

2014 Speedo Championship Series Sectional Meet – Buffalo, NY

Written by Katherine Emanuel

On Sunday night of March 30, 2014, the entire FISH Sectional Team piled into the vans, ready to head to dinner. As the last finals session of the meet was over, we were finishing the trip out by stopping (for a second time that weekend) at La Nova, Buffalo's local pizza parlor chain. We were about three blocks away when Coach Ray asked which swimmer would be doing the meet write-up. Suddenly, my choosing to sit in the front row of van seemed like a horrible idea. I did not speak, hoping someone would volunteer. But to no avail. After several "I already did mine"s echoed from several other swimmers, Coach Ray nominated me to do it (yay).

Fast forward to today, July 23, 2014. I decided to get on this report when Coach Ray "reminded" me about it during practice this morning. But hey, better late than never.

I will start off by saying that I had no idea of what to expect on a FISH travel trip. I had traveled when I was on my old team, but a FISH trip was a first for me, so I was excited.

The first night that we were in Buffalo, after the 1500, we went out to a sit-down restaurant for dinner. (Unfortunately, I don't remember its name.) Apparently the FISH had also gone to it the previous year; all Veronica could talk about when we were driving there was how it served a dessert with a diamond in it, and how the dessert cost thousands of dollars. Naturally, I was curious about this extravagant dish. However, when we got there, I could not find the diamond dessert listed anywhere on the menu. When we collectively asked the waiter about it, he chuckled and told us that they took it off the menu because they couldn't keep up with the diamond demand. This may be just me, but I'm pretty sure that was code for, "Nobody ever actually ordered it, and we were wasting our time putting it on the menu."

After dinner, we went back to the hotel and got ready for our first prelims session of the meet by getting some high quality sleep (my favorite way to prepare). Throughout the weekend, there were many, many best times, but there were some races that stuck out in my mind in particular:

- I guess I should first bring up the fact that the FISH owned the 200 fly. On the girls' side, I was amazed to watch Allison and Carrie go 1-2. Add Veronica's swim in there and together they scored 48 points! On the guys' side, Ian pulled in an awesome third place finish.
- When Maddie Donohoe swam her 1500, not only did she place second, but she dropped so much time that she came within 3.5 seconds of her first Junior Nationals cut!
- Another great swim was by Ryan in his 200 back final. I remember that before swimming his race, he mentioned that he wasn't even supposed to be swimming it in finals, but enough people scratched and he got in. Then he proceeded to win the C-final – not bad for a race that wasn't originally supposed to happen.
- Amy's performance in the 400 freestyle relay was outstanding. She wasn't incredibly happy with her individual 100 free, but as I watched her swim in the relay, I could tell she gave it her all. She ended up splitting over a full second faster than her individual event.

All in all, I walked away from this trip with some very interesting memories, from Carrie getting extremely excited about seeing Canada from across the Niagara River to walking through a mini-blizzard on one of the first days of spring. On the plane ride up to Buffalo, Michael and I challenged Coach Ray to a three-way Sudoku race and I lost miserably to both of them. At least I finished the puzzle, right?

Another incredible moment was when we found out that out of all the teams there, FISH's combined team of fifteen people placed 2nd overall! Our four boys, Ian, Ryan, Michael, and David, placed 5th, and our eleven girls, Maddie D, Molly, Allison, Maddie H, Carrie, Keely, Amy, Michelle, Claire, Veronica, and myself, placed 3rd!

I think my best memories of the trip, however, were of when we ate Chipotle and later Olive Garden as a group in the breakfast/dining area of the hotel. Any one of us could have chosen to eat in our rooms, but instead we all instinctively decided to eat together. That really demonstrated how we were a team.