

## **Linn-Mar swimmers have youth and depth**

Written by Jim Ecker

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They don't have their own pool and practice late at night, but there's a lot of enthusiasm for the Linn-Mar High School boys swimming program this year.

Coach Ralph Cortez has 41 swimmers on the team, which is more than last year, and better overall depth.

"The level of ability is up a notch, so that's really exciting," he said. "We're going to have a lot of places to plug people in.

"I think it's really going to be a team effort. It's nice to have a little depth."

The Lions practice from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 at Coe College every night. The bus leaves Linn-Mar at 6:40 p.m. and returns to school at approximately 10 p.m., so it takes dedication. The team also lifts weights on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays before school.

Cortez works with a summer club program in Marion and helps promote the sport. He also thinks the high school program has grown to a point that talented swimmers want to compete.

"Our team is a lot more visible now because we've actually sent out some very good swimmers, with the circumstances that we have," he said.

Nate Greve placed in four events at the state meet last year as a sophomore and ranks as

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Linn-Mar's top swimmer entering the new campaign. He placed 15th in the 200 medley relay, 16th in the 100 breaststroke, 17th in the 200 freestyle relay and 21st in the 200 individual medley.

"He always comes on pretty good," Cortez said.

All of the other members of those state relay teams graduated, but Cortez thinks there are talented swimmers to replace them. Kyle McNeal, a successful swimmer a year ago, is back this season and the Lions have added eight talented freshmen.

Cortez mentioned Justin Arebaugh, who attends Marion High School and swims for Linn-Mar, as one of the freshmen to watch this season. Marion High School does not have a swim team.

Linn-Mar did not score any points at the state meet last year, so that's one of the goals this season. "Absolutely," Cortez said. "Our goal is to improve our times."