

CC's Baker chosen area's top swim coach

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When you have three teams representing two of the better conferences in the metro-Detroit area finish among the top-12 squads at the state finals, it's not too difficult to figure who's going to dominate the all-Observersland team.

Plymouth Salem once again captured the Western Lakes Activities Association championship, its 10th-straight title. For the second-consecutive year, Plymouth Canton was second at the conference meet.

At state, Salem placed fifth; Canton was 12th. Considering all that Chuck Olson has accomplished in his many years at Salem, and that Canton — under the guidance of Ed Weber, in his second year as coach — hadn't done this well at state in a decade, both deserved some attention as our coach of the year.

But that distinction goes to Redford Catholic Central coach Jeff Baker, who in his third year as coach guided the Shamrocks to a second-place finish behind state power Birmingham Brother Rice in the Catholic League finals and to a fourth at the state meet.

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Jeff Baker

Redford Catholic Central coach

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SWIMMING

loaded up all three relays. The result: a second in the 400-yard freestyle relay and fifth in both the 200 medley and 200 free relays.

That kind of coaching, and tapering his kids' performances so they produced their best during the season's biggest meet (something Olson and Weber also did very well), earned Baker the Observersland coach of the year title.

FIRST TEAM

Catholic Central, 200-yard medley relay: The senior foursome of Zach Fellrath, Mike Kruszewski, Bryant Steele and Brett Meconis set standards for the CC swimming team that hadn't been matched in recent years, both individually and as a team. The team placed fifth at the state meet and won the Cranbrook Invitational, Eastern Michigan University Relays and the Catholic League Meet. Their best time also set a school record, clocking a 1:36.81, and the team set new pool records at Livonia Stevenson and Lake Orion.

"They had fantastic swims at the state meet and were our fastest team ever at CC," said coach Jeff Baker.

Ben Dzialo, Salem, 200 freestyle: A junior, Dzialo finished 10th in the state in the 200 free in 1:45.58, one of his four scoring swims. He also placed sixth in the 100 butterfly in 1:51.40 and was part of two Salem relay teams.

Three times Dzialo has reached All-American status and five times he's been all-state. "Ben Dzialo has positioned himself as a contender for the 2003 state meet in any event," said Salem coach Chuck Olson. "He's an exceptional talent with an attitude to match, and an excellent student, maintaining a 4.1 GPA."

Eric Lynn, Salem, 200 IM: A team co-captain, Lynn proved himself to be one of the state's best swimmers, finishing first at state meet in the 200 IM (1:52.67) and second in the 100 backstroke (51.03). At the Western Lakes Activities Association Championship meet, Lynn was an individual event double-winner, capturing the 200 free (1:46.19) and 100 back (53.23).

Lynn has been all-state seven times, All-American five times and holds the varsity team record in the 100 freestyle (46.89), the 100 backstroke (51.03) and is on all three relays. He was his team's Most Valuable Swimmer this season.

"Eric has had an outstanding high school career," said Olson. "Eric has the ability and the personality to set the example for his teammates. He is well-respected by opponents and their coaching staffs."

Mike Johnson, Salem, 50 freestyle; Johnson, a senior co-captain, saved his

best performances for the end of the season, placing second in both the 50 free (22.25) and 100 free (48.96) at the WLAA meet, then finishing fourth in the 50 free (21.00) and 10th in the 100 free (47.95) at the state finals.

Six times Johnson has been all-state and three times he's been All-American. He also won the Mike Kilgore Award for academic (4.2 GPA) and athletic achievement.

"Mike always showed the way to apply yourself in practice and compete with confidence and dignity," said Olson.

Ben Dzialo, Salem, 200 freestyle; Dzialo qualified for the state meet for the second straight year after a 10th place finish at the Class A regional.

Rols finished 20th overall at the state meet. He also took second in the WLAA meet with a point total of 335.35. His best six-divide total was 225.4 in a dual meet against Northville.

"Dialo spent first or second at every one of our (regular season) meets," Franklin coach Kevin Haffner said. "He also won the 50 freestyle and on our 200 freestyle and 200 medley relay teams when needed."

Baker also an accomplished swimmer who will compete next month at the nationals.

Bryant Steele, CC, 100 butterfly: A key member in several quality relay teams, CC senior Bryant Steele did quite well when he was on his own.

Steele took third at the state meet in the 100 butterfly, and racked up four first-place finishes at the CHSL championships. He also accumulated eight pool records and set a league record in this event.

Baker said Steele's offseason workouts paid big dividends this year.

"Bryant's training attitude greatly improved this year and it showed with his achievements," he said. "He's a swimmer who knew what he wanted and trained very hard to obtain his goals."

Mike Wisniewski, Canton, 100 freestyle: Wisniewski, a senior, was instrumental in Canton's 12th-place finish at the state finals. A team co-captain, he capped his prep career with a pair of top six finishes at state, placing sixth in the 100 free (47.82) and fifth in the 200 free (1:44.73). He also won both the 50 (22.18) and 100 (48.55) and was part of two winning relays at the WLAA meet.

"Matt has improved greatly," said Canton coach Ed Weber. "Last year was his first time qualifying for state meet and this year he's all-state. His success will show his teammates that hard work does pay off."

Nick Markow, CC, 500 freestyle: If in-season improvement counts for anything, CC senior Nick Markow would get high marks for his 2001-02 season.

He shaved 15 seconds off his 500 freestyle time, winning the CHSL meet and taking seventh place at the state meet. He said his proudest achievement was being named captain of the Shamrocks, a title he lived up to, according to his coach.

"His dedication and work ethic helped set the tone for the season," Baker said.

Salem, 200 freestyle relay: This four-some splashed to a third-place finish at the state finals in 1:28.32 without Lynn, Salem was second in the WLAA.

Johnson's, Dzialo's and Lynn's accomplishments have been documented: Violin, a junior, placed sixth at the WLAA finals (23.5) and earned Salem's Most Improved Swimmer award.

"Matt made great strides," said Olson of Violin, who carries a 4.2 GPA. "Whenever he got an opportunity, he took advantage of his situation and competed with the best in the state."

Zach Fellrath, CC, backstroke: Another top senior for CC, Zach Fellrath swam well enough in 2002 to write his name into the school record books.

Fellrath set new school records in the 100 backstroke, and finished ninth at the state meet with a time of 53.85. He also helped to set a school record in the medley relay, and was a member of CC's state-championship winning cross country team.

"Zach's cross country training greatly aided his swimming," Baker said. "He was a surprise addition to our team two years ago, and now he's a record holder at the school."

Mike Kruszewski, CC, breaststroke: A fun guy out of the pool, senior Mike Kruszewski was all business in the pool. Known as an athlete who provides "comic relief" on the team, he stepped up in some of the team's biggest meets this year with some excellent performances.

Kruszewski delivered his state-qualifying time in the 100 breaststroke at the Catholic League meet with a time of 1:02.85. He also took first-place honors at the Cranbrook Invitational and took third in the Catholic League meet, capping a four-year varsity career. "Mike provided the comic relief for our team during exciting, and came through in the clutch with some great swims as our top breaststroke," said coach Jeff Baker.

Catholic Central, 400 freestyle relay: High school teams tend to look to their seniors when a meet is to be won or lost, and the senior-laden 400 freestyle relay team for CC delivered all season long.

The combination of Kevin Ryan, Nick Markow, Bryant Steele and Brett Meconis netted All-American honors with their time of 3:10.53, which was good for second place at the Division 1 state meet. This group also set new school and pool records all over the place, in addition to winning the CHSL championship.

"If the meet was on the line, I wanted this relay together to get the job done," Baker said. "They had great swims multiple times to preserve wins."

SECOND TEAM

Salem, 200 medley relay: At the state finals, this Rocks' foursome overcame a less-than-expected preliminary performance to earn a seventh-place finish (1:37.89). Without Johnson, they also finished second at the WLAA finals (1:42.14).

Dzialo and Showalter are the two juniors in the group. Showalter, the breaststroke, placed second at the WLAA finals in the 100 breast (1:04.48), but he moved up in all his strokes.

"Matt had a very good junior year and

has improved in all his strokes," said Olson. "He should be a driving force as a senior."

Tim Ryan, CC, 200 freestyle: Senior Tim Ryan, another of CC's talented senior class, provided key points for the Shamrocks in the distance swim events this season. He finished with a 1:49.15 in the 200 freestyle in the CHSL meet and helped the team to a fourth-place finish at the state meet.

"Great training and work ethic allowed Tim to accomplish his goals," Baker said. "Rob Cyrek, CC, 200 IM: One of the youngest members of the CC team was also one of its best. Freshman Rob Cyrek recorded some of the best times in several

relays in the Observersland this season.

He rang up a 2:01.94 in the 200 IM, and delivered a 49.66 in the 100 freestyle, both among the best times in the area in those events this season.

Kevin Ryan, CC, 50 freestyle: Senior captain Kevin Ryan had a season to remember in 2002, picking up All-State and All-American honors for the Shamrocks. He was a three-time state qualifier in the 50 freestyle and was the Catholic League champ and first-place finisher at the Eastern Michigan Relays.

"As a captain and leadoff swimmer for the free relays, he set the tone for the

Please see SWIMMING, D3



Coach Jeff Baker
Catholic Central



Ben Dzialo
Plymouth Salem



Eric Lynn
Plymouth Salem



Mike Johnson
Plymouth Salem



Dan Rals
Livonia Franklin



Bryant Steele
Catholic Central



Mike Wisniewski
Plymouth Canton



Nick Markow
Catholic Central



Matt Vivian
Plymouth Salem



Zach Fellrath
Catholic Central



Mike Kruszewski
Catholic Central



Matt Showalter
Plymouth Salem

ALL-AREA SWIMMING & DIVING

2002 ALL-OBSERVER TEAM BOYS SWIMMING & DIVING FIRST-TEAM INDIVIDUALS

200-yard freestyle

Ben Dzialo, senior, Plymouth Salem

200-yard individual medley

Eric Lynn, senior, Plymouth Salem

50-yard freestyle

Mike Johnson, senior, Plymouth Salem

100-yard butterfly

Dan Rals, sophomore, Livonia Franklin

100-yard backstroke

Bryant Steele, senior, Catholic Central

100-yard freestyle

Matt Wisniewski, senior, Plymouth Canton

500-yard freestyle

Nick Markow, senior, Catholic Central

100-yard backstroke

Zach Fellrath, senior, Catholic Central

100-yard breaststroke

Mike Kruszewski, senior, Catholic Central

FIRST-TEAM RELAYS

200-yard medley

Redford Catholic Central (Zach Fellrath, Mike Kruszewski, Bryant Steele, Brett Meconis)

200-yard freestyle

Plymouth Salem (Mike Johnson, Matt Vivian, Ben Dzialo, Eric Lynn)

400-yard freestyle

Redford Catholic Central (Kevin Ryan, Nick Markow, Bryant Steele, Brett Meconis)

SECOND-TEAM INDIVIDUALS

200-yard freestyle

Tim Ryan, senior, Catholic Central

200-yard individual medley

Rob Cyrek, freshman, Catholic Central

50-yard freestyle

Kevin Ryan, senior, Catholic Central

Diving

Joe Rhode, junior, Catholic Central

100-yard butterfly

Brett Meconis, senior, Catholic Central

100-yard backstroke

Joe Le, sophomore, Plymouth Canton

500-yard freestyle

Nick Dixon, freshman, Plymouth Salem

100-yard backstroke

Brad Nelson, senior, Plymouth Canton

200-yard breaststroke

Matt Newman, junior, North Farmington

SECOND-TEAM RELAYS

200-yard medley

Plymouth Salem (Eric Lynn, Ben Dzialo, Matt Showalter, Mike Johnson)

200-yard freestyle

Redford Catholic Central (Kevin Ryan, Rob Cyrek, Bryant Steele, Brett Meconis)

400-yard freestyle

Plymouth Canton (Joe Le, Brad Nelson, Ryan Aherm, Matt Wisniewski)

HONORABLE MENTIONS

(state qualifiers)

Canton: Dennis Speck, Yuhel Uno; North Farmington: Sernet Alver, Jason Bank, Mohamed Bachrouche, Brian Clayson; Stevenson: Brandon Tuscotti.

2002 CHL Playoffs Round 1



Plymouth Whalers



VS. London Knights

1st Round Home Playoff Schedule

Game 1 (A): Friday, March 22 @ 7:30 pm

Game 3 (B): Tuesday, March 26 @ 7:30 pm

*Game 5 (C): Saturday, March 30 @ 7:30 pm

*Game 7 (D): Tuesday, April 2 @ 7:30 pm

* - if necessary

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