

Warriors by a whisker at MVC meet

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 21 January 2012 23:50 - Last Updated Saturday, 21 January 2012 23:57



WATERLOO - Ian Ford says he stands 6-foot-4 1/2 inches tall, and that extra half-inch is important.

It helped Cedar Rapids Washington win the Mississippi Valley Conference swim meet Saturday afternoon by a fingertip at the Waterloo Central Middle School pool.

The Warriors edged Dubuque Senior, 383-381, for the title, partially because Ford won the 100-yard backstroke by one-hundredth of a second to give Washington three extra points in the team standings.

If Ford had finished second in that race - if he had been just two-hundredths of a second slower - the Warriors would have finished second in the team standings by a single point.

That's how close it was.

"It dawned on me right before the race," said Ford. "My coach warned me, 'It's basically going to come down to winning that event for us to win the meet.'"

Ford and Conner Clements of Cedar Falls swam neck-and-neck for practically the entire race. It looked like Clements might have been a tad ahead of Ford coming down the stretch, but it

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was hard to tell and Ford wasn't taking any chances. He dug deeper and finished the race with an extra burst of speed.



"Probably in the last 15 yards or so, I was like, 'Screw it, it's going to hurt, but I've got to do it for my team,'" he said.

It wasn't the last race of the day - there were still two events to go after the 100 backstroke - but it was the most dramatic finish and perhaps the most important on a day filled with tight races.

The winner of each individual race collected 20 points for his team. The runner-up got 17. Subtract three points and the Warriors go home unhappy in second place.

"Having Ian win by one-hundredth was a big key," said Washington Coach Chris Cruise. "That was three additional points that we wouldn't necessarily have had if he had finished even a whisker behind that. It was a big difference."

Washington picked up 47 points in the 100 backstroke when Ford finished first, Jared Thorson placed fourth (15 points) and Logan Barnes grabbed seventh (12 points). That 1-4-7 finish was huge.

The Warriors led Dubuque Senior by eight points, 349-341, entering the 400-yard freestyle relay, which was the 11th and final event in the meet. That meant the Warriors had to finish no worse than second in the 400 relay, and that's exactly what they did to clinch the championship.

Dubuque Senior won the 400 relay and collected 40 points for its final tally of 381. Washington placed second and got 34 points for its final count of 383.

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If the Warriors had placed third in the 400 relay, they would have gotten 32 points and finished in a flat-footed tie with Dubuque Senior with 381 for the day.

That's how close it was between fifth-ranked Washington and eighth-ranked Dubuque Senior. Cruise called it a significant victory for the Warriors as they pursue their goals of a high finish at the state meet.

"I think when you set the tone for winning like this, that helps you later on when things are close, because you're feeling good about yourself and you have confidence in yourself and your ability to pull something out when it gets tight and the going is tough," he said.

There was another dramatic race earlier Saturday when Washington teammates Josh Hughes and Morgan Barnes finished a tight 1-2 in the grueling 500 yard freestyle. Hughes won the race by 12-hundredths of a second in 4:50.89, with Barnes touching in 4:51.01. They collected 37 points for the Warriors right there.

Hughes and Barnes battle like that all the time in practice, and they did the same thing two years ago in the MVC sophomore meet in the Waterloo Middle School pool. Hughes won that race by four-hundredths of a second, which is incredible for a 20-lap event.

Hughes and Barnes swam in adjacent lanes Saturday, with Hughes in Lane 3 and Barnes in Lane 4. They battled stroke for stroke, for 500 long yards, pushing each other to the end.

"Being next to each other is always a benefit," said Barnes. "It's really fun to get in the pool and go against him."

Someone wondered how they manage to keep it a friendly rivalry. "Sometimes it's not!" Hughes shot back quickly, laughing.

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They were fierce rivals when they were younger, he explained, before they became teammates. "We're close friends now," he said.

Hughes and Barnes can breathe to either side during races, and they deliberately alternate sides so they can look at each other during the race and see who's ahead. When Hughes is breathing to his right, Barnes will breathe to his left. And when Hughes is breathing to his left, Barnes will breathe to his right. They kept an eye on each other practically the entire time Saturday.

"It's been kind of fun to watch," said Cruise. "The two of them have a great rapport. They work hard. They train with each other, and I think that really helps push both of them to do things that maybe they wouldn't do."

Barnes, who has signed to swim at South Dakota next year, was named the Mississippi Division Swimmer of the Year Saturday for his accomplishments during the entire MVC campaign. He won the 200 yard freestyle Saturday, beating Hughes by 1.54 seconds.

The Warriors also won the 200 medley relay with Ford, Sami Scheetz, Thorson and Scott Allison splashing to victory. Ford finished second in the 200 IM, Thorson placed third in the 100 fly and Nick Durin swam fourth in the 100 fly.

Cedar Rapid Jefferson placed seventh in the team standings with 130 points. Kristian Anderson finished second in the 100 fly and placed third in the 100 backstroke.

Cedar Rapids Kennedy and Linn-Mar tied for eighth place in the 11-team meet. Chandler Heisler placed fifth in the 50 freestyle and 100 freestyle for the Cougars. Nate Greve finished fifth in the 100 breaststroke for the Lions.

TEAM STANDINGS

1. Washington 383, 2. Dubuque Senior 381, 3. Cedar Falls 259, 4. Iowa City West 226, 5. Iowa City High 170, 6. Dubuque Hempstead 132, 7. Jefferson 130, 8. (tie) Kennedy 122, Linn-Mar

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122; 10. Waterloo West 104, 11. Waterloo East 39.

200 Medley Relay

1. Washington (Ford, Scheetz, Thorson, Allison) 1:41.10.
2. IC West (Yao, Miller, Burrill, Lehnertz) 1:41.34.
3. Cedar Falls (Clements, Sund, Stern, Michels) 1:42.99.
4. Dubuque Senior (Martin, Gill, Yuan, Franson) 1:43.93.
5. Jefferson (Scallon, Kleinheinz, Anderson, Inghram) 1:48.06.
6. Linn-Mar (McNeal, N. Greve, Hendricks, Arebaugh) 1:49.80.

200 Freestyle

1. M. Barnes (CRW) 1:47.56; 2. Hughes (CRW) 1:49.10; 3. Langner (CF) 1:51.31; 4. Thompson (ICH) 1:51.46; 5. McNeilly (ICH) 1:51.49; 6. Colin (DS) 1:51.53.

200 Individual Medley

1. Huff (DS) 1:59.10; 2. Ford (CRW) 1:59.81; 3. Sund (CF) 2:04.81; 4. Miller (ICW) 2:05.30; 5. Gill (DS) 2:08.83; 6. Stern (CF) 2:10.41.

50 Freestyle

1. Gill (DS) 22.12; 2. Duster (DS) 22.14; 3. Yao (ICW) 22.24; 4. Lehnertz (ICW) 22.66; 5. Heisler (CRK) 22.97; 6. St. John (ICH) 23.02.

100 Butterfly

1. Yao (ICW) 54.96; 2. Anderson (CRJ) 55.24; 3. Thorson (CRW) 55.55; 4. Durin (CRW) 57.86; 5. Clements (CF) 58.45; 6. Yuan (DS) 59.14.

100 Freestyle

1. Gill (DS) 49.32; 2. Lehnertz (ICW) 49.96; 3. Duster (DS) 50.33; 4. St. John (ICH) 51.17; 5. Heisler (CRK) 51.60; 6. Franson (DS) 52.67.

500 Freestyle

1. Hughes (CRW) 4:50.89; 2. M. Barnes (CRW) 4:51.01; 3. Colin (DS) 4:59.99; 4. Thompson (ICH) 5:00.43; 5. McNeilly (ICH) 5:00.97; 6. Schroeder (DS) 5:05.53.

200 Freestyle Relay

1. Dubuque Senior (Gill, Duster, Franson, Huff) 1:28.46.
2. IC West (Miller, Yao, Lehnertz, Burrill) 1:29.33.
3. Washington (Scheetz, Hughes, M. Barnes, Allison) 1:32.85.
4. Cedar Falls (Sund, Langner, Clements, Stern) 1:33.47.
5. Hempstead (Rutkowski, Pfiffner, Mueller, Rotz) 1:34.55.
6. Kennedy (Holmes, Casey, Moore, Heisler) 1:34.94.

100 Backstroke

1. Ford (CRW) 53.88; 2. Clements (CF) 53.89; 3. Anderson (CRJ) 56.81; 4. Thorson (CRW) 58.82; 5. Scallon (CRJ) 58.97; 6. Yuan (DS) 59.28.

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100 Breaststroke

1. Huff (DS) 1:01.33; 2. Miller (ICW) 1:03.84; 3. Sund (CF) 1:03.89; 4. Gill (DS) 1:04.27; 5. N. Greve (LM) 1:05.54; 6. Durin (CRW) 1:05.96.

400 Freestyle Relay

1. Dubuque Senior (Gill, Duster, Schroeder, Huff) 3:17.51.
2. Washington (Hughes, M. Barnes, Thorson, Ford) 3:21.75.
3. Hempstead (Rutkowski, Pfiffneer, Warren, Mueller) 3:30.47.
4. IC High (St. John, McNeilly, Eyman-Casey, Thompson) 3:30.65.
5. Jefferson (Anderson, Scallon, Inghram, Kleinheinz) 3:32.43.
6. Linn-Mar (Starr, Arebaugh, McNeal, N. Greve) 3:33.35.