

Intelligencer Girls Swimming High 5s

By **Bill Keen** Staff writer | Posted: Tuesday, December 4, 2012 12:00 am

5 Teams To Watch

(listed in order of strength)

Germantown Academy: Nobody was surprised at Easterns last spring when the Patriots cleaned up. What was surprising was the number of younger swimmers who won gold, silver or bronze. With several very talented freshmen joining the fold, this team may be better than last year.

North Penn: Last season, the Maidens could count on their divers to rack up a ton of points every meet, but the unit was hit hard by graduation. No problem; an awful lot of quality swimmers will pick up the slack and keep the program rolling along.

Central Bucks East: No less than 19 freshman swell the Patriots' ranks to 44 individuals determined to make a run at the SOL Continental title. The guess here is they will.

Hatboro-Horsham: When you're trying to pick the strongest teams, a good place to start is to count the veterans who went to districts. The Hatters return 11, leadership that can take this team a long way.

Souderton: The easiest thing to say is the Indians lost some extremely talented seniors, which they did. The smart thing to say is they have a lot of talent coming back and some promising newcomers to fill the holes. They'll be just fine.

5 Performers To Watch

(Listed in alphabetical order)

Rachel Sauders, Central Bucks West: This extremely gifted diver is poised to grab the District One Class AAA gold. She took the silver last season with 462.80 points and won bronze at states. That alone makes her the preseason favorite to win it all.

Sydney Szopo, Upper Moreland: As a freshman she finished second in District One Class AA diving and repeated last year. The girl who finished ahead of her each time — her sister Natalee — graduated. First in districts and a top three finish at states is within her reach.

Hanna Wittman, Central Bucks East: Very few opposing fans knew her name when last season started. In the end, nobody could forget it. She won the Class AAA breaststroke (11th at states) and was second in the IM (10th at states). And she's only a sophomore.

Rachel Zilinskas, Germantown Academy: Watching her win 200 free gold and shatter the record winning the 500 free at Easterns, it was difficult to tell she was under a doctor's care for a thyroid condition as a sophomore. Expected to repeat, she has accepted a scholarship to swim at the University of Georgia.

Laureana Zrada, Souderton: In his final season as coach, Todd Bauer saw Zrada dominate the same events he specialized in as an Indians' swimmer. She won gold at districts in the 200 free, and finished second in the 500 and following that with a fourth in the consolation finals at states. Zrada will swim in college at Bucknell, just like Bauer.

5 Meets To Watch

(listed in chronological order)

North Penn at Souderton

Jan. 18, 3:30 p.m.

For the better part of the last decade, this has been one of the best and most eagerly anticipated girls' meets in the area. It will be again.

Mount St. Joseph at Gwynedd-Mercy Academy

Jan. 30, 6 p.m. (at La Salle College High School)

Senior night for both schools will also be a meet that could be extremely important in the AACA standings. That why this meeting of archrivals will be at night.

Central Bucks South at Central Bucks West

Feb. 1, 6 p.m.

One of those rare occasions when both teams are at home. This time West will be "home" on the scoreboard but that won't matter when these two rivals step to the blocks.

Archbishop Carroll at Archbishop Wood

Feb. 6, 6 p.m. (at Klinger Middle School)

A regular season PCL meet could be a preview of what to expect in the District 12 AA meet now that Carroll has dropped down from AAA. It should be a good one.

Hatboro-Horsham at Central Bucks East

Feb. 8, 3:30 p.m.

Two teams with lots of veterans returning will meet in a battle that could be a lights-out donnybrook; it may not be decided until the 400 free relay.