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SWIMMING: North Penn, Souderton shaping up well for districts

By KEV HUNTER

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Thursday's annual North Penn-Souderton showdown was the beginning of the big push to the postseason.

And for many, the thought — and hope for — postseason success makes those grueling January swims go a little bit easier.

"I can't wait. I can't wait until the end of the year," Knights senior freestyler Brett Else said. "We're all so excited — we can't wait to get there. We have a couple other big meets and then it's districts, states, and it's on from there."

Else and the rest of the North Penn boys and girls squads looked pretty polished in their victory over Big Red on Thursday, a victory that brought North Penn's overall record to 9-0, including a 6-0 mark in Suburban One League Continental Conference meets.



mark c. psoras à the reporter (Mark C Psoras)

North Penn can complete a perfect 7-0 run through the conference when it travels to Central Bucks South on Tuesday, and then has two remaining dual meets: at Methacton on Thursday and then its annual battle with rival Emmaus on Feb. 3, at NP.



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"This is the time when everything starts to get fine-tuned," Knights coach Jeff Faikish said. "We're taking a look at who we're gonna place where and who shines at what moments, who needs a little bit extra work and who we need to back off a bit because they're broken down too much. It's that time of the year where the end is starting to come into sight."

North Penn showed tremendous burst in the meet against Souderton, despite the forecast of snow wreaking a little bit of havoc on the practice schedule.

The Knights posted multiple season-best times and further improved their outlook for districts.

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"It was interesting to see how the kids were going to react to having (Wednesday) afternoon off," Faikish said. "None

of my kids got in in the afternoon and there were very few kids at morning practice, so (Thursday) was like a Monday, and our kids actually swam really well."

It was a fast day for the freestylers, including Else and fellow senior Thanas Kountroubis.

Souderton also had some impressive swims, and, had the type of meet that builds confidence and makes one of the toughest months of the season seem all worthwhile.

"It's depressing January," coach Caitlin Warren said with a smile, "so if they can pop out some good swims, it's a good meet. My kids are excited to taper. They're like 'I'm tired of feeling worn down. When am I going to feel good?'"

"And I just keep telling them, the dual meets are when you learn how to race and then you have the leagues, districts and states, and that's where you're gonna swim your fastest times all season."

North Penn's Senior Day, fittingly, including several strong performances by the seniors and veterans. Freshmen, too, stood out on both sides, as Big Red's Spencer Nice won a pair of events and Aidan Daly went under five minutes in the 500 free, finishing second behind Kountroubis.

"We are starting to look very strong," Faikish said. "We changed some things up based on how we swam last year. Where we're at as a team, I'm very happy with, but in the back of my mind and in my gut — I'm not gonna lie, I'm nervous."

"I like where we're at today, but ultimately it's where we're at at the end of February and in March. That's our goal, to make the final push over the next couple weeks to achieve our dreams and goals."



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