

Lady Pioneers hope for national success

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

Who could blame Mary Ellen Wydan if a year ago she felt like she was trying to walk on water. After all, she was a new coach in a new location trying to install a new program for Oakland University's women swimmers.

And she was taking that OU team to their first NCAA Division II nationals.

This year Wydan is more comfortable, the program is firmly in place, and the team is looking forward to a successful run at nationals.

"That shouldn't be misinterpreted as a shot at No. 1. I'd say California Northridge and South Florida are the favorites," said Wydan. "Then it should be a battle for third through sixth."

OU, WYDAN FIGURES, should be in the thick of that battle. The Pioneers were fourth last season.

"I've learned a lot, in terms of what to expect," said Wydan. "Last year we had nothing to lose. This year, I had expectations. And you want to live up to your expectations."

"I think we have a stronger team this year than last. We're better prepared, and we're deeper."

One reason OU is stronger is the development of freshman Nancy Schermer. "I knew she had a lot of potential," said Wydan, "and she's been very dependable."

Schermer combines with juniors

Kim Pogue, a Farmington native, and Linda Scott, from Rochester, to give OU a solid freestyle corps. Schermer has qualified for the 100, 200, 500 and 1,650 free, while Pogue will compete at nationals in the 200, 500 and 1,650 free. Scott will be in the 100 and 200 free.

OTHER NATIONAL QUALIFIERS are Sarah Stanwood, a senior from Plymouth, in the 400 individual medley and Kathy VanValkenburg, a senior, in the 100 and 200 backstroke.

Several other Pioneers are on the verge of qualification. They'll get one more chance at next weekend's Midwest Invitational at Illinois-Circle in Chicago.

Wydan is resting many of her swimmers for this last shot. Among those who could make the trip to nationals are freshmen Kim Brace in the 100 and 200 fly, Allison Klump in the 100 breast, and senior Lee Ann O'Neill on both the 1 and 3 meter boards; sophomore diver Janine Doll on the 1-meter board; Stanwood in the 200 IM; and Scott in the 100 butterfly.

IN ADDITION, positions in the three relays have yet to be determined, Wydan said.

"Quality runs throughout the line-up, so we're having a hard time putting relays together," she said.

"That's something we'll definitely be looking for at this meet."

Wydan figures Schermer and Pogue to swim 3 relays each, but other positions are less certain.

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Something else could possibly go wrong for Oakland University's men's swim team, but if it does kindly spare Pete Hovland the news.

The Pioneer program has suffered enough setbacks this season to last a decade. First Mike McCloskey was lost to grades before fall semester. Then in January, Jeff Colton and Mark Duff suffered academic setbacks that made them ineligible.

Just like that, Hovland was without two of his best swimmers from last year's NCAA Division II runner-up, and his No. 1 diver.

"Yeah, it does hurt," said Hovland. "Of Colton's unexpected loss, he said, 'It hurts our medley relay, too.'"

But OU's swim cupboard is not bare, thanks to an outstanding freshmen class recruited by Hovland.

"The freshmen have been swimming well all year long," said Hovland. "And Matt Croghan is doing an exceptional job."

CROGHAN IS perhaps the best of the current batch of OU swimmers. The

OU sports

sophomore, who finished second at nationals in the 1,650-yard freestyle and third in the 500 free, has qualified for each and has "the ability to score in the top three in both" according to Hovland.

Other veterans Hovland is counting on to score some points at nationals are Steve Larson, who's qualified in the 50 and 100 free and 100 back, and will fill Colton's spot on the 400 medley relay, and John Christiansen, the team's only senior, in the 50, 100 and 200 free and all three relays.

That's not much experience to rely on, which is why Hovland is predicting a "bottom 5" finish, or somewhere between fifth and 10th, at nationals.

How high that finish is hinges on the freshmen. Already qualified for nationals are Mark VanderMay in the 100 and 200 breaststroke, the 200 individual medley and three relays, and Jeff Kuhn, who's made it in the 100 breast

and is very close in the 200.

NEWCOMER MIKE KOLEBAR, a junior college transfer, will swim the 50, 100 and 200 free and all 3 relays at nationals.

On the brink of making the cut are freshmen Tom Warnica, a Rochester Adams grad who's close in the 200, 500 and 1,650 free; Jeff Cooper, in the 500 and 1,650 free and the 400 IM; Steve Ramsey, in the 50 and 100 freestyle; and sophomore Steve Hussey, in the 100 and 200 back.

The final shot they'll have to qualify will come this weekend at Wayne State, the host of the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) meet. That OU will be concentrating on qualifying for nationals says something about the strength of the GLIAC in swimming.

"The conference used to be one of the stronger ones around when Wayne

State had a good team and Northern Michigan was a member, along with Ferris," said Hovland. Now only OU and Ferris have solid teams, the rest with few numbers and little quality.

THERE HAVE been 7 GLIAC meets. OU has won them all, and No. 3 should be no real problem, either. It shapes up as more of a dual meet with Ferris than a league championship tilt.

"The toughest battle is going to be with Ferris for the conference title," said Hovland. "I feel we can go 1-2, 1-2-3, and it could still be close because of their numbers. They could get the rest of the scoring spots."

Still, OU is a heavy favorite. The Pioneers trounced Ferris earlier this season in a dual meet.

Swimmers will find added incentive. "Our kids have pride," said Hovland. "They want to win it. But, basically, they'll be swimming against guys they've been training against all season."

"They have to provide their own motivation."

That will be easy enough, with nationals three weeks away. There'll be no more qualifying chances.

Wm. Tyndale cagers split pair on road trip

William Tyndale College made sure its trip to Chicago over the weekend wasn't wasted, as the men cagers downed Niles College of Illinois 84-56 Saturday.

Tyndale (7-13) fell behind early, 6-0,

but regrouped and closed the gap to 33-31 at intermission.

A patient offense was the remedy in the second half as Tyndale controlled the tempo.

Phil Carr was hot for the winners,

pouring in 32 points. Mike Sacco added 12 points and Jim Swanson had 6 points and 11 rebounds.

Friday night wasn't as nice to visiting Tyndale, however, as they were defeated by the powerful Moody College

of Chicago, 89-61.

Moody led the entire game and 43-21 at intermission.

Carr led Tyndale with 17 points. Randy Scott had 16 and Swanson added 13.

Dream ends for Cleland

ONE QUICK glance at Doug Cleland's life last fall would have fostered eerie remarks.

A dominant swimmer for a decade, Cleland was about to enter the high pressure world of college athletics. The Rochester Adams star had earned himself a scholarship to Tennessee, a king among collegiate swim programs.

Cleland started early with the Volunteers, taking six credit hours last summer while churning through two 90-minute workouts a day. His grades were fine; so was his swimming.

When fall semester opened, it brought with it the start of the serious swim season. Training sessions increased to a total of five hours a day — four hours in the pool and another of either weight training or running.

CLELAND ADAPTED, or so it seemed. "His summer workouts at Tennessee had put him ahead of the other freshmen recruits. 'I was swimming real good,'" he said. "And I really loved the city (of Knoxville). I had a 3.5 grade point in my summer classes."

But athletes are not machines, however programmed their performances appear. Progress can be plotted and charted, diagrammed and analyzed with precision, but there's always the human factor to consider.

Something snapped in Doug Cleland early last fall at Tennessee. The sport that his life revolved around for 12 years lost meaning. "I was swimming with my eyes closed," said Cleland. "I didn't care if I ran into someone, I didn't care what my splits were in practice."

"It got to the point where I lost all incentive in workouts."

So Cleland packed his bags and came home, three weeks into the fall semester at Tennessee.

sport shorts

It's not too early to begin thinking softball.

The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of Metro-Detroit will conduct a softball extravaganza this week. The festivities kick off with the annual Hall of Fame dinner, followed by a Workshop and Open House.

The 4th annual Hall of Fame dinner, honoring five new inductees, takes place 6:30 p.m. today at the Polish Century Club in Detroit. Tickets are \$20 a person.

William Svobach and Tony Lutonski, softball commissioners; Joe Gaud, a slow-pitch player; Al Delechi, a longtime softball sponsor; and the late Charles Justice, a former fast-pitch player, all will be honored. The action moves to the Southfield Civic Center, 26000 Evergreen, between 10 and 11 mile roads, tomorrow for a daylong Softball and Ballfield Maintenance Workshop from 9:15 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday's Open House at the civic center, which runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., will have more than 50 exhibitors displaying the latest in uniforms, bats, gloves, trophies and other things.

The workshop and open house are free of charge. For more information, call Stuart Alderman at 545-6400.

IT'S ACTION TIME

• Four box seats to the Detroit Tiger opening-day baseball game.

• A Mexican or Italian dinner for 10 with Mr. and Mrs. Vince Lombardi, Jr., and lunch for six with Michigan State University Coach George Perles.

• Four tickets to the Sept. 14 Notre Dame vs. U-M football game in Ann Arbor.

• One week's stay in December or January in a 5-bedroom condo in Val, Colo.



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EVERYONE WAS surprised by Cleland's decision. "Surprised is an understatement," said Cleland of his parent's reaction.

"Shocked is a better word. To tell the truth, it's been really hard for me. They thought I had everything going for me."

"But I've always believed that if you're not doing something you enjoy, why do it. It's been tough for me, but it's a letdown for them, because swimming has been such a big part of my life for so long."

Big part means that for 12 years, Cleland spent 11 months a year, 2-5 hours a day, refining his swimming skills. The only true benefit he earned was a college scholarship. And he walked out on that. It took only three weeks for Cleland to do something he'd never done: turn his back on swimming and quit.

EXPLAINING SUCH a decision borders on the impossible. The reasons are complex and numerous, and trying to capsuleize it in a few simple sentences is futile.

Cleland, though, summarized it best:

"The big reason I don't love swimming anymore is that I'd dive into the pool and swim my heart out and I wouldn't improve. Then a whole year of training is down the drain."

"You train all year for that one moment, for two minutes in the pool. When those seconds don't come off like you want, you pretty much say to yourself, 'Well, back to the drawing board.'"

"How many times do you think you can go back to the drawing board?" Cleland believes he reached his swimming peak when he was "15 or 16. After that, I didn't improve much. And when you don't improve, it's not much fun."

IT'S A STARTLING look into an athlete's psyche. Building confidence and body for an entire year for that one all-too-brief moment, when success is determined by the ticks of a clock.

Cleland trained as hard as anyone, and he swam as well as he could. But his improvement waned, and as it did so did his confidence.

Cleland's currently enrolled at Oakland University, studying broadcast communications. OU swimmers Cleland is acquainted with are trying to convince him to remain there and join the team next season, but Cleland is balking.

"I'm definitely leaning on going to Michigan State," he said. "They have a good communications program there."

HE'S TALKED with OU coach Pete Hovland, whom he knows from his days of swimming with the Oakland Live 'Yer. Hovland is applying no pressure; his only advice to Cleland has been to stay somewhat in shape, in case he decides to return.

Cleland isn't ruling out that possibility. "It's something I'll always keep open," he said. "I want to keep all my opportunities open to me. But right now, I don't plan on swimming again."

Cleland is working part time in display advertising for an engineering firm. "It's the first time I've had a job. I enjoy the responsibility, and I need the money to pay my tuition for school."

For the first time in his life, Cleland is faced with a different challenge: making a career for himself. And he loves it.

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