

Watkins Memorial boys measuring up vs elite teams



Kurt Snyder, Reporter

12:03 a.m. EST January 6, 2016



(Photo: Michael Lehmkuhle/The Standard)

GRANVILLE - It has not taken Spencer Kleeh long to emerge as one of the area's top swimmers.

The Watkins Memorial freshman, however, is keeping a humble approach. His experience this season tells him he still has a long way to go.

Kleeh saw some of the state's best compete in December at the Ned Reeb Memorial at Ohio State. He then shared a pool with Granville senior Colin McDermott on Monday.

"When you are kind of close to him, it helps you pace yourself a little bit," Kleeh said. "When you are swimming by yourself, it's kind of harder to get that drive to push yourself. It is nice to have someone faster."

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Watkins Memorial senior Skylar Chapman competes Monday in the 100 butterfly during a meet against Granville at Denison. (Photo: Michael Lehmkuhle/The Standard)

Kleeh placed second to McDermott in the 50-yard freestyle and the 100 free during the Warriors' and Blue Aces' dual meet at Denison. Kleeh finished in 24.81 and 56.52.

"I came into the season with a 24 flat, and my goal was to try to break that and get into a 23. I got that (earlier in the season)," Kleeh said. "My other goal is to get below a 53, and I am working on that one."

Kleeh placed second and seventh in his signature events during the B-Flight portion of the Ned Reeb. He will see many of central Ohio's top swimmers again next month in the Division I sectional and district meets.

"Spencer has gotten a lot of opportunities to see upperclassmen and to see where he can be," Watkins coach Fay Barry said. "I kind of think he may be better than some of what he sees."

Watkins held its own against Granville. Skylar Chapman (1:03.24) and Ian Jarvis (1:10.51) took the top two spots in the 100 butterfly, and Chapman (1:10.13) and T.J. Miller (1:17.19) repeated the feat in the 100 backstroke. Jarvis added a victory in the 200 individual medley (2:24.73) and Joey Neibert a runner-up finish in the 200 free (2:24.22).

The Warriors also won the 400 free relay (3:59.47). With a strong mix of seniors and freshmen, the Warriors already are below their top relay marks from recent seasons.

"It is nice to swim with the older kids. They will help you set some of your goals and stay on top of you," Kleeh said. "It is nice to be setting some of the groundwork for Watkins to have a better team the next couple of years."

Watkins' next chance to lower times comes each of the next three Saturdays as the Warriors reach the heart of the competition season. They swim at Delaware on Saturday and New Albany, in a meet hosted by Northridge, and Coshocton, in a meet hosted by River View, the following two weeks.

With a full month of training and competition ahead before the postseason begins, the best may yet be come for the Warriors.

"We have a nice blend of our veterans and some young freshmen that are very talented to make a strong boys team," Barry said.

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