

Sports

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All-Area swimming

Jason Barringer of Farmington Hills Harrison, competing in the 200-yard individual medley (above) during a meet earlier this year and looking for his time after the race (right), received an at-large berth on the All-Observer boys swim team. Barringer was ninth in the breast stroke at the Class B meet earlier this month. North Farmington and Redford Catholic Central are well represented on this year's honor squad, which can be found on Page 6D.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

North's Heller is co-champ on vault

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

As sure as night turns to day and winter becomes spring, North Farmington is always among the state's top gymnastics teams.

The Raiders, who were fifth last year, stepped up to fourth place in this year's statewide competition Friday at Saginaw Valley State University. North was 11th two years ago and second the previous year.

"It's consistent," coach Jeff Dwyer said. "When you start beating the Hollands, the Troys, the Cantons, you've done a good job. Our goal was to get in the top five, and we're happy with where we were."

Midland Dow, the No. 1-ranked team most of the year, captured the team championship with a 130.70 score.

The first division included Muskegon Mona Shores (137.75), Western Lakes Activities Association champion Plymouth Salem (137.60), North (137.00), Plymouth Canton (136.90) and Holland (136.80).

THE SECOND tier consisted of Freeland (133.75), Troy and Fraser (133.30), Holt (132.70), Ann Arbor Pioneer (128.80) and defending state champion Rockford (123.45).

"Dow was uncatchable at this meet," Dwyer said. "It was the toughest meet I've been to as far as the number of teams capable of contending for the state title. We finished behind some good teams, and we finished ahead of some good teams."

The Raiders were led by junior Heather Kahn, who was runner-up to state champion Kim Miller of Salem in the all-around, and senior Kym Heller, who finished her career winning an individual co-championship on vault.

Kym Heller
co-champion on vault

Kahn, who scored 36.00 in the all-around Friday, also qualified for the finals Saturday on every event but the balance beam.

"She's been so dang consistent," Dwyer said. "She beat Kristie Kelly of Freeland and the all-arounders from Dow. She did really well, considering the pressure of the meet."

Heller, who scored 35.00 in the all-around and placed sixth, also had a great meet, according to Dwyer.

AS A SENIOR, she was subsequently selected for the four-person Michigan team that will compete against the top gymnasts from other states later this spring in Nebraska. Kelly, Dow's Tracee Lewis and Ann Arbor Pioneer's Tammy Crocker also are on the elite squad.

"That's quite an honor," Dwyer said. "It was a great way to go out."

Junior Kristin Szutarski and sophomore Jameelah Gater contributed the other scores in North's team to-

gymnastics

tal. Szutarski was 33rd in the all-around (33.00) and Gater 37th (32.40).

"They get overshadowed by Heller and Kahn," Dwyer said. "but, without them posting scores in the mid to high 8s, the team wouldn't have been what it was."

"Those four individuals carried us through the season, and there was always a lot of pressure on each of them to score."

Heller scored 9.5 on vault Friday to rank first going into Saturday's second half of the individual competition. She finished with a two-day total of 18.85 to share top honors with Kelly.

"SHE LEARNED the trick last year but had a lot of difficulty with it the last few weeks," Dwyer said. "Either her rotation was off, or her landing wasn't what it should have been."

"But she worked real hard on it and it paid off. I was glad to see it after all the hard work she put in."

"She did a one-and-a-half twisting hard spring, and I didn't see anyone else doing that at this meet," he added.

Kahn finished fifth on vault (18.65) and seventh on bars (17.05), and she tied for eighth place on floor (18.05).

"She tried a more difficult (bars) routine on Saturday, and I have to give her credit for that," Dwyer said. "The kids are so drained after Friday, and I was glad to see her try it."

Please turn to Page 2

Stingrays continue reign

Along with the Irish, the Farmington Hills Stingray swimmers' eyes were smiling on St. Patrick's Day weekend.

Following three days of competition at the U.S. Swimming 13-and-up short-course championships in East Lansing, the Stingrays captured another state title Sunday night.

The Stingrays, who compiled 1,108½ points in Michigan State University's McCaffree Pool, overcame a two-day deficit of more than 60 points, to edge the rival Oakland Live Y's, who finished with 1,107 points.

"I was thrilled for all at the same time a bit sad," Stingrays coach Peter Leonhardt said. "Our kids swam great all weekend and really came through on Sunday night."

"But OLY's swimmers swam great, too. I feel for them. I guess the luck of those green shamrocks were wearing rubbed off. A 1½-point difference! I have never seen a meet this large so close."

MORE THAN 500 of the state's best swimmers from more than 40 teams competed in the statewide meet. The close victory for the Stingrays was in sharp contrast to previous Stingray long-course (50-meter pool) and short-course (25 yards) consecutive state titles dating back to 1987.

Leonhardt was undecided in singling out any group or individual swimmer who made the difference for the Stingrays.

"It was a total team victory," he said. "Our 45 boys and girls — most of whom also swim for over 15 area high schools — can better appreciate the value of placing 12th in a race to score one point, first for 16 points or just cheering their teammates on."

Beginning with Sunday's events, the Live Y's were ahead of the Stingrays 954 to 890½. The turnaround started with the 200-yard backstroke and 100 freestyle races.

But the Stingrays got a boost in the girls 200 butterfly, placing 1-2-4-5-7 for 57 points to OLY's single sixth place for nine points.

FITTINGLY, it was in the same pool that Mark Spitz, the gold-medal winner in the 1972 Olympics who is attempting a comeback for the 1992 Games, set 100 and 200 butterfly pool records, also in 1972. The records still stand.

The boys butterfly events concluded the evening's individual events with the Stingrays clinging to a 3½-point edge, 52½ to 57½ with four relays to go. The Live Y's took the lead again in the first relay, the girls 13-14 400. Their A and B teams scored while

swimming

the Stingrays scored with their A relay only. Teams are allowed to enter up to two teams per relay event.

The Stingray boys 400 freestyle relay recovered 12 points by outpacing OLY's sole entry.

The meet was left to be decided by each team's older swimmers, all of whom have had many years of experience swimming at crunch time. Each team had A and B relays in the final races, the 400 freestyle.

The Stingray A girls set the pace, swimming a quick, 3:38.89 to notch first place and 32 points. The Stingray B team was third for 24 points. OLY's girls met the challenge, taking second and fourth for a combined 48 points.

THE SCORE following nearly 30 hours of racing and with one race remaining was the Stingrays 1,068½, the Live Y's 1,065.

Leonhardt huddled briefly with assistants Jeff Cooper, Steve Matheny and Laurie Hubbard.

"We chose our fastest eight freestylers, told them to pull out all the stops and go for broke," Leonhardt said.

Live Y's coach Scott Teetzel likewise set his guns to claim the victory. His B relay swam earlier in the day in 3:20.01, good enough for an eventual sixth place. To win, his A team had to outpace the Stingray A squad while the Stingray B team needed to fall well below 3:20.

All eyes were set upon the race starter. His gun sounded at 9:30 p.m., and victory for one of these teams was three minutes away.

The Stingray A took second for 26 points with a fast time of 3:24.88. The Live Y's were a shade behind in third place, and the Stingray B bent but did not fade, swimming 3:20.22, good enough for seventh place. The placings gave the Stingrays 40 points, the Live Y's 42.

THE RESULTS were quickly tabulated and announced to the new-hungry crowd: Stingrays first, OLY second. The cheers subsided as fast as they rose, however, as these totals did not include the final relay.

The final numbers came seconds later: Stingrays 1,108½, the Live Y's 1,107.

The victory earned Leonhardt and Cooper a traditional pool bath as both were tossed in by their young swimmers.



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