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## SWIMMING: A silver for NP's Deana, bronze for CB West's Saunders

By Kev Hunter  
khunter@thereporteronline.com

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Mark C. Psoras/The Reporter  
Central Bucks West diver Rachel Saunders twists through the air as she competes in the PIAA District 1 Diving Championships held at Upper Dublin High School.

LEWISBURG — By the time North Penn's Jason Deana earned his third medal of the evening, the North Penn senior was still experiencing quite a sense of euphoria from the second one.

"It was probably by far my favorite race - that one right there," Deana said of his 50-yard freestyle Wednesday evening. "I wanted to get second. I thought it was possible..."

Deana, with a wide grin, was still letting it sink in, the realization of what he had accomplished. His time of 20.59 seconds, good for a spot on the National Federation of High Schools' Honor Roll, earned him a silver medal in the Class 3A 50 free on the opening night of states at Bucknell University's Kinney Natatorium.

"I knew a lot of the guys going into the race and I knew it was gonna be good," Deana said. "It was all seniors, everyone wanted it just as much."

Deana just pushed harder, and beat out six other senior swimmers and he was one of six competitors in the race to go under 21 seconds. Only Haverford senior Shane Ryan, who won the gold, broke 20, touching in 19.91.

Deana did not make it back for the night swims last year, finishing 21st. This year, he swam his most amazing race of the season when it mattered most.

The North Penn sprinter, bound for North Carolina State next year, then anchored the bronze medal 200 free relay for the Knights. That foursome continued to add to its greatness, as a team of Brandon Anders, Tomas Gimenez, Jack Morris and Deana swam a time of 1:23.93, a week and half after they had replaced a 20-year-old North Penn school record (1:25.29) with a time of 1:24.78.

"We were seeded second, and we knew (second-place) Upper St. Clair was gonna be right with us," Deana said. "We knew it would be very tough to beat (first-place) La Salle. At the beginning of the year, we all said we wanted to go 1:23, but I don't think any of us thought it was actually possible. It was perfect."

The 34 points the Knights earned from the free relay gave them 87 for opening day. That's good for third in Class 3A, behind only Hershey (95) and La Salle (182.5).

The Knights started the evening with a medal, getting fourth in the 200 medley relay with a team of Anders, Gimenez, Deana and Spencer Collopy, and they also got points from Morris (11th in 200 free) and Pat Dunigan (15th in 200 IM).

Deana tries for his fourth medal today in the 100 free.

"I think it just pumps me up," he said of his impressive opening day. "I got the bulk of my swimming done (Wednesday). Doing six races in one day is tough. (On Thursday), I'll swim in one race in the morning and hopefully I'll make it back and do one at night."

Earlier in the day, Central Bucks West diver Rachel Saunders had her best performance of the season, scoring a 428.80 to earn herself a bronze medal.

"It feels great. I'm really excited about this," Saunders said with a big smile after the eight medalists posed for pictures on the podium.

Saunders went against some familiar competition, including Pine-Richland's Lauren Lamendola and Central Bucks South's Lindsay Schmidt - both medalists last year along with Saunders.

Last year's top four went: Cedar Cliff's Rachel Mumma, Lamendola, Schmidt and Saunders. With the exception of Mumma, who graduated, the order was the same this year, as Saunders followed up her fourth-place of a season ago with a bronze.

"It was nerve-racking at first but it was exciting at the end," the junior said.

Saunders' back dive stood out in a stellar performance and helped her outscore District One rival Corey Johnson of Upper Dublin, who was fourth with a 420.85.

It was a wild final round, with Lamendola passing Schmidt for the lead, outscoring her 447.75 to 440.20. Saunders was as calm as ever.

"One of my good friends, Kelly Thatcher, and I always listen to pump-up songs together, and we don't look at the scoreboard," she said.

The strategy must have worked for both of them - Thatcher (Downingtown West) also earned a medal, placing eighth with a 401.80.

With Schmidt, who is headed to West Virginia, and Lamendola both graduating, Saunders will be the top returning medalist next season.

"I'm so excited for senior year," she said.

Later in the evening in the girls Class 3A swim portion, the North Penn 200 free relay team dropped more than a second and a half off its prelim time to earn a fifth-place finish in a great championship final - North Allegheny set a state record with a winning time of 1:33.78.

The Maidens' foursome of Eve Kosten, Olivia DiStefano, Tara Rogers and Brooke Else hammered out a time of 1:36.41, racing past Council Rock North (1:37.30), West Chester Henderson (1:37.61) and Conestoga (1:38.36). Hershey (1:34.34), Wilson (1:35.54) and Franklin Regional (1:35.63) went two, three and four.

Also making it back for the night swims were Ann Fadden, who won the consolation heat and finished ninth overall in the 50 free with a time of 23.67; the Souderton 200 medley relay (Alyssa Santangelo, RickiLee Hodges, Megan Furey and Fadden), which finished 11th with a time of 1:49.32; and CB West's Andie Blaser, who finished 14th in the 100 butterfly with a time of 57.66.

In the team scoring, Wilson leads with 134 points, followed by North Allegheny with 108. North Penn is tied for 19th with Bethel Park with 28 points, Souderton is 23rd with 21 points, and CB West is 25th with 19.

Pennridge's David Zurmuhl placed sixth in the 50 free boys consolation race, going 21.37 to get 14th overall.

Day Two of states is today, starting with the boys diving at 2 p.m.

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