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## SWIMMING: Souderton's Moyer, NP's Deana win state gold

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Mark C. Psoras/The Reporter  
Souderton's Ozzie Moyer celebrates  
his state gold medal on Thursday  
evening at Bucknell.

LEWISBURG — Souderton Area's Ozzie Moyer completed his journey Thursday afternoon.

"This is the one meet I wanted to win my whole life," he said with a big smile, speaking of the PIAA State Diving Championships, "and I finally got it."

The Big Red senior capped a historic high school career with a Class 3A state title at Bucknell University, as he entertained the Kinney Natatorium crowd with one great dive after another — climaxed by an amazing one in the 11th round — and racked up a winning score of 536.45 to earn the gold.

“This is better than anything I’ve ever felt in my life,” Moyer said just moments after walking off the medal stand. “This is the best feeling ever. I don’t know how you can beat this or duplicate it. I’m just so happy.”

North Penn’s Jason Deana would also win his first state gold later Thursday evening, making it quite a day for local competitors.

Moyer was able to outscore Hershey’s Tanner Wilfong, who earned the silver with a 515.50, and defending champion Ian Forlini of William Tennent, who was the bronze medalist with a 508.0. Those three were so outstanding that they were the only ones in the field to break 500 points.

Moyer took the lead in the prelims, had it all the way until the ninth round, and then regained it in the tenth. His 11th dive, a inward two-and-a-half somersault tuck, locked up the championship.

“I knew it would come down to that,” Moyer said. “My freshman year, I saw (former North Penn and current Indiana diver) Zac Nees do that dive (to earn the silver), and I knew it was gonna come down to that dive for me too. I had a good start to it and just put it in. We’ve been practicing that dive so much.”

Moyer became the first ever gold medalist in boys diving for Souderton, and it was the first time ever that Souderton had three boys divers competing at states — Tyler Wenzel and Matt Evers both made the finals and both scored. Wenzel placed 10th with a 405.75 and Evers 13th with a 398.95.

“I’m really proud of Tyler and Matt,” Moyer said. “They work hard. They deserve it.”

Big Red diving coach Bill Hence was thrilled to see the progression in all three. He’s coached Wenzel since he first got up on the board when he was 13, Evers since he was seven, and Moyer since he was six.

“If you’re down there at practice any day, you can see why this moment was so special,” Hence said. “Days like this don’t come around often in a coaching career. I’m thankful I got to coach those kids, not because of how they did, but because of who they are.”

Moyer’s competitiveness and also his easy-going personality made him easy to cheer for. When he nailed his last dive of the afternoon, the crowd simply erupted. Kinney Natatorium was transformed - for a magical moment - into the Land of Oz.

“It was such a cool vibe down on the deck,” Souderton head coach Todd Bauer said. “Everybody loves him.”

Moyer medaled all four years for Big Red. He placed seventh as a freshman, fourth as a sophomore, fourth as a junior, and then completed his journey Thursday.

“I just kept working hard,” said the gold medalist, who is bound for The University of North Carolina next year. “I knew if I worked at it, I could do it.”

“If anyone deserves it,” Bauer said, “it’s Ozzie.”

The North Penn girls 4x400 relay finished a great season with a medal and fifth-place finish, as a team of Brooke Else, Oliva DiStefano, Eve Kosten and Tara Rogers sprinted to a time of 3:31.10, which edged rival Upper Dublin (3:31.31) and also topped Upper St. Clair (3:32.91) and Greater Latrobe (3:34.52).

Hershey took the gold with a 3:26.01, followed by Wilson (3:29.16), Parkland (3:30.34) and Franklin Regional (3:30.70).

Wilson won the girls title with 231 points, followed by Hershey with 218.

Then, it was time for Deana.

The Knights’ senior won the first event of the boys session, coming up with an amazing final kick - and an amazing race all together - to push past Greater Latrobe’s Lucas Bureau.

“Sometimes in the last 15 yards of a race, somebody will pass me, but this time...I’ve never felt anything like this,” Deana said. “All the adrenaline, all the hard work...it just made me go that much faster. (Winning the gold) feels surreal.”

Deana, seeded second going in, dropped 12 hundredths of a second off his prelim time, and that’s what made the difference.

It was one of the gutsiest finishes - and one of the most exciting races - of the day.

“When I finished, I looked up and saw ‘first place, Jason Deana,’ so I celebrated a little,” Deana said happily, “but I wanted to be sure.”

There was no doubt. Deana out-kicked Bureau, the top seed, to finish his career with a state championship.

It was a monster overall performance for Deana at states, complete with four medals.

By the time he earned his third medal Wednesday 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. “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 50 free.

“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 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).

“I think it just pumps me up,” Deana said of his impressive opening day.

Local consolation finalists Thursday included CB West’s Andie Blaser in the 100 free (11th, 52.65); NP’s Tara Rogers in the 100 free (12th, 52.71); Pennridge’s David Zurmuhl in the 100 free (13th, 47.05); and Souderton Area’s Laureana Zrada in the 500 free (12th, 5:06.15), Alyssa Santangelo in the 100 back (15th, 58.22) and the Indians’ 400 free relay (10th, 3:32.63).

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