

Granville girls swimmers measure up at elite event

Kurt Snyder, ksnyder@newarkadvocate.com 12:04 a.m. EST December 17, 2014

The Granville girls swim team did not have a chance to ease into the season.

This past Saturday, the Blue Aces received one of their toughest tests, and the more difficult the better. They passed with flying colors, competing against some of the state's best in the Ned Reeb Memorial at Ohio State University.

"In that meet, we all swam out of our minds, especially with the smaller team that we have this year," senior Paige Griesse said.

Abby Stone won the championship in the 100 freestyle (51.35), and Granville had seven other top 11 finishes in the A flight. They did it despite graduating three from their state-winning 200 medley relay a year ago.

Stone edged Upper Arlington's Gracie Long and Columbus School for Girls' Miranda Donley for her title. Stone also finished second to Thomas Worthington's Kaylee Witkiewicz in the 100 backstroke (56.44).

"It's pretty cool because I know a lot of the girls on our team are friends with a lot of the other girls on Upper Arlington and CSG," Stone said. "Upper Arlington is such a good (Division I) school, and being able to compete with them is just really cool. Being very competitive with them is really exciting. It makes it just easier when we get to state against the Division II schools."

Reinforcements also are on the way for Granville as freshman Sarah Martin had her breakout performance. She placed third in the 200 free (1:56.77).

"The 200 freestyle was really exciting," Martin said. "(Stone) and everyone else were really supportive, which is really nice."

Martin also joined the three seniors Stone, Griesse and Maggie McGonagle on the medley relay, which placed fourth (1:49.69). The success in what has been Granville's signature race the past few seasons boosted the Blue Aces' confidence.

"Obviously we knew that getting back up there is going to be really hard because we set the level so high last year, but I definitely think we are going to have a shot to do some really cool things this year," said Stone, who has switched from the butterfly to the breaststroke in the medley relay.

"Swimming in a fast meet and seeing how fast we could go was reassuring. We are going to be good."

McGonagle added, "It's an honor to be swimming with the three girls on the relay. It is kind of fun to take it on because I loved all of the girls that were on the relay. It feels like a privilege to be able swim on that relay."

The 200 free relay of Stone, Griesse, Martin and junior Bailey Bradshaw added a sixth (1:39.97), and Griesse was seventh in the 200 free (1:58.62), a new event for her, and eighth in the 100 free (54.46).

"For what we have this year, I think we are doing a pretty darn good job," Griesse said.

Many of Granville's younger swimmers had success in the B flight, led by freshman Sydney Bednarski, placing fourth in the 50 free (27.04). Others with strong showings included sophomores twins Brooke and Emily Kauchak and freshman Alexandra Specht.

Granville does not have as many household names as in past years, but that could change quickly. The Blue Aces expect the less-experienced swimmers to quickly emerge.

"We have people this year that do all kinds of different things," McGonagle said. "Definitely at our smaller meets, we are having people try different events to kind of get a range of what people can do."

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