

Warriors rounding into form for stretch run

Written by Tom Fruehling
Saturday, 18 January 2014 22:03 -

It's that time of year when the Washington Warriors swimmers start to get serious.

The Mississippi Valley Conference meet is next week in Cedar Falls with the all-important district and state meets coming up on Feb. 8 and 15.

And even with somewhat of a make-shift lineup, the Warriors tuned up for what's ahead by turning in a fine showing Saturday in their own seven-team Jim Voss Invitational.

In a high-powered field with four teams ranked among the top 10 in the state, Washington came in a strong second behind higher-rated Bettendorf, but better than the West Des Moines Valley swimmers that had beaten them in a dual meet a week ago.

"To say that I am surprised with how we finished would be an understatement," said Washington Coach Chris Cruise. "Our guys swam absolutely fantastic from the start to the end. They were just outstanding.

"Win or lose, every one of them had great swims. I was very pleased with how well we're competing right now."

They were without two of their top swimmers, freestyle sprinter Sami Scheetz due to illness and butterfly specialist Zach Weston because of a show choir obligation.

Several others saw limited action with injuries or competed on reconfigured relay teams.

Still, the seventh-ranked Warriors gave fourth-ranked Bettendorf a run for its money.

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"We're really coming together as a team," said junior Jared Thorson, who cruised to a quick victory in the 100 yard butterfly. He's currently listed at second in the state in the event. "We're bonding. We do everything together. We eat together, we swim together.

"That's the key to getting good. Lots of food and lots of practice."

Like all of his teammates, Thorson still sports the blond hair that the Warriors traditionally sport throughout the season. That will be shaved as they get closer to the year-ending competition.

And soon they will begin wearing panty hose in practice to add some resistance in the water, just as baseball hitters warm with a weighted bat.

Also in the Warriors' training regimen are boxy, baggy "drag suits" worn over their regular trunks to literally drag them down.

"We'll probably take them off next week," said Thorson. "That'll really help our times."

Some even went without them on Saturday, and the results showed.

"Several of the guys we're counting on to move up in the power rankings and get us points dropped their times significantly," Cruise noted. "That's what we'll need in the district and state meets."

Meanwhile, Washington's highly ranked swimmers came through as Cruise had hoped.

Sophomore Nick Saulnier easily won the 200 individual medley and was a close second in the 100 backstroke. He's among the state leaders in both events.

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“My goal this year,” he said, “is to set school records in both events and win state. And help get my team a lot of points.”

Freshman phenom Cameron Kelley dropped more than five seconds off his personal best in taking the 500 freestyle by nearly a full length of the pool. His time now puts him in the top tier of the state power rankings.

“I was quite happy with my swim today,” Kelley said matter-of-factly. “But I know I can do much better. I set impossible goals for myself.”

Senior Nick Durin, who dropped his baggy drag suit, was a narrow runner-up in the 50 freestyle and came back for a solid third in the 100 freestyle.

“Everybody stepped up today,” he said. “The team came through great.”

Thorson, the happy-go-lucky unofficial team cheerleader, said it is the camaraderie that pays off in the pool.

“We’re all behind the blocks yelling for each other,” he pointed out. “And when we know that the others are rooting for us, we don’t want to let them down.

“We want to give it our personal best. We always try our hardest. That’s what gives us an edge.”

JIM VOSS INVITATIONAL

Team Scores

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1. Bettendorf 310.5, 2. Washington 254, 3. WDM Valley 230, 4. Ankeny 226.5, 5. Waukesha South 199, 6. DM Lincoln 51, 7. Cedar Falls 31

200 Medley Relay

1. Valley 140.70
2. Washington (Saulnier, Jackson, Thorson, Kehoe) 1:41.18
3. Waukesha 1:41.40

200 Free

1. Nathan Spencer (Bett) 1:47.53
2. Kyle Gerum (WSou) 1:47.57
3. Chandler Cox (Ank) 1:50.75

200 IM

1. Nick Saulnier (CRW) 2:03.69
2. Jonathan Jaworski (WSou) 2:05.29
3. Cole Bunn (Bett) 2:05.30

50 Free

1. Sam Gorham (WDMV) 22.16
2. Nick Durin (CRW) 22.73
3. Aaron Klinker (Ank) 22.97

100 Fly

1. Jared Thorson (CRW) 54.04
2. Alec Carlson (WSou) 54.71
3. Ethan Eiler (WDMV) 55.29

100 Free

1. Gerum (WSou) 49.20
2. Carl Skoog (WDMV) 50.03
3. Durin (CRW) 50.25

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500 Free

1. Cameron Kelley (CRW) 4:54.42
2. Spencer (Bett) 4:58.61
3. Cox (Ank) 4:58.91

200 Free Relay

1. Valley 1:29.86
2. Washington (Kehoe, Durin, Kelley, Thorson) 1:31.00
3. Bettendorf 1:31.36

100 Back

1. Carlson (WSou) 53.48
2. Saulnier (CRW) 54.68
3. Richard Turner (Bett) 56.11

100 Breast

1. Tanner Nelson (Bett) 1:01.99
2. Jameson Spitzig (Ank) 1:04.06
3. Ryan Schade (Bett) 1:05.51

400 Free Relay

1. Waukesha South 3:17.20
2. Valley 3:18.79
3. Washington (Durin, Kelley, Thorson, Saulnier) 3:23.06