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DIVING: CB West's Saunders, North Penn's Gagnon win SOL Continental titles

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North Penn diver Geoffroy Gagnon twists through the air as he competes during the SOL Continental Conference Diving Championships at Central Bucks South High School on Wednesday, Feb. 13, 2013. (Photo by Mark C Psoras\The Reporter)

WARRINGTON — Central Bucks West's Rachel Saunders earned her first conference championship and promising North Penn junior Geoffroy Gagnon surprised even himself by taking home the boys title at the Suburban One League Continental Conference Diving Championships Wednesday night.

Saunders, a senior, set a pool record with a score of 444.80 to top second-place Madison Tanis of North Penn (379.30) and replace the previous CB South pool record of 425.05, set by former Titan Lindsay Schmidt last year.

"It's real exciting because I wasn't even thinking about the pool record," Saunders said. "I think that's when I do my best because when I think about what score I'm supposed to get, I get more nervous. Usually I just dive and not think too much about it. It's kind of hitting me now that this is one of my last meets for high school."

Saunders progressed from a third-place finish at leagues as a sophomore to a runner-up spot last year and then to the top spot as a senior. She consistently scored sevens all evening to stay comfortably ahead of the competition.

"I get more nervous in the warm-ups than in the actual meet, so by the time the meet starts, it just feels like practice," she said.

Saunders' reverse dive pike was particularly strong.

"That's one of my favorite dives," she said with a smile afterwards. "They used to be my least favorite and I would try to avoid them, but now it's my favorite category."

Saunders' postseason is off to a commanding start, and it's a postseason that could possibly culminate with a state title. She placed third at states last year, behind only Schmidt and champion Lauren Lamendola of Pine Richland, who both graduated.

Gagnon, meanwhile, aims for his first trip to Bucknell, and his performance Wednesday definitely built up his confidence.

The Knights junior got off to a fast start and was on his way to a total of 434.85 points in the event.

"When you have a strong first dive, you have a really good feeling inside of you and it boosts your confidence that you can just tackle every other dive," he said.

Gagnon built up a sizeable lead early and was able to hold off Souderton's Matt Evers (423.95), a 13th-place finisher at states last winter.

"Coming in, I didn't think I was gonna beat Matt, to be honest," Gagnon said. "He dove really well and was a very formidable opponent."

It was Gagnon's night, and the Knight standout pretty much secured his first conference crown when he nailed his reverse dive pike.

"That was a really good way to kick off my second round," he said. "It really strengthened my hopes for a lead over Matt and it really boosted everything from that point on."

The swimming portion of the conference championships will be held this weekend, as the boys swim at CB South Friday evening and the girls compete at North Penn Saturday morning.

Suburban One League Continental Conference

Diving Championships at Central Bucks South

Boys: 1. Geoffroy Gagnon (NP) 434.85; 2. Matt Evers (S) 423.95; 3. Matt McCool (CBW) 376.55; 4. Nash Nickerson (CBS) 367.45; 5. Zeke Flandro (S) 318.95; 6. Matt Kolosick (CBE) 291.80; 7. Josh Stearsman (NP) 244.20; 8. Andy Widmeier (CBE) 222.55; 9. Thomas Jordan (CBE) 212.45; 10. Kevin Cantwell (CBE) 206.20; 11. Jess Gross (Penn) 205.60

Team Scoring: 1. CB East 40; 2. North Penn 32; 3. Souderton 31; 4. CB West 16; 5. CB South 15; 6. Pennridge 6

Girls: 1. Rachel Saunders (CBW) 444.80 (pool record; previous: 425.05, Lindsay Schmidt, CB South, 2012); 2. Madison Tanis (NP) 379.30; 3. Marie Yacopino (NP) 376.45; 4. Kelly Magri (CBW) 345.65; 5. Gabrielle Rudnitsky (HH) 336.80; 6. Katie Green (Penn) 324.85; 7. Nicky Laderer (Penn) 318.50; 8. Cara Mergner (CBW) 313.40; 9. Hanne Genyn (CBE) 280.15; 10. Andrea Jakobowski (CBE) 278.15; 11. Amanda Crouthamel (Penn) 272.50; 12. Julia Norek (CBE) 267.70; 13. Carly Files (Penn) 261.60; 14. Courtney Wentz (CBE) 257.0; 15. Kaitlyn Roberts (S) 177.45

Team Scoring: 1. CB West 46; 2. Pennridge 35; 3. North Penn 33; 4. CB East 24; 5. Hatboro-Horsham 14; 6. Souderton 2

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