Depth aids North girls swimming to 3-0 start

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

With a school record 60 on the roster, it's no surprise that Williamsville North's varsity girls swimming team is off to a 3-0 start.

North opened the 2006 season with a 99-89 road win at Jamestown on Sept. 18 then won at home against Orchard Park, 59-43, on Sept. 26 and Clarence, 66-36, last Friday.

North's depth was apparent right from the Jamestown meet. Coach Doug Cassidy said his team only won four of 12 events (Casey Matthews, diving; Kelly Battaglia, 100-yard butterfly; Cammie Farkas, 100 freestyle; and 400 free relay) but picked up several second, third, and fourth place finishes, which on Jamestown's six-lane pool, canceled Jamestown first and fifth places.

"If we had swan that meet at our pool, Jamestown would have more than likely won because they took more of the first places," said Cassidy. "In six-lane scoring, if you finish second, third, and fourth, you out-score the team that took first and fifth which is what happened in most of the events. In any of the events that they won, we either matched their score or scored higher than they did. So our depth was key. Keeping the 60 kids on the team in meets like that really makes a difference because we had a large team with depth and versatility. In six-lane scoring, we definitely have an advantage against most of the teams."

Cassidy also felt team depth was key in the win over Orchard Park, the program's first since 2000.

"Although we're stronger than we were the last couple of years due to some of our young kids coming up and our experienced kids getting better, Orchard Park graduated quite a few kids like Andrea Lehner, so they're not the powerhouse that they've been," said Cassidy. "But the meet could have gone either way. There were a lot of close races and we were fortunate to come out on top in most of them. The same thing goes with Clarence."

Battaglia (200 IM, 100 fly) and Farkas (200 free, 100 free) were double winners. Becky Akers (500 free), Abigail MacDonald (100 back 1:03.90), Matthews (diving) and 400 free relay (Farkas, Britney Talty, MacDonald, Battaglia, 3:54) also won.

North won all but two events against Clarence. Akers won the 100 breast and 500 free. Battaglia (50 free), Farkas (100 fly), Matthews (diving), MacDonald (100 back) and Maggie Schmidt (200 free) were also single winners. All of North's relays won. They were comprised of 200 free relay – Sarah Bachwitz, Schmidt, Talty and Danielle Demerath; 200 medley relay – MacDonald, Akers, Battaglia and Farkas (fastest time of season, 2:02.39) and 400 free relay (MacDonald, Bachwitz, Schmidt, and Farkas). North's second 400 free relay of Abby Zwierchowski, Talty, Katie Kreidler and Battaglia almost took second but finished third in 3:56.

"We not only had our fastest first place time but our second relay was one of the better relays around," said Cassidy.

Clarence freshman Victoria Jacumski won the 200 IM and 100 free.

Overall, Cassidy has liked the leadership shown from captains Akers, Bachwitz, Battaglia and Lindsay Carucci.

"The senior leadership is unbelievable," said Cassidy. "They do everything the way it's supposed to be done to keep the team together. I still find it remarkable that while it's been the largest team I've had it is also the most close-knit. The kids have just been great and the parents have been supportive."

North swims at Hamburg on Wednesday and at Sweet Home on Friday.

Sweet Home

The Lady Panthers are 2-2, defeating West Seneca West, 53-48, and Hamburg, 101-82. They also lost to Orchard Park, 114-66 and Jamestown, 101-74.

In the loss at Orchard Park, freshman Paige Gutowski broke school records in the 200 IM (2:14.71) and 100 breast (1:10.13). Gutowski rebroke her 200 IM record versus Jamestown (2:14.10). Gutowski and senior Bethany Fried are still undefeated.

Amherst improves record

Amherst Central's varsity girls swimming team improved its dual meet record to 2-1 on the season with a 55-46 victory over Pioneer on Tuesday, Sept. 26.

Amherst was led by double winners Ellie Poleon (200 and 500 free) and Michelle Niblock (200 IM and 100 fly).

"It's nice to see these two begin to show some leadership with good, tough swims," said coach Kim Skomra. "It does a world of good for their confidence and their success motivates the rest of the girls to work hard in practice."

Brianne Burton also won two events for Amherst, touching first in the 100 free and 100 breaststroke in a personal best 1:13.7. Eva Lankes continued her good performances, winning the 50 free and placing second in the 100 back. The team of Burton, Niblock, Lankes and Kaelyn Sullivan combined to win the 200 relay events, while Melissa Tschamler, Kristin Scaringi, Emma O'Connor and Poleon placed second in the 400 free relay. Tschamler continues to impress in individual events as she recorded a personal best time (1:14.9) in the 100 fly, finishing a tough second.

"It seems every meet a new face steps up and records a lifetime-best," said coach Skomra. "It really helps keep the other girls focused on their seasonal goals."

Jennifer Burke, Andrea Pratt, and Brittany Carfley also had good performances for the Lady Tigers.

Girls Soccer

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CCA forward Katie Smith scored unassisted for the game's first goal. CCA freshman Faye-Lynn Noel picked up the second goal with an assist from senior Jessica Ganze. Megan Saltzman closed out CCA's win near the end of the game.

CCA sophomore goalie Leanne Hoppe had the shutout.

CCA held Medina to no goals in the first 70 minutes. Medina finally scored on a broken play to make it 1-0. CCA tightened up but in the last few minutes, Medina had an exceptional breakaway and scored for the 2-0 win.

Despite CCA's loss to a fast, well-disciplined, older and more experienced team, CCA coach Joe Karnath said his team played one its strongest efforts in the seven years he has been coaching the team.

CCA defenders Amie Stuitje, Sarah Wade, and Kristen Ganze as well as Jenni Albrecht and Laura Albrecht gave a valiant effort in the tough loss, he added.

Against O'Hara, CCA scored first on a goal by sophomore Rebecca De Rose from a nice pass from captain Jenni Albrecht. The half ended with CCA ahead 1-0. However, early in the second half, O'Hara scored two quick goals for a temporary 2-1 lead.

Shortly afterwards, CCA's forward Alicia Fairclough netted an unassisted goal to tie the game. At this point, CCA seem to push harder and put three more balls in the net for the victory. Saltzman scored with a nice assist from Noel. Smith got a goal with an assist from Noel and forward Ashley Tom put one in the net with help from Smith.

CCA goalie Hoppe gave another respectable performance in the win.

"Overall, the win was a nice team effort with the whole squad helping out," said Karnath.

Reed

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teammate was that you could always trust him. He said he was given a firecracker once during training camp when the Bills were still in Fredonia.

Not knowing what to do with it, Tasker decided to play a joke and light it and toss it into a teammates dorm room.

He said the pair went to their room upstairs waiting for it to go off.

"We lit the firecracker and it was big and I was nervous," said Tasker. "We had thrown the firecracker into Freddy Smerlas' (and Jim Ritcher's) room," said Tasker.

A few minutes later, they heard the explosion and Tasker said Smerlas assumed it was someone who broke into the dorm.

He said over time, he told the story to his teammates but Reed always stood by his friend.

"Andre never sold me out," joked Tasker.

Reed said in the early days, his goal was to make the team and make an impact.

During his first two years with the team, he credited another former Bills all-pro wide receiver — Jerry Butler — for being a big influence on his career.

"He was at the so-called end of his career," said Reed, who called Butler a mentor. "He was handing the torch to me."

He earned his first of seven pro-bowl appearances after the 1988 season — which also began a run of eight playoff appearances in nine seasons during the hay day of Reed's days with Kelly.

Andre Reed was inducted onto the Buffalo Bills Wall of Fame in a ceremony at Ralph Wilson Stadium during halftime of Sunday's Bills-Vikings game.
Photo by Patrick McPartland

In 1990, the Bills earned their first of four straight Super Bowl appearances.

During those playoff runs, there was one game in particular that will always stand out in Reed's memory.

On Jan. 3, 1993, the Bills hosted the Houston Oilers at then Rich Stadium on a day that would go down in the NFL record books.

The Bills fell down to the Oilers 35-3 early in the third quarter.

The team was without Kelly and all-pro running back Thurman Thomas due to injuries when they overcame the deficit and made the greatest comeback in NFL history.

Reed played a major role, catching eight passes for 136 yards and three touchdowns.

The team scored 35 unanswered points and Reed scored to give the team its first lead. The Oilers tied the game with a field goal to tie the game later before the Bills prevailed 41-38 in overtime.

"There was no better time in my life," Reed said of those years.

Reed played for the Bills from 1985 to 1999, and had a total of 941 catches for 13,095 yards and 86 touchdowns.

He played his final season in the NFL with the Washington Redskins in 2000, catching 10 passes and a touchdown that season.

Having played with the likes of players like Kelly, Thomas, Tasker, James Lofton and Bruce Smith, Reed knows he had help getting him in position to go on the wall-of-fame.

"I was as good as the people around," said Reed, who someday may join Kelly in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

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