

McGANN, E & A McKINNEY, THOMPSON MOC 8TH 400-FR Lady Swim Blue Devils Placed Second in UCT, 2nd in Section

By DAVID B. CORBIN
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Rapid improvement over last year, despite graduating several talented athletes, was evident early on when the Westfield High School girls swim team shocked archrival Scotch Plains-Fanwood, 101-69, on December 21. With the addition of a very talented freshman class, the Lady Blue Devils went on to place second in the Union County Tournament (UCT), advance to the North Jersey, Section 2, Public A finals and finish with an 11-3 record.

The Lady Blue Devils were on the top end of a number of routs, mostly at the expense of Union County opponents. Aside from the victory over the Raiders, the Blue Devils defeated Kent Place, 107-63, Summit, 113-57, Elizabeth, 137-33, New Providence, 116-54, Cranford, 11-59, Governor Livingston, 114-56, Plainfield, 140-22, and Union, 140-29. The Blue Devils also beat Oak Knoll, 99-71, and finally the Ridge Red Devils,

loss was to No. 2 Immaculate Heart Academy early in the season.

"We ended with an 11-3 record with our losses coming from the No. 1 and No. 2 ranked teams in the state. We had a huge lopsided win versus rival Scotch Plains in December as well as a great meet versus top-ranked Bridgewater. In our first December match-up, we were the only team this year to hold the top ranked team to under 100 points," Blue Devil Head Coach Steve Wittington expressed.

The Blue Devils got some great mileage from several of their veteran swimmers, especially junior Abby McKinney.

"Our top swimmer this year was Abby McKinney, who dropped so much time from the year before. Her time in the 100-butterfly is less than one second away from the school record and she qualified for the Meet of Champions on three individual events," Coach Wittington pointed out.

Julia McGann, freshman Vivian Jeckell, Marcelina Krowinska and Abby McKinney touched first in the 400-free relay with a time of 3:37.85. Senior Keeley Thompson, junior Ellie Cestaro, Abby McKinney and Jeckell took first in the 200-medley relay at 1:50.48. Abby McKinney also took first in the 200-Individual Medley at 2:11.23 and senior Jenna Daniel took third at 2:16.02.

Thompson, Krowinska, McGann and Jeckell finished second in the 200-freestyle relay at 1:40.72. Thompson placed second in the 100-backstroke with a time of 1:00.11 and she also placed second in the 50-freestyle at 24.91, while Jeckell finished fifth at 25.13. McGann placed second in the 200-freestyle at 1:57.49.

In the grueling 500-freestyle, McGann touched third with a time of 5:20.17, while freshman Emma Heinze finished seventh at 5:29.77 and freshman Fiona Strout finished eighth at 5:31.22. Abby McKinney took fourth in the 100-butterfly at 58.59 and sophomore Natalie Lee finished fifth at 59.99. Daniel finished sixth in the 100-breaststroke at 1:11, followed by Cestaro at 1:12.23, and sophomore Maddie Sullivan finished 10th at 1:14.1. Krowinska placed eighth in the 100-freestyle at 55.83.

At the Meet of Champions, the Lady Blue Devils put together a new four-some of McGann, freshman Erin McKinney, Thompson and Abby McKinney to placed eighth in the 400-freestyle relay with a time of 3:37.7.

"We had such a deep group of freshman join the team and contribute to the starting lineup (Emma Heinze, Vivian Jeckell, Sarah Kennedy, Erin McKinney, Fiona Strout). Both Vivian Jeckell and Erin McKinney competed at the NJISAA Meet of Champions for the team," said Coach Wittington, who added, "The girls had an amazing season and, as a team, was the fastest WHS girls team in my three year tenure as coach."



David B. Corbin (Late December 2018 files) for The Westfield Leader and The Times
BLUE DEVILS' TOP SWIMMER...Abby McKinney dropped so much time in the 100-butterfly from last year that she was less than one second off the school record. McKinney also qualified for the Meet of Champions in three individual events.

136-34, in the sectional semifinal at Westfield.

Two of their three losses were to No. 1 ranked Bridgewater-Raritan, 97-73, during the regular season then in the Section 2, Public A final, 127-43, to the Panthers, who had won their fifth straight. The Lady Blue Devils were led by captains Ireland Applegarth, Jenna Daniel and Keeley Thompson. The Blue Devils' other

Other top experienced swimmers included senior Keeley Thompson, juniors Marcelina Krowinska and Erin McGann, and sophomore Julia McGann.

The UCT was a thriller but the Raiders managed to edge the Blue Devils, 385-375, for their fifth straight crown. The Lady Blue Devils did record a number of impressive performances at the UCT.

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David B. Corbin (February 2019 files) for The Westfield Leader and The Times
DECEPTIVE AND EFFECTIVE...Senior Matt Crowley, right, led the team by far in assists with 82 and was second on the team in scoring with 277 points and free throws with 50. He also led the Blue Devils in thefts with 39 steals.

Blue Devils Competed with Multi-Sport Athletes

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be an offensive asset with 131 points, including 24 3-pointers (2nd on team), and 28 assists (3rd on team). Walsh also had 20 steals and 22 rebounds. In the 68-48 win over the Raiders, he put in 16 points, including four 3-pointers.

Junior guard Andrew Echausse was up front on defense and made 20 steals, blocked six shots and pulled 15 rebounds. Bringing the ball down court on offense, Echausse set up 31 assists (2nd on team) and scored 32 points.

"Jake Walsh and Andrew Echausse can play a very fast pace. We are looking for Jake to do a lot for us next year. He has a great shot and will be able to create for others. He should be close to a double-double every night in points and assists," Coach McKeon said.

Senior guard Sebastian Ferrero led the team with 31 3-pointers and totaled 121 points. Ferrero also had 33 rebounds, 21 assists, 18 steals and blocked five shots. Ferrero sank trip threes and finished with 14 points in the win over Cranford. He also had a seven-assist evening in the second win over the Raiders.

Senior forward Tommy McGuire was big on defense and under the boards as he led the team with 25 blocked shots and 70 rebounds, while creating 18 steals. Offensively, McGuire totaled 87 points, including 11 3-pointers, and dished out 17 assists. Senior guard Michael Kane finished with 74 points, including eight 3-pointers, grabbed 46 rebounds and added 16 steals and seven assists.

"Tommy brought a unique ability to be able to play outside and be a defensive force in the paint. Sebastian was a knockdown shooter, he led the team in 3-pointers. Michael is all-out hustle all the time, he was a guy that always had to guard the best player and was up for the challenge," Coach McKeon pointed out.

Junior forward Colin Freer pumped in 107 points, including 19 from 3-point range, and added 11 assists. Freer also had 17 steals and three blocks. Freer had a 15-point effort in the game against New Providence. Used mostly for his defensive stalwartness, junior center Declan McCauley grabbed 42 rebounds and added seven blocks and four steals. Offensively, McCauley scored 63 points and had an assist. In the first game against the Raiders, McCauley pulled down seven rebounds.

In his time on the court, junior center Hank Shapiro pulled 55 rebounds (3rd on team) and added 12 steals and four blocks, while scoring 70 points, and added eight assists. Shapiro grabbed 10 rebounds in the second game against Plainfield. Junior Will Kessler hit three free throws, and added seven rebounds, four steals, two assists and a block. Freshman center Logan Howland had 22 rebounds, 11 points, three assists, three steals and three blocks.

"We are going to have big bodies inside, Hank Shapiro, Declan McCauley, Will Kessler and Logan Howland. We want teams to have to defend all aspects of the game," Coach McKeon emphasized.

Experiencing limited court time, senior Adam Perry finished with 27 points, including four 3-pointers, 13 rebounds, five steals and a block. Senior Nick Murray contributed a 3-pointer, four assists and three rebounds. Junior Ray Hurt had 11 rebounds, five points, four steals, an assist and a block.

"We should be experienced and have the mental toughness and poise to win close games. We are looking to build off this past year and move forward. We want to be tough on defense and play at speed that will be hard to match. We are looking for JV players to step up and play major roles on the team as well," Coach McKeon said. "This summer will tell a lot, who is going to step up and insert themselves to help this team win games."

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