive,” Elias said. “I think the motivation came from when I messed up my reverse 1 1/2 pike in the first round; I knew I needed to really step it up in order to be in the game.”

She’ll work hard before districts to perfect the same 11 dives. Considering her determination, that “game” could have a much different ending.

Who needs to win?

Souderton diving coach Bill Hence was an interested spectator Friday at the swimming championships.

“I just came to stand around the side of the pool,” he joked before the meet started. “Maybe I’ll yell and jump up and down once in a while.”

He did both in the second of three heats of the breaststroke, when Indians freshman Lucas Giannini lopped over three full seconds off his 1:09.25 seeding time and qualified for districts in 1:05.83.

“It was a surprise to me how fast I finished,” said Giannini, adding he was spurred on by the sight of his teammates. “I was able to see some of them while I was going, but the most was when I could hear them yelling for me at the end.

“I looked up into the stands at my mom; she was saying, ‘Good job,’ and that she was so proud of me.”

Giannini finished 11th in a field of 24, but a freshman from North Penn stunned almost everybody in the 200 freestyle.

Although Thanas Kountroubis had already qualified for districts, his 1:53.28 was only ninth fastest in the field and left him in the third of four heats.

He won the heat in 1:49.60, never expecting the only individual to swim faster would be junior teammate Jack Morris in the final heat. Morris won in 1:44.75; Kountroubis finished second.

“I was planning on going sub-50 (under 1 minute, 50 seconds) and it turned out I did it,” the freshman said. “I knew high school was going to be really tough and rigorous and, going into the season, I had never done the 100 free before.

“First time I swam it, I didn’t like it very much, but others kept telling me to keep trying, get better and give it everything I had, and that’s what I did.”

Two of the fastest

The 50 free is the sport’s most unforgiving race, but girls from Souderton seem to be able to master it quite nicely. The latest is Ann Fadden.

“I really feel like I have to lead the team and uphold the 50 status of our program,” said Fadden, who has signed with the University of Delaware. “My start was pretty good, but my turn was a little rough, but my coaches said I had a good swim.

“I wasn’t too happy with my time, but I finished first.”

Finally, sometimes you have to sacrifice to win. CB West's Quinn MacMillan broke that school record in the 100 free we've been telling you about. After her 53.06 topped teammate Andie Blaser's two-week old record, MacMillan was happy — and hurting.

"It means a lot to me because it's my home pool, so I'm glad I did it here," she said. "Basically, the last lap hurt really bad, but I just kept going. I kept working really hard to the finish; I went all out."

As did so many others.