

PREP SWIMMING AND DIVING: State championships

Warhawks finish in fifth place at state meet

Germantown has three medalists on the day

By Steven L. Tietz
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WAUKESHA — School athletic directors are not supposed to have favorite sports as they cheer for all the kids they work with and support.

But Germantown AD Sara Unertl couldn't help but smile at all the remarkable achievements that Warhawk girls swim coach Lori Bruss and her charges have turned in in recent years, capped off by the impressive fifth place finish in the WIAA D1 state meet held on Saturday at Waukesha South.

Because around 15 years ago, Unertl, back when she was known as Sara Petric, was coaching the then "homeless" Germantown girls swim team back when the school did not have a pool and the squad was struggling just to survive. Athletes were carpooling at all kinds of odd hours to nearby Homestead and the Schroeder Aquatic Center just to get some practice laps in.

But the program survived under her guidance and with other coaches such as Kevin Ewald and eventually Bruss in 2016. Germantown's new pool opened a couple of years ago and the team has thrived from that point on.

Unertl couldn't be prouder:

"It is pretty special," she said. "We have the pool now which helps so much. The kids don't have to travel at 10 at night or super early in the morning. It's just very nice that it's all been able to come together this way."

A special highlight this year was the honoring of its legendary retired coach Dick Zache, as he was inducted into the Germantown Athletic Hall of Fame at a dual meet with now three-time WIAA D1 state champion Brookfield East.

An event that would have proved to have been impossible in the pre-pool days.

Ironically, Germantown even won that dual with the powerful Spartans, who were swimming short-handed that day.

East was decidedly not short-handed on the Saturday state meet, as the Spartans won nine events and set five records in beating Arrowhead, 304.5-264, for their third crown.

But the Warhawks had a say in how things went, as they scored a D1 program best 149 points for their spot in the 40-plus team field. Germantown won state D2 titles in 1992 and 1993 under Zache and competed in the division for many years.

Leading the way were top

six medalists junior Kristina Wittmann in diving (third), senior Sabina Mrzyglod in the 100 freestyle (fifth) and the 200 medley relay team of senior Ali Beay, senior Hanna DeGrace, freshman Julia Saxman and Mrzyglod (third).

The medley relay's school-record shattering time of 1:43.57 was good enough to earn All-American honors.

Bruss said it was a special end to a special season that included winning a WIAA sectional title on Nov. 6.

"Yes, we went into the season with some pretty high goals," she said. "We thought we could win sectional and the kids stepped up and performed that day and they did again today. Just some unbelievable efforts. They really performed with energy and excitement."

Mrzyglod, who recently signed an NCAA D1 letter of intent to swim at Georgia Tech, led the way for the Warhawks. She not only anchored that record-setting medley relay and earned fifth in the 100 free (51.02), but also claimed eighth in the 200 individual medley (2:05.47) and anchored the 400 freestyle relay team of Beay and sophomores Abigail Bruss and Isabella Barger to a season best seventh place finish of 3:32.25.

She finished her career with an excellent final 100 free split of 50.89.

Mrzyglod said the meet and the season worked out to perfection.



Dave Radcliffe/Daily News Staff

Germantown senior Ali Beay swims the 100-yard butterfly during the WIAA Division 1 Girls Swimming and Diving Championship Saturday at Waukesha South.

"We had big goals because we had more depth than ever," she said. "Our team was so close this year. It was fun for us as seniors to get to know the younger kids and see what energy they brought to the team."

"We as the older ones tried to show them how to have fun

and really enjoy the moment. It really made for an enjoyable last season."

Germantown got a great head start to the day when Wittmann claimed third in diving (427.15 points) as Arrowhead's Sydney Nelson won with 437.0. Wittmann got big help from freshman team-

mate Fynn Langley, who also scored points with a solid 13th (380.4).

"I was 14th last season, so I worked on improving everything this year," Wittmann said. "I trained harder at Schroeder and I got stronger. I

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tried to ease into the competition. I do my easy dives first and then the harder ones at the end. It really made for a special day.”

That strategy worked well for Wittmann as she was 13th in the preliminary round and fifth after the semifinals.

Beay, who also earned a D1 scholarship to Denver, was seventh in both the 100 butterfly (56.35) and the 100 backstroke (57.4). Both spots were just one place off the medal stand.

In addition, the 200 free relay team of DeGrace, Abigail Bruss, Saxman and Barger was 11th (1:38.31). Barger was also 12th in the 100 backstroke (58.13) and DeGrace 10th in the 100 breaststroke (1:05.2).

It was a great ending to the season,” Mrzyglod said.

“There were time goals I didn’t quite get, but I can’t worry about that because we improved so much,” she added. “It’s a short season but we’re really happy with how things turned out.”

And the overall speed at the state meet didn’t surprise veteran West Bend coach Dave Bloomier. He spent over



Dave Radcliffe/Daily News Staff

West Bend West/East freshman Lily Inkmann swims the 500-yard freestyle during the WIAA Division 1 Girls Swimming and Diving Championship Saturday at Waukesha South.

30 years at Waukesha North and was one of those who helped in the planning for the state of the art South Natatorium when it was built.

He said it makes for a better, faster state meet.

“I’ve always been among those who wanted it (state) here,” he said. “It’s a deep-water pool and deep water, means fast water.”

West Bend finished off a fine season as freshman Madison Rummel took 24th in diving (151.95 points),

while freshman Lily Inkmann was 22nd in the 500 free (personal best 5:15.13), junior Nicole Walters 22nd in the 100 butterfly (58.56) and the 400 free relay team of seniors Ashley Jankowski and Maren McDonnell, Inkmann and Walters 23rd in a season best of 3:42.87.

Bloomier was happy with how things worked out.

“Oh yeah,” he said. “We were 5-2 in duals, second place in the (North Shore) conference relays and third in conference. We were pret-

ty young and were happy to get those two seniors (Jankowski and McDonnell) to state.”

The Hartford/Slinger team had two entries at state, as the 200 medley relay team of junior Lucie Smith, seniors Caitlin Simonz and Rebecca Passeri and junior Helen Wilson moved up three spots from its seed to take 16th (1:50.76), earning the team two points and a tie for 39th.

Passeri was also 24th in the 100 free (54.34).