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BOYS SWIMMING

BOYS SWIMMING: Kountroubis a versatile distance specialist for North Penn

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By Bill Keen Staff writer

TOWAMENCIN — When is a distance swimming specialist not really a distance swimming specialist?

When he swims for perennial powerhouse North Penn and his name is Thanas Kountroubis.

Last season as a junior, he finished second at the District One Class AAA championships in both the 200 and 500 freestyle, the longest events on the high school card.

It was an extremely impressive showing for somebody who may *not* contend for distance gold this season according to Knights' head coach Jeff Faikish.

"He's not really a distance specialist; he can specialize in any event," the coach said. "From the time I've been coaching him, he's a unique athlete and we've been trying to find the best fit for him.



Chloe Elmer/Staff Photographer

North Penn Thanas Kontroubis swimmer poses during practice on Monday, December 1, 2014 at the school.

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"He's a junior national qualifier in breaststroke but you would never know that because, in the summer months, we train every event at practice."

"In his weakest event, he would still be one of the top kids on any other team."

Kountroubis smiled and sidestepped the question when asked which two individual events he would pick if he had his choice.

"Coach Faikish is going to do what's best for everyone; he'll put you in where he thinks you can excel the most," Kountroubis said. "As of now I don't have an answer to that, but I know whatever we do this year, the two events where each swimmer is swimming his fastest times, that's where they'll be put for districts."

Faikish keeps his swimmers guessing by the way he conducts his daily practices

"Two days ago we did an all IM (individual medley) set and today it was more freestyle, so you never know," said Kountroubis, adding competition at practice makes everybody stronger. "One of the things we have that a lot of other teams don't is depth. You have kids behind you in the lanes who are going to tap you on your feet to make you go faster."

Kountroubis played soccer, baseball and basketball when he was younger but decided to devote himself to swimming as a freshman. As he prepares for his final year in the program, he keeps one thought in mind.

"The one thing that can mess you up is your mental approach," he said. "If you go into a race expecting too much of yourself, you're never going to do well.

"I try not to think about it; I just go in and I do it."

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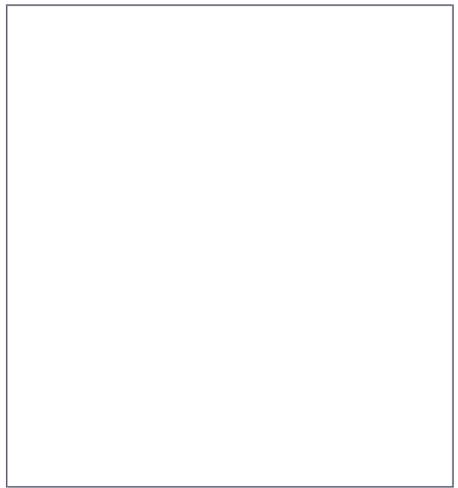
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