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SWIMMING: Knights, Maidens take 2nd in district

By Kev Hunter
khunter@thereporteronline.com

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Mark C. Psoras/The Reporter North Penn swimmer Kevin Dunigan competes in a 200- Yard Individual Medley heat during the PIAA District Swimming Championships on Thursday.

PHILADELPHIA — The North Penn boys swim team came up a bit short of defending its District One Class 3A title on Friday, but it took a truly great effort by rival Upper Dublin to dethrone the Knights.

The Cardinals, champions just three years ago but underdogs this time around, had a big surprise waiting for everyone in attendance at La Salle University.

“We call it the sneak attack,” Cardinals coach Lisa Fantini said, as she tried to dry off following the celebratory plunge into Kirk Pool. “We were looking for ways we could plug away and get into some of the places we could get more points. And they all swam fantastic.”

The Cardinals cashed in with the 100 freestyle, with Bobby Bantley winning gold in 45.97 seconds and Zach Brech placing sixth with a 47.59. They got another 13 points from Chris Devlin’s sixth-place finish in the 500 free, and then pulled ahead of the Knights for good when they got fourth (Eric Jensen) and sixth (Joe Starosta) in the 100 back.

“That 100 (free) really picked it up,” Fantini said. “We like to do that on the first day as well and really go after the medley relay, and that always sets the tone for the meet.”

The Cardinals won gold in the medley and the 100 free to start each day with wins, and they also finished off the meet with back-to-back golds, as Cooper Tollen went 57.76 to win the 100 breast and the 400 free relay team of Jensen, Flynn, Brech and Bantley came within 11 hundredths of a second of beating the district record, hammering out a 3:07.69 to win by over four seconds.

Upper Dublin amassed 298.5 points over the two-day meet, topping the 262 points by runner-up North Penn and the 178 by third-place Souderton Area. Once nightfall came, Upper Dublin’s success would continue, as the girls also took home the team title as well, overcoming a strong effort by North Penn.

Members of the Cardinal boys squad surprised even themselves a little bit.

“When we scored out the meet as coaches prior to the meet, using the seed times, North Penn was about 80 points ahead of us,” Fantini said. “We weren’t really expecting this.”

The Knights trailed Upper Dublin by a half point going into Friday, and did pull ahead after two events on the strength of Jason Deana’s bronze and Jack Morris’ fifth-place finish in the 100 free, and also Pat Dunigan’s bronze and Jonathan Krail’s 12th-place finish in the epic 500 free. That pushed North Penn out in front 213-208.5 with three events to go, but the Cardinals scored extremely well in those final three events.

Tomas Gimenez did place fifth in the 100 breast for the Knights, who closed out the meet with another trip to the medal stand, getting seventh in the 400 free relay with a team of Kevin Dunigan, Spencer Collopy, Pat Dunigan and Morris.

Souderton dropped a whopping seven-plus seconds in its 400 free seed time to go 3:12.72 and get fifth, with a team of Michael Hay, Elliott Miller, Triston Loux and Kevin Musterait.

Later on in the evening, Souderton Area’s Laureana Zrada followed up her gold-medal 200 free on Thursday with a silver medal in the 500 free on Friday. Zrada swam a gutsy race, nearly catching winner Delaney Fox of Kennett, who was seeded more than eight seconds ahead of Zrada.

Fox touched in 5:04.59, and Zrada swam a 5:06.16.

Zrada's teammate, Alyssa Santangelo, also earned a silver medal in her individual event Friday, going 58.02 in the 100 back.

The only girl to outrace Santangelo was West Chester East's Christina Leander, who broke her own district record with a 54.73.

The Maidens punctuated their performance with a bronze-medal finish in the 400 free relay.

District One Swim Championships

at La Salle University
Class 3A

Boys
Team Scores: 1. Upper Dublin, 298.5; 2. Norh Penn, 262; 3. Souderton, 178.

100-yard freestyle: 1. Bobby Bantley (Upper Dublin), 45.97; 2. Riley Weber (Central Bucks East), 46.25; 3. Jason Deana (North Penn), 46.27.

500 freestyle: 1. Connor Forlini (William Tennent), 4:37.07; 2. Seth Underwood (Perkiomen Valley),4:41.22; 3. Patrick Dunigan (North Penn), 4:44.50.

100 backstroke: 1. Shane Ryan (Haverford), 48.49 (meet record, previous record 48.63 by Ryan, 2011); 2. Nic Graesser (Conestoga), 49.36; 3. Kyle Lukens (Plymouth-Whitemarsh), 50.36.

100 breaststroke: 1. Cooper Tollen (Upper Dublin), 57.76; 2. Thomas McCormick (West Chester Henderson), 57.90; 3. Greg Grewal (Downingtown West), 58.78.

400 freestyle relay: 1. Upper Dublin (Eric Jensen, Ian Flynn, Zach Brech, Bobby Bantley), 3:07.69; 2. Council Rock North, 3:12.07; 3. Haverford, 3:12.09.

Girls
Team rankings: 1. Upper Dublin; 2. North Penn; 3. Souderton.

100-yard freestyle: 1. Tommie Dillione (Council Rock North), 51.98; 2. Mackenzie Hornibrook (Unionville), 52.30; 3. Carolyn Meier (Upper Dublin), 52.64.

500 freestyle: 1. Delaney Fox (Kennett), 5:04.59; 2. Laureana Zrada (Souderton), 5:06.16; 3. Kaitlin Benjamin (Conestoga), 5:08.17.

100 backstroke: 1. Christina Leander (West Chester East), 54.73 (meet record, previous record 55.60 by Leander, 2011); 2. Alyssa Santangelo

(Souderton), 58.02; 3. Samantha Park (Council Rock North), 58.29.

100 breaststroke: 1. Hannah Whitman (Central Bucks East), 1:06.87; 2. Lauren Early (Garnet Valley), 1:07.32; 3. Jennifer Mill (West Chester East), 1:07.55.

400 freestyle relay: 1. Upper Dublin (Casey O'Neill, Sam Wheatley, Emily Houser, Carolyn Meier), 3:32.18; 2. Conestoga, 3:32.69; 3. North Penn, 3:32.78.

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