

SWIMMING: SOL Continental loaded once again

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North Penn girls aim for district three-peat; SOL Continental loaded once again

Blessed with hard-working seniors and fortified by their big-meet experience, the North Penn boys and girls swim teams enter this season as defending district champions.

For the Maidens, a three-peat in District One Class AAA looks to be well within reach, as NP heads into the pool quite possibly a stronger team than it was a year ago.

"After a strong showing at the PIAA Meet last year, and the loss of only one state qualifier, we are looking to improve upon our finish," said North Penn girls coach Matt Weiser, whose team raced to a Suburban One League Continental crown and a first-place finish at districts, capped off by a third-place finish in the state.

It takes a team as strong as North Penn to remain atop the rugged Continental Conference, which once again should fill many of the lanes at the state finals at Bucknell.

The Souderton Area boys team includes multiple swimmers that have experienced competition at the district, state, and national level, but Big Red will also need to replace its two top scorers, both lost to graduation.

"Last year was quite a year for the team," said Big Red boys and girls coach Caitlin Warren, whose boys squad finished ninth at states, broke five team records and had a pair of state medalists, including a gold-medal winner in Kevin Musterait (Ohio State). "The core of the team still exists, but the talented sophomore and junior classes from last year will need to step it up."

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Lansdale Catholic will be a force in the Philadelphia Catholic League and should once again be well-represented at the big meet in March, as junior Cassidy Fries returns after a season in which she swam to All-PCL honors as well as a District 12 Class AA title in the 100 breaststroke.

Returning state champion Allie Szekley leads Gwynedd Mercy Academy in the Catholic Academies League while out in Doylestown, the Central Bucks West boys begin a new era under first-year head coach Zach Wilson.

"We have a really strong group of swimmers leading the way and have gained a lot of depth in the freshman and sophomore class,' Wilson said. "Our ability to put together strong relays as well as all of the very talented swimmers that can swim any event will help us be really successful this season.

"I expect the season to go extremely well. All of the young gentlemen on the team are working really hard and setting their goals high. I believe the team will have a very successful season overall, with multiple swimmers potentially making it to postseason meets.'

Following is a team-by-team look at the area.

BOYS

Central Bucks West

Coach: Zach Wilson (first season)

Last Year's Record: 5-7

Key Performers Lost: Pat Blaser, breaststroke

Key Returners: Henry Mackensen, Sr. butterfly/IM; Andrew Evans, Sr., sprint/freestyle; Will Lambert, Sr., breaststroke/free

Others to Watch: Evan Washington, So., freestyle; Peter Baltes, So., distance freestyle

Lansdale Catholic

Coach: Bob Birnbrauer (20th season)

Last Year's Record: 2-7 overall and 2-5 in the PCL

Key Performers Lost: Dylan Yurasits (La Salle); Dang Khoa Tran (Dartmouth); Conor McCann (UConn)

Key Returners: Brian Lockhart, Sr.; James Kulik, Sr.; Garhett Moore, Jr.

Coach Birnbrauer Says: "We're looking at this year as a building opportunity for young swimmers to get considerable dual-meet race experience.'

North Penn

Coach: Jeff Faikish (third season)

Last Year's Record: 12-0 overall; 7-0 and first in the SOL Continental; District One Class AAA Champs; ninth place at PIAA Class AAA States

Key Performers Lost: Jacob Schellinger, fly; Jonathan Krail, breast; Greg Niedlinger, back; Geoffroy Gagnon, diver

Key Returners: Athanasios Kountroubis, Sr., freestyle/breaststroke; Liam Kelly, Sr., free; Brett Else, Sr., freestyle; Shane Hennessey, Sr., freestyle; Ian Boland-Bintner, So., diver; Quinton Mitchell, Sr., diving; Bryce Hoch, So., diver; Corey Smith, Jr., back

Others to Watch: Mark Dunigan, Sr., breaststroke; Alex Holland, Sr., breaststroke; Mike Kern, Sr., distance freestyle; Stephen Kolokithias, Sr., IM; Owen Marett, Sr., fly; Cole Palumbo, Sr., freestyle; Skyler Trautz, Sr., freestyle, Kyle Supko, Sr., free/IM; Jorge Lopez Palacios, Sr., free

Coach Faikish Says: "The North Penn Knights are a team without a lot of depth and experience, looking to compete for another Suburban One League and District One title. With a big senior class, the Knights are poised to be strong contenders at the District One Championships and PIAA State Championships.'

Pennridge

Coach: Ryan Griffiths (9th season)

Last Year's Record: 3-9 overall and 1-6 in the SOL Continental

Key Returners: Max Coulter, Sr., IM/breaststroke; Kyle Frerichs, Sr., middle distance; Eric Jordan, Jr., butterfly; Hayden Sandt, So., sprint freestyle; John Handy, So., diving; Jakob Aigeldinger, So., diving

Coach Griffiths Says: "The 2014-2015 Rams squad will be looking for young talent to fill key roles while relying on veteran leadership to bring this year's squad to new heights.'

Souderton

Coach: Caitlin Warren (third season)

Last Year's Record: 10-1 overall and 6-1 in the SOL Continental

Key Performers Lost: Triston Loux; Kevin Musterait

Key Returners: Matt Holcombe, Sr., all-around; Ryan Kierstan, Sr., sprint free; James Beldham, distance free; Brendon Loux, Jr., all-around; Danny Trout, Jr., back; Ryan Witoslawski, Jr., breast; Spencer Smith, Jr., distance; Zeke Flandro, Jr., diving; Cristian Musterait, Jr., sprint free; Nick Scott, Jr., all-around

Others to Watch: Spencer Nice, all-around; Storm Krader, all-around; Michael Dechert, all-around

GIRLS

Central Bucks West

Coach: Vibeke Swanson (24th season)

Last Year's Record: 5-7

Key Returners: Meg Baltes, Sr., distance free/IM; Maddie Seiden, Sr., distance free; Kelly Magri, Sr., diver; Collette Strong, Jr., back/IM; Paige Kramar, Jr., fly/back/IM; Jackie McDowell, Jr., free/fly; Trisha Mulligan, Jr., fly; Sarah Stim, So., diver; Aemie Roberts, So., diver; Marlee Evans, So., breast/free; Lizzie Gallagher, So., free/breast; Carly Siegel, So., distance free; Sarah McPherson, So., free/breast

Coach Swanson Says: "We are a fairly young team. We will be led by our senior captains (Baltes, Seiden, Magri). Our freshmen are training well and look to grow into some nice swimmers.'

Gwynedd Mercy Academy

Coach: Maura Gillies (first season)

Key Performers Lost: Claire Lacon, 50 freestyle; Lea Zaengle, 100 backstroke

Key Returners: Allie Szekley, Jr., 200 IM/100 Backstroke; Steph Szekley, So., 500 free/200 free relay; Mary Kate Curley, Sr., 200 free/500 free dd Others to watch: Hannah Blaser, Jr., 100 breast/200 IM; Molly Riemenschneider, Sr., 100 fly/200 IM; Kiergah McMenamin, Sr., 100 free/100 back

Coach Gillies Says: "We have a strong group of returning upperclassmen. We have an excited group of freshmen who are expecting big things from their first year of high school swimming.'

Lansdale Catholic

Coach: Bob Birnbrauer (20th season)

Last Year's Record: 3-8 overall and 2-4 in the PCL

Key Performers Lost: Amanda Matylewicz; Mary Murphy

Key Returners: Mary Cate Coyle, Sr. free; MaryAnne Wietecha, Sr., fly/free; Allie Razzi, Sr., free/breaststroke; Cassidy Fries, Jr., IM/free/breaststroke; Courtney Fries, So., back/free

Others to Watch: Hailey Gianoni, Fr., IM/free/fly; Madeleine Kulik, Fr., free; Joey Lamorticello, Fr., back/free; Meghan Primus, Fr., free; Samantha Razzi, Fr., free/back; Madelyne Moore, Fr., free/back; Caitlyn Couch, Fr., free; Talia Gallo, Fr., free

Coach Birnbrauer Says: "We look to challenge PCL teams in the dual-meet season and finish the year with several District 12 individual event winners."

North Penn

Coach: Matt Weiser (seventh season)

Last Year's Record: 12-0 overall; 7-0 and first place in the SOL Continental; District One Class AAA Champs; Third at PIAA Class AAA States

Key Performers Lost: Julie Krout, distance free; Tara Rogers, freestyle; Kat Perkins, freestyle/back

Key Returners: Olivia DiStefano, Sr., freestyle/back; Marie Yacopino, Jr., diver; Erin O'Neill, Jr., breaststroke; Leah Brown, Jr., freestyle; Madison Tanis, Sr., diver; Aimee Baur, Jr., freestyle; Kailyn Evans, So., IM/back

Others to Watch: Caroline Miller, Sr., IM/breast; Steph Galetta, Sr., freestyle; Kara Killion, Sr., freestyle; Anna Haggerty, Sr., IM; Abby Halteman, Sr., breaststroke

Pennridge

Coach: Ryan Griffiths (9th season)

Last Year's Record: 4-8 overall and 2-5 in the SOL Continental

Key Performers Lost: Jackie Cios; Maggie Walker; Jen Grasmeyer; Jessica Gross

Key Returners: Brittany Weiss, Jr., breaststroke/IM/middle distance (seventh-place finish at states in 100 fly and 100 breast); Hannah Zurmuhl, Jr., sprint freestyle/backstroke (fourth-place finish at states in 50 free); Erin Finley, Sr., sprint freestyle; Keri Salanik, Sr., distance freestyle; Elizabeth Yardley, Sr., distance freestyle; Claire Beno, So., middle distance/IM; Sam Vargo, So., sprint freestyle

Others to Watch: Morgan Scott, Fr., freestyle; Nicole Didenko, Fr., freestyle/backstroke; Anna Beno, Fr., IM/Backstroke; Holly Files, Fr., diving

Coach Griffiths Says: "The 2014-2015 squad is poised to have a great campaign with several swimmers in a position to be at Bucknell in March. Look for the veteran core of seniors, along with experienced state championship swimmers Zurmuhl and Weiss to gel quickly with the incoming talent of Scott and Beno to make for a very successful team season for the Rams."

Souderton

Coach: Caitlin Warren (third season)

Last Year's Record: 6-5 overall and 4-3 in the SOL Continental

Key Performers Lost: Gabriella Pagano, fly; April Kichline, sprint free; Kayla Rush, all-around

Key Returners: Rickilee Hodges, Sr., sprint/free/breast; Shannon Paparella, Sr., free; Sarah Hershey, Sr., distance; Hannah Boland, Sr., all-around; Amanda Wimmer, Sr., sprint; Amber Rogers, Jr., distance; Ariana Crossgrove, Jr., back; Lauren Harkins, Jr., sprint; Tori Rest, Jr., diving; Emily Hodges, So., all-around; Alison Kurlak, So., free; Lauren Rutkowski, So., breaststroke; Kayla Elliott, So., diving

Others to Watch: Mikaela Hershey, Fr.; Jenny Rogers, Fr.; Maureen Morris, Fr.

Coach Warren Says: "The girls team is looking to improve its league finish from last year and increase the number of athletes competing at the district and state level.'

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