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### Madison Tanis

Posted by editor

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**School:** North Penn

### Diving



**Favorite athlete:** Tom Daley

**Favorite team:** I do not watch sports.

**Favorite memory competing in sports:** Making it to States my sophomore year.

**Most embarrassing/funniest thing that has happened while competing in sports:** At my sophomore year at districts, my teammate painted our names on his chest and was cheering through the whole meet.

**Music on iPod:** A Day to Remember, The Wonder Years and country music

**Future plans:** To attend the University of Findley and find my passion within the veterinary field. Also, I hope to continue advancing my diving career.

**Words to live by:** "Keep your hopes up high and your head down low."

**One goal before turning 30:** To complete graduate school

**One thing people don't know about me:** I have been to Europe three times and have been to Holland, Belgium, Germany and France.

By Mary Jane Souder

Madison Tanis, according to her coach, has tenacity.

And that's not just a play on words with her last name, although that fact was not lost on North Penn diving coach Kyle Goldbacher.

"If I had to pick a word to describe her it would be tenacity, not necessarily tenacious," he said of the North Penn senior. "She is tenacious in certain competitive environments, but I think she has tenacity. The difference between being tenacious and having tenacity – she has this quality that has a couple of parts to it.

"One, she expects the very best from herself, and she has a determination that is uncommon. It also involves being resilient. She is an extremely intelligent young woman, and she knows how to learn from her mistakes.

"I would say tenacity primarily because she performs her best when the most is on the line. When you get to that critical point where – okay, this is the moment of truth, that is when she's at her best."

An elite diver, Tanis has already qualified for states twice, finishing fourth last year. This past summer, she qualified to compete in the elite USA Diving Nationals. She has signed a letter of intent to take her talents to Findlay University.

If it sounds like an impressive resume, it is, but making it even more impressive is the adversity Tanis overcame along the way. Tanis calls it a "little hiccup" at the beginning of her sophomore year. Most would undoubtedly use much stronger language.

"I had a pacemaker implanted, and that put me out at the beginning of the season," Tanis said. "They really don't know what it was, but my heart just decides to stop sometimes.

"It's unpredictable, it's random. It's lasted up to 10 seconds without beating, but it's obviously come back each time."

The problem was first detected in eighth grade, but a visit to CHOP and then wearing a heart monitor for 30 days provided no definitive answers.

"I didn't have any episodes wearing the monitor, so they didn't catch anything," she said. "It happened again in 10th grade. I would pass out, and that was the only way they knew."

This time, Tanis spent two weeks at CHOP, and on Sept. 19, 2012, a pacemaker was implanted.

"I felt absolutely healthy physically, which was really annoying for me as a 14-year-old being told I'm perfectly healthy but I still have to stay in the hospital," said Tanis, admitting she never really considered the seriousness of her problem. "I was a little distracted because 10th grade is our first year in high school, and I didn't want to leave.

"It never really scared me because I felt perfectly healthy, but obviously I was not. It never hit me that each time it happened it might not come back on. I don't know – I never thought of it that way, but everyone else was terrified for me, which is understandable."

For three months following surgery, Tanis was not allowed to dive, but she received the green light to resume diving on Dec. 19. Two days later, she was competing in North Penn's meet against Upper Dublin.

As for restrictions, there aren't many. Tanis is not allowed to do any pushups or exercises that involve the pectoral muscles.

"That's where all the wires are, and they don't want to wear them down," she said. "Besides that, there have been no restrictions for me.

"It's absolutely fine. It's been great."

Tanis has been diving since she was 10 years old, picking up the sport after opting to give up gymnastics.

"I was a gymnast for six years," she said. "I made it up to Level 7. It was pretty high up there, but it just got too intense for me too quick.

"I was still in elementary school, and (gymnastics) was going to be five nights a week. It was like 'Wait, wait, wait.' I was a little 10-year-old. All the problems that occur later on with all the joints – I liked the idea of diving better. I loved the water when I was little, and it just looked like a lot of fun."

Tanis got her start at the Hatfield pool.

"My mom and dad were really supportive – they knew all the problems I could face later," she said.



"My mom steered me in the direction of diving because I could still flip, twist and do all the things I liked."

Coming as no surprise, Tanis was a natural and experienced immediate success. Goldbacher, her winter coach, was starting a Junior Olympic team and encouraged her to join.

"At the time, I wasn't as serious about diving as I was about softball," she said of a sport she had been playing most of her life.

Tanis, who was involved in the travel circuit, played softball for the high school team through her sophomore year.

"I really did love softball," she said. "As I got older, I got more into diving. It got more intense, and I just fell in love with that more."

As a freshman, Tanis was the youngster on a team with veteran talent.

"I knew I wasn't going to be the star that year, and I just wanted to make myself better," she said. "I would pit myself against the other girls and secretly try to beat them even though we were on the same team. It was great competition."

Swim coach Matt Weiser knew his team had inherited a special talent.

"There were a couple of girls ahead of her, and she was competing with them the whole time just trying to get a spot in the dual meets," he said. "It was a tough decision because here we had these older girls ahead of her, and she just wanted to get on the boards."

"The whole season she just competed, competed and competed, and she made districts as a freshman. It's just incredible to see a young kid come in and go that far, especially their freshman year."

That was just the beginning for Tanis who – despite missing out on a portion of her sophomore season – finished ninth at districts and earned the final spot at states. As a junior, Tanis finished fourth in districts and medaled at states, capturing sixth place.

"I have loved it," she said of her high school experience. "Last year was my first real experience at states. In 10th grade, I made it and I was just happy to be there. That was the end of it."

"When I (made it to the finals) and got a medal, I was beside myself. This year I definitely want to do better."

Tanis was voted a captain of a Maidens' swimming/diving team that is expected to excel. It's not the norm for divers to be voted captains.

"From time to time we get some divers here and there, but divers aren't always practicing in the pool at the same time as the swimmers," Weiser said. "It's just kind of a different thing, but she had so many people supporting her, voting her in."

"For her teammates to vote a diver and give her the kind of respect she has, I think it's just awesome. Every kid on the team loves her. They see what type of person she is, and they follow her. It doesn't matter swimmer or diver, they're behind her 100 percent."

For the past year, Tanis has been practicing with Goldbacher's Junior Olympic team, Imaginary Dive Club. Wednesdays – off days for her high school team – and Saturdays she travels to The College of New Jersey to practice with the team.

Summers follow much the same schedule, daily practices with her local team and two weekly trips to TCNJ. Tanis has reaped the dividends for her hard work as evidenced by her trip to nationals in August.

"She did well," Goldbacher said. "She definitely has overcome a lot of adversity and uncertainty in her life."

"She does not take anything for granted. She's very appreciative of her opportunities. She strives to make the most of every opportunity she had. That's not common for the typical teenager."

An excellent student, Tanis will continue her diving career at Findlay where she plans to double major in pre-veterinary medicine and biology.

"I've always been around animals and I love them," she said. "I did the dual major in biology because I knew if I wasn't going to become a vet I would want to do something with biology."

A member of Key Club, Tanis and her best friend initiated the Love Your Brother Project through the club.

"We did it the past two years, and we've collected over \$16,000 in school supplies for Bayard Taylor Elementary School in Philadelphia," she said. "They had all the budget cuts, and they were in shambles. My friend went down and saw it and came back and talked to me about it.

"The teachers were buying their own supplies. We just felt really bad. North Penn is kind of a wealthy area so we figured we could help."

It's a gesture that doesn't surprise those who know her best.

"It's unusual to have a diver recognized by her teammates (and elected captain) – not necessarily for her competitive achievements but more for the personality, the strength of character and the integrity she has," Goldbacher said. "I have enjoyed working with her tremendously. Every moment has been a good moment with her."



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