

Hummel shows 'all guts and heart' for J-Hawks

Written by Tom Fruehling
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MARSHALLTOWN – The most gutsy performance at the boys state swimming championships Saturday was turned in by Cedar Rapids Jefferson sophomore Paul Hummel.

He came close to matching his all-time personal best times in both of his races despite undergoing an emergency appendectomy on Thursday.

“I told him it was his choice if he wanted to swim or not,” said J-Hawk Coach Ryan York.

Hummel, a 6-foot-3 breaststroke specialist who also normally swims on the freestyle relays, said that once he got in the water, he felt fine.

“Oh, it hurt just a little bit,” he said matter-of-factly. “Not that bad. I felt pretty good, actually.”

He started getting excruciating stomach pains on Wednesday afternoon just before practice. York said he had a friend in college who suffered an attack of appendicitis with similar symptoms.

He contacted Hummel’s parents, Michelle and Kurt, and Paul was taken to the hospital emergency room. Ironically, York said, his swimmer had to have liquids pumped into him in order for a CT scan to produce an image of his abdomen.

“His muscles have too much lean and not enough fat,” the coach said.

Hummel stayed overnight at the hospital, underwent surgery at noon Thursday and spent the day at home on Friday.

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“They said it was close to bursting,” said the 16-year-old.

By Saturday morning, he was raring to go.

Although he qualified for the 100 yard breaststroke and all three relays, he called it a day after his first two events.

He was less than a second off his best time for his leg in the 200 yard medley and was also less than a second off his personal best in the 100 yard breaststroke.

He said he was shooting for the school record of 59.49 but had to settle for a 1:00.29.

“Yeah, I’m kind of disappointed,” he acknowledged. “It kind of sucks that it happened right before state. But I’ve got nexy year.”

York said there’s little doubt Hummel will have the school record.

“Very tough kid,” he said. “All guts and heart.”