

Watkins Memorial girls becoming versatile in pool

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GRANVILLE - Gracie Gessner has had a lot of success with her 100 backstroke in past seasons for the Watkins Memorial girls swim team.

Gessner, however, also is ready to step out of her comfort zone for her senior season. Many athletes are drawn to swimming because of the opportunity to expand their horizons in the sport each season.

"I really want to try butterfly just to try it. I have never really raced it," Gessner said. "I think it can be a fun experience, something new. My sister always did freestyle, and when she went to college, she did butterfly, and she was under a minute. Maybe we are just a butterfly family."

Versatility is the name of the game, and the Warriors should have plenty of it heading into a season which begins Saturday at New Albany for Northridge's Viking Splash. A season ago, Watkins was a team in transition with coach Fay Barry taking over and several varsity spots up for grabs because of graduation.

What the Warriors found is they still had a lot of talent. They achieved several personal and season bests during the Licking County League, sectional and district meets.

"Half of my team is club swimmers, so they already believe in a process because they train that way," Barry said. "The whole team across the board improved as the season went on. That certainly makes everyone really excited for this season. My goal is always to be able to peak and be our best at that time like all coaches because it's why you put in all of this work right now."

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Senior Abby Jarvis and juniors Kelsey Seas and Adrianna Hansen were on district-qualifying relays a season ago. Freshman Gabrielle Brust also will make a significant impact after she competes in the Speedo Winter Junior National Championships next weekend at Ohio State.

The Warriors are eager to continue the progress the program has made during the past decade. The Warriors reset school records and climb higher in the sectional and district standings seemingly each year.

"I think it's going to be a really good year," Gessner said. "Coming off of last year, we are all improving, and we are getting (Brust), who is an incredible swimmer. The relays are going to be intense."

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