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H.S. SWIMMING: Big seasons possible for area squads

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Souderton swimmer Alyssa Santangelo and competitors launch for a Medley Relay heat during the PIAA District One Swimming Championships on Thursday, March 1, 2012. (Photo by Mark C Psoras\The Reporter)

A few new faces in the head coaching ranks and some tremendous individual star power highlight the start of this year's swim season.

Allie Szekely, who put on a show this past summer at the Olympic Trials in Omaha, joins the team at Gwynedd Mercy Academy.

"At our time trials, everyone just stopped what they were doing for a minute and just watched her," coach Heather Norman recalled with a laugh.

The Monarchs, as a whole, should have a pretty strong squad this season, welcoming back some key pieces from last year's 6-5 finish. GMA could be moving up in the standings in the Catholic Academies League and the Monarchs could be due for a big postseason.

Optimism also flows at Central Bucks West, which embraces the challenge of competing in the rough waters of the Suburban One League's Continental Conference.

“The team is smaller than usual, but I think the motto ‘small and mighty’ may come into play,” Bucks girls coach Vikye Swanson said.

Lansdale Catholic eyes a strong season in the Philadelphia Catholic League while North Penn, now coached by Jeff Faikish on the boys side, aims to defend its Continental crowns.

Boys

Central Bucks West

Coach: Rich Reshetar (sixth season)

Last year’s record: 5-6 (2-5 in the SOL Continental)

Key performers lost: Sam Byers; Mike Chen

Key returners: Pat Blaser, Jr., utility; Matt Schnell, Jr., sprint freestyle; Henry Mackensen, So., utility; Andrew Evans, So., freestyle; Jackson Butkus, Sr., sprint freestyle

Strengths: Freestyle, IM

Question Marks: Depth, relays

Lansdale Catholic

Coach: Bob Birnbrauer (18th season); Katie Kwortnik, assistant

Last year’s record: 3-9 overall and 1-4 in the Philadelphia Catholic League

Key performers lost: Harry Kulik, District 12 qualifier

Key returners: Conor Plasha, Sr., free/back; Dang Khoa Tran, Jr., IM/free/breast; Conor McCann, Jr., free/breast; Dylan Yurasits, Jr., free/diving; James Kulik, So., free; Brian Lockhart, So., free/fly; Steve Bedrossian, Fr., free; Christian Paulsen, Fr., free; Garhett Moore, Fr., free

Strengths: Dylan Yurasits don the District 12 diving title and was All-State at the PIAA State Championships. Dang Khoa Tran qualified for the state championships with his 100 breast win. All other returners are District 12 qualifiers with only one senior on the team.

Question marks: Depth is a problem in dual meets. Will be challenged in District 12 2A with added teams. Freshmen will need to add some depth.

North Penn

Coach: Jeff Faikish (first season)

Last year’s record: 10-1 overall and 7-0 in the SOL Continental

Key performers lost: Jason Deana, Kevin Dunigan, Tomas Gimenez

Key returners: Brandon Anders, Sr., free/back; Alex Chasar, Sr., breast; Spencer Collopy, Sr., free; David Jordan, Sr., free/fly; Colin Kelly, Sr., breast/IM; Jack Morris, Sr., free/fly

Others to watch: Jon Krail, Jr., free; Thanas Kountroubis, So., free/breast; Corey Smith, Fr., back/IM

Strengths: Depth and experience

Question marks: Graduated a lot of seniors, including PIAA State Champion Jason Deana.

Pennridge

Coach: Ryan Griffiths (seventh season)

Last year's record: 2-10 (1-6 in the SOL Continental)

Key returners: Jon Spehar, Sr., IM/back/breast; David Zurmuhl, Sr., sprint free/back; Andrew Koch, Sr., distance free; D.J. Maurone, So., sprint free/fly/IM; Kyle Frerichs, So., middle free/breast

Strengths: Breast, IM

Question marks: Some inexperience in some spots as the Rams have an ample, youthful roster, but the freshmen and sophomores will have to come along.

Souderton

Coach: Caity Warren (first season)

Last year's record: 10-2 (6-1 in the SOL Continental)

Key performers lost: Ozzie Moyer, Diving 3A State Champ

Key returners: Nick Wieder, Sr., back/distance free; Jesse Rush, fly/IM; Scott Jorgensen, Sr., distance free; P.J. Ryan, Sr., breast/IM; Matt Evers, Sr., diving; Triston Loux, Jr. utility; Kevin Musterait, Jr., sprint free; Matt Holcombe, Jr., utility

Strengths: Numbers, diving

Question marks: Holes to fill in the sprint free events, due to graduation

Girls

Central Bucks West

Coach: Vikye Swanson (22nd season)

Last year's record: 7-6

Key returners: Quinn MacMillan, Jr., freestyle/state swimmer; Rachel Sauders, Sr., diver, third at states; Jennifer Strohmeier, Sr., free/back/IM, state relay swimmer; Katherine Baltes, Sr., distance/free/fly; Meg Baltes, So., free/fly; Maddie Seiden, So., distance/free/utility; Cara Mergner, Jr., diver; Kelly Magri, Jr., diver; Kelly Mulligan, Jr., fly/distance/free

Strengths: Free/fly/backstroke/diving

Question marks: Need some people to step up in the breast and in the relays

Gwynedd Mercy Academy

Coach: Heather Norman (9th season)

Last year's record: 6-5, third in the Catholic Academies League

Key performers lost: Anna Lise Zaengle, IM and breast; Rachel Tumolo, back; Meg Curley, back

Key returners: Emily Fesnak, Sr., 100/200 free; Katie Cassidy, Jr., distance; Kieragh McMenamin, So., IM/back/500; Molly Reimenschneider, So., IM/fly

Others to watch: Mary Kate Curley, So., 100/200 free; Allie Szekely, Fr., IM/breast/free

Strengths: Sprint freestyle, IM and breast

Question marks: Lots of holes to fill from graduation

Lansdale Catholic

Coach: Bob Birnbrauer (18th year); Katie Kwortnik, assistant

Last year's record: 4-8 overall and 3-3 in the PCL

Key performers lost: Maura Conley, Katie Murphy, Dana Salanik, Julie Young. All were District 12 qualifiers and Katie Murphy was the District 12 500 free winner and a PIAA state qualifier.

Key returners: Nicole Marshall, Sr., IM/back/free); Mary Murphy, Jr. IM/fly/breast; Amanda Matylewicz, Jr., free; Erin Noonan, Jr., diver; Erin Edling, So., free/fly; Mary Cate Coyle, So., free; Letizia Iervolino, So., free; Mary Ann Wietecha, So., free/fly; Cassidy Fries, Fr., free/breaststroke; Diem Tran, Fr., IM/free/back/fly; Maura Maxwell, Fr., free/back)

Strengths: Nicole Marshall returns as District 12 IM winner and state qualifier. All other returnees are district qualifiers. New freshmen will add strength to relays and expect to place high in individual events at the district level.

Question marks: Depth in dual meets. The PCL added additional 2A teams so this young team needs to perform its best at the end of the season at the championship meet.

North Penn

Coach: Matt Weiser (fifth season)

Last year's record: 11-0 overall and 7-0 in the SOL Continental

Key performers lost: Brooke Else, free/fly; Val Stearns, free; Erica Elias, diving; Ashley Liss, diving; Heather Paolone, diving

Key returners: Aspen Trautz, Sr., free; Alyssa Tate, Sr., free/breast; Brittney Patterson, Sr., fly/IM; Becca Hoch, Sr., back/IM; Jenna Peterson, Sr., breast

Others to watch: Tara Rogers, Jr., free; Eve Kosten, Jr., free/breast; Emily Kosten, So., free/back; Olivia DiStefano, So., free/back

Strengths: The Maidens have a deep team and a history of tradition and success.

Question marks: Graduated a lot of seniors, especially divers. A very young team.

Pennridge

Coach: Ryan Griffiths (seventh season)

Key performers lost: Alexis Detweiler

Key returners: Chelsea Weiss, Sr.; Julia Nadovich, Sr.; Katie Green, Sr.; Nikki Laderer, Sr.; Kylee Smith, Sr.; Jackie Cios, Jr.; Jen Grasmeyer, Jr.; Keri Salanik, So.; Carly Files, Sr.; Amanda Crouthamel, Sr.

Strengths: Tremendous turnout

Question Marks: How quickly the younger swimmers are able to contribute to the team scoring

Souderton

Coach: Caity Warren (first season)

Key performers lost: Sarah Kesack, breast/IM; Jill Whitmire, back/free; Ann Fadden, free

Key returners: Alyssa Santangelo, Sr., back/free; Megan Furey, Sr., fly/IM; Erica Witoslawski, Sr., free/IM; Laureana Zrada, Sr., free; Bronwyn Smith, Sr., free; April Kichline, Jr., free/breast; Gabriella Pagano, Jr., fly; Kaitlyn Roberts, Sr., breast; Jess Wimmer, Sr., breast; Lauren Billy, So., diving; Ricki Lee Hodges, So., breast/free

Strengths: Freestyle events, relays

Question marks: Some lanes to fill due to graduation, but newcomers appear promising

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