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WATKINS MEMORIAL ROUNDUP

Swimming coach excited about season

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New

The Watkins Memorial High School swimming and diving program is hoping to continue its progression this season.

The girls team did not have any Division I state qualifiers last season, but it had eight district qualifiers and six have returned.

"The girls team is deep and versatile," third-year coach Heidi Williams said. "We're looking forward to trying to reach our goals, getting more district qualifiers and seeing if they can take that next step.

"We have a good mixture of experienced girls who also have club experience and a good number of younger girls. It's going to be an interesting and exciting season. With the way we're swimming right now, I just can't wait to see where we are at the end of the season."

Seniors Kayla Fenimore, Jayna Hulse and Shelby Seas and juniors Gracie Gessner, Abby Jarvis and Chelsea Lint are back after having competed at district last year at Ohio State.

The 200-yard medley relay of Fenimore, Seas, 2014 graduate Rachel Baughn and Monica Tumblin had the Warriors' highest district finish, placing 18th in a program-record 1 minute, 58.5 seconds.

The same four combined to finish 22nd (1:48.83) in the 200 freestyle relay (1:48.83).

Tumblin did not return for her senior season.

Also at district, the 400 free relay of Jarvis, List, Gessner and Hulse placed 29th (4:27.28), Seas was 21st (1:10.69) in the 100 breaststroke and 23rd (55.87) in the 100 free and Fenimore finished 26th (1:12.65) in the 100 breast and 27th (1:03.59) in the 100 butterfly.

Seas set the program record in the 100 free (55.8) last season in the Thomas Worthington sectional.

"Kayla provides versatility," Williams said. "She has done the (200 individual medley) and fly in the past but likely will concentrate on the breast and fly. Jayna will focus on distance events and relays and Shelby will be in both the freestyle and breast. All three have the drive to do well and are anchors of our team who compete in club."

Also back are senior Adriana Wright-Ross and junior Hailey Miller. Rounding out the roster are senior Aylin Striberng, junior Lynee Stockdale, sophomore Emily Cangelosi and freshmen Taylor Denney, Sarah Dieterich, Adrianna Hansen, Kate Miller, Kelsey Seas and Samantha Tran.

The Warriors scored 427 points to win the nine-team Northridge Viking Splash Invitational on Dec. 6 at New Albany.

The 200 medley relay of Gessner, Shelby Seas, Fenimore and Kelsey Seas finished first (2:04.19). Placing second were Shelby Seas in the 100 free (1:00) and 100 breast (1:17.63), Fenimore in the 100 fly (1:10.76), Gessner in the 100 backstroke (1:12.24) and Hulse in the 200 free (2:26.68).

The boys team, which did not have any seniors last season, returned only three of its five district qualifiers from a year ago. Those returnees are juniors Skylar Chapman, Grady



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LORRIE CECIL/THISWEEKSPORTS

Junior Skylar Chapman is one of three returning district qualifiers for the Watkins Memorial boys swimming team.

SWIMMING & DIVING

•**Coach:** Heidi Williams, third season

•**Top athletes:** Boys -- Skylar Chapman, Grady Marshall and Jacob Sloan; Girls -- Kayla Fenimore, Gracie Gessner, Jayna Hulse, Abby Jarvis, Chelsea List and Shelby Seas

•**Key losses:** Boys -- Alan Chapman; Girls -- Rachel Baughn and Monica Tumblin

•**2014 postseason:** Boys -- 10th at sectional, did not score at district; Girls -- Eighth at sectional, did not score at district

Schedule

Dec. 3 -- Northland and Eastmoor Academy at YMCA North

Dec. 6 -- Northridge Viking Splash Invitational at New Albany

Dec. 13 -- Ned Reeb Invitational at Ohio State

Dec. 20 -- at Coshocton

Dec. 27 -- Newark and Northridge at Licking County YMCA

Jan. 10 -- Mount Vernon at Kenyon College

Jan. 17 -- Northridge Invitational at New Albany

Jan. 19 -- Marietta Invitational at Marietta YMCA

Marshall and Jacob Sloan.

At district, the 200 medley relay of Chapman, Sloan, Alan Chapman and Anthony Juarez finished 27th (1:59.54), the 200 free relay of Skylar Chapman, Alan Chapman, Marshall and Juarez finished 30th (program-record 1:49.36) and Alan Chapman finished 26th (57.7) in the 100 fly.

Alan Chapman, who set the program record in the 100 fly (57.57) in the Thomas Worthington sectional last year, did not return for his senior season. Juarez, who is a sophomore, also did not return.

Also back are senior Jacob Abram and junior T.J. Miller. Newcomers are junior Brian Wright and freshmen Justin Mohler, Jacob Raver and James Richard.

"The boys team is small but mighty," Williams said. "They're already turning in times they didn't have until late in the year last season. Jacob Sloan has really stepped up and he gives us versatility. Grady and Skylar are starting where they peaked last season."

Skylar Chapman won the 200 free (2:14.11) in the Viking Splash Invitational, as the Warriors finished fourth (208) behind champion Big Walnut (480).

Girls basketball team out to strong start

The girls basketball team is out to a strong start.

Watkins Memorial won its first three games and was 3-1 overall and 2-1 in the LCL before playing Johnstown on Dec. 13.

The Warriors finished 5-18 last season after going 7-16 in Jayme Gates' first season as coach in 2012-13.

"We do not know the last time Watkins started 3-0," said Gates, whose team lost to defending LCL champion Newark Catholic 65-36 on Dec. 10. "Some say it's been since the 1989 state finalist team. I know our seniors have never seen it and they are very proud to be a part of an exciting start and new expectation of Watkins basketball.

"Still, we have yet to play a solid 32-minute game. Each game has given us game experience and the girls have found the hunger to win."

The Warriors opened Dec. 1 with a 38-31 win over Groveport. They then topped Lakewood 43-40 on Dec. 3 and defeated Heath 44-42 on Dec. 6.

"At Groveport, we held the lead the entire game but never pulled away," Gates said. "Against Lakewood, we were down by 15 at half and battled back to win. Against Heath, we were up 19 and, yet, only won by two. Each (of the first three games) gave us different scenarios and we found ways to finish.

"A start like this is a huge mental victory. In previous years, we have ended up on the wrong side at the end of these types of games."

Against Groveport, Liz Fafiade had 11 points and Lexi Denison added nine. Against Lakewood, Denison had 14 points and eight rebounds and Fafiade, Rylan Perry, Emma Hock and Hannah Smith all scored six points.

"Lexi Denison is a captain and leader on and off the floor," Gates said. "She leads us in rebounding and scoring. Her work ethic is second to none. She understands the game and has a great balance of focus and fun. Liz Fafiade is playing very strong in the paint. Liz and Emma Hock are both second on the team in rebounding behind Lexi.

"I also want to credit Anna Shroyer. She is a captain and is doing great things off the bench. She is a workhorse on defense and creates a spark of energy for us."

Fafiade had 14 points and Perry scored eight against Heath, which trailed 33-14 at halftime. Hock had 10 points against Newark Catholic.

"We have a lot more to learn and growth to be made," Gates said. "We are not nearly where we need to be. The ladies are still learning rotations and how to work with one another. They are learning the importance to value every possession offensively and defensively. We need to stay disciplined and not waste possessions."

Boys basketball team loses first two games

The boys basketball team opened Dec. 5 with a 62-29 loss to Dublin Scioto and lost to Teays Valley 52-46 on Dec. 9.

Against Teays Valley, Alex Miles had 13 points and Joey Looney and Gavin Brown both scored nine. Brown had a team-high seven points against Scioto.

The Warriors opened LCL play Dec. 12 against Lakewood.

Wrestling team shines in East Side Quad

The wrestling team went 2-0 in the East Side Quad on Dec. 10, beating host New Albany 63-10 and defeating Licking Heights 60-16.

Watkins Memorial opened Dec. 5 with a 46-30 loss to Gahanna.

The Warriors won six matches against the Lions, with Alec Fulwider (106 pounds), Alex Lieb (113), Dean Marek (138) and Jacob Maynard (145) each winning by pin.

"We learned a lot from our first match -- some good, some bad," coach Mark Kurth said. "We will go to work to get better and continue improving throughout the rest of the season. We had no seniors in the lineup (against Gahanna). We had one freshman, six sophomores and five juniors."

Comments

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At a glance

Below are the coming schedules for the Watkins Memorial boys basketball, girls basketball and wrestling teams:

BOYS BASKETBALL

*Dec. 16 -- Home vs. Heath

*Dec. 19 -- At Newark Catholic

GIRLS BASKETBALL

*Dec. 17 -- At Licking Valley

*Dec. 20 -- Home vs. Licking Heights

WRESTLING

Dec. 19-20 -- North Canton Hoover Holiday Invitational

*League contest



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