

Marlins anticipate another top-5 finish at girls state swim meet

BY DAN O'NEARA
STAFF WRITER

Always a contender at the state meet, Farmington Hills Mercy figures to be a factor in the Division I swimming and diving championships this weekend at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti.

With three relays and 13 individuals qualified to compete, there's little doubt of that. The Marlins, who won the state title in 1998 and have been in the top five every year since, have their sights set on fourth place, one better than last year.

"(Ann Arbor) Pioneer is going to run away with it," Mercy coach Jim Downs said. "Zealand will be second. We could take third, possibly. (Rockford, Livonia, Stevenson, Grand Haven, Northville and Mercy are all right there for third. We missed fourth last year by five points, so we're trying to get that, at least.)"

Downs added Zealand has a better seed time than Mercy in every relay, but the difference is only two or three tenths of a second in two.

"So anything could happen there," Downs added.

The foursome of seniors Eloise Page, Elizabeth Garlow and Caitlin Kelly and junior Katie Naglick will swim the medley relay.

Downs was unsure of his lineup for the other two relays except for the certainty Kelly will be on those teams, too.

"A lot depends on who is fatigued coming off their races," Downs said. "We may make a decision at the last minute."

SWIM

FROM PAGE D1

who won, they were cheering for someone who might've taken third but had a qualifying time. There was a lot of excitement."

There were no records set in the league meet, but several Mercy swimmers bettered their times and will have a better seed at the state meet because of it.

Loniowski dropped three seconds in the 500. Kelly and Naglick swam their best times of the season in the 100 freestyle and butterfly, respectively.

All of the Mercy swimmers who had qualified for the state meet swam double-suited since they had a week to go in their taper for the season finale.

But the Marlins still focus on the league meet, Downs said, because it's a tradition with Mercy, which has won the event 12 straight times and nearly every year since the mid 1960s.

"We don't want to go in there and say, 'Yeah, we're too good for this.' We do a lot of mental preparation for the league meet with charts and posters the girls make for each other," Downs said. "They get into this thing about motivation among themselves."

"When somebody pops a time that qualifies them for the state meet, then the focus drifts ahead a little bit. But we do take it seriously."

"We want to put the whole thing together - county, league and state meets. It's all part of the package of performing all down the line."

Other Mercy swimmers who qualified in the league meet included, by event - 200 freestyle: 2. Loniowski; 3. Page; 200 IM: 2. Garlow; 4. Jackie Smith; 5. Annette Merchant; 50 freestyle: 2. Switaj; 3. Reble; 4. Schuchardt; diving: 6. Becky Butler; 7. Krysta Milewski; 8. Arin Kaspius; butterfly: 2. Merchant; 3. Crowley; 5. Gariepy; 100 freestyle: 2. Switaj; 3. Schuchardt; 500 freestyle: 2. Loniowski; 3. Page; 5. Colleen Coan; backstroke: 2. Naglick; 4. Frances Murphy; 5. Smith; breaststroke: 3. Elena Milewski; 7. Elizabeth Zennedjian.

Rounding out the team scores at the league meet were Pontiac Notre Dame Prep, 187; Harper Woods Region, 92; Livonia Ladywood, 81; Royal Oak Shrine, 76; and Madison Heights Bishop Foley, 64.

We'll see how people feel. Both relays are going to be pretty solid."

Individually, Page and freshman Mara Loniowski will swim the 200 and 500 freestyle, seniors Annette Merchant and Jackie Smith the IM and butterfly, Garlow the IM and breaststroke, freshman Elena Crowley and junior Emily Gariepy the butterfly, junior Carrie Roble the 50 freestyle, Naglick the 200 freestyle and butterfly, Kelly and sophomore Sarah Schuchardt the 100 freestyle and freshman Caryn Switaj the 50 and 100 freestyle.

Garlow was sixth in the breaststroke and 10th in the IM last year, and Naglick was ninth in the butterfly.

"It's hard to tell (how the Mercy swimmers will do), because you don't know where others are going to swim and, with 16 places, it's hard to figure out what's going to happen," Downs said. "A couple people are so good they could pick any of four or five events. It's real hard to try to figure it out."

Farmington's Chrissy Fleck will compete in the IM at the Division I meet and will join teammates Katie Fleck, Mallory Annarino and Ayumi Ueda in the 400 freestyle relay. Jarah Hargitt was a contender

in a regional diving meet Tuesday.

"It's very exciting," coach Jason Cavicholi said. "It's the first time in seven years that we've had any qualifiers. We're looking real fast in the water right now."

North Farmington qualified three of its relays for the Division I meet. Its known individual qualifiers are Emily Howard in the 50 and 100 freestyle, Valencia Smith in the IM and butterfly and Kristen Wolff in the breaststroke.

Harrison is sending six swimmers and two relays to the Division II state finals at the University of Michigan.

Katie Steff will compete in the IM and 500 freestyle, Jakki Waldecker the IM, Beth Leeb and Kim Nordhoff the 500 freestyle, Liz Stieber the backstroke and Jessi Waldecker the breaststroke. Steff, Jakki and Jessi Waldecker and Stieber comprise the medley relay team, and the 400 freestyle relay consists of Steff, Nordhoff, Leeb and Jakki Waldecker.

"This is the largest group of kids that we've taken in our seven years here," coach Ross Bandy said. "They're a good group of kids, and I expect them to do well."

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Rice earns 28-17 win over DLS

BY JIM TOTH
STAFF WRITER

One more win and the Birmingham Brother Rice Warriors can finish the season where they started it - in the Pontiac Silverdome.

Couch Al Fracassa's squad kept their Division II state title hopes alive as a 21-point second quarter was the driving force behind a nail-biting, 28-17 triumph over Catholic League foe Warren DeLaSalle in regional final play Saturday at Birmingham Groves.

"We played a very good football team," acknowledged Fracassa, whose troops defeated the Pilots, 28-12, during Week 5 of the regular season. "When you play a good football team it's hard. They've been beating teams all year. They've done a remarkable job with their talent. We didn't play a slouch out here. They're tough kids."

Likewise, the Warriors have also done a remarkable job and now turn their attention to state semifinal play which occurs next Saturday against highly touted Allen Park. (Related story, Page D7)

With a win, the Warriors would compete for the Division II title Nov. 29 at the Silverdome.

"They have a good offensive

FOOTBALL

and defensive team," said Fracassa of the 11-1 Jaguars. "They're very well coached and they have really good speed. We're just glad we're in it."

Likewise, the Warriors have also done a remarkable job and now turn their attention to state semifinal play which occurs next Saturday against highly touted Allen Park. (Related story, Page D7)

Two of those scores went to junior wide out Brian Mahler, including an all-important 38-yard hook-up that gave the Warriors a 21-14 advantage at the half.

The first covered 18 yards and saw Mahler elude two would-be tacklers before tipping into the end zone.

The other Rice six-pointer came when tailback Anthony Jackson slipped behind the DeLaSalle secondary to haul in a 48-yard strike from

Pickens. DeLaSalle, which entered the contest 8-3 and off playoff victories over Rochester Adams and Warren Cousine, pushed across one score in each of the first two periods.

Senior Bradley Sabo rumbled in from 14 yards to cap a 14-play, seven-minute drive in the first quarter and senior Joseph Konrad took back a Pickens

pass 68 yards for six points in the second frame.

Following a 30-yard field goal from Robert Miller that trimmed the lead to 21-17 early in the third period, the Warriors milked the clock for much of the second half until a Jackson 1-yard dash enabled the Rice faithful to breathe a sigh of relief.

That scoring march was crucial as it took better than six minutes off the clock and left the Pilots with only two minutes to make up 11 points.

"The kids came through and that's the sign of a good team," said Fracassa of his Warriors, who held a 272-269 edge in total yards. "Everything worked out and we got to go another week."

Pickens' roller-coaster performance, fortunately, included more ups than downs and resulted in 271 yards passing and three touchdowns.

But he also threw three interceptions. The Pilots offered up a little more balance with 137 rushing yards and 132 passing yards.

However, a pair of fumbles stopped any further scoring. The Warriors now stand 10-2 overall, including a season-opening 34-20 victory over Farmington Harrison at the Silverdome.



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