

ESG — Synchronized Swimming

Western going for 31st gold medal

by MATT KRUEGER
Reporter

They can't escape the history of the Empire State Games, but the members of the Western Region synchronized swimming team sure try.

Western, made up predominantly of swimmers from the Tonawanda Aquettes, heads into the 31st edition of the ESGs with a 30-year winning streak in the team competition. It's the only team that has never lost. In fact, you have to go back to 2005 to find a year when Western didn't sweep the entire competition, winning the team event and taking the gold, silver and bronze medals in solo, duet, trio and figures.

So when this year's crop of girls takes to the pool at Binghamton State University this week, it will have the high expectations associated with three decades of dominance behind it. Thinking about Western's history at the Games only puts pressure on the latest

team, but every single girl will tell you she doesn't want to be part of the squad that finally loses the gold medal.

"To be honest, we don't really think about it," said Jessica Bagley of Kenmore, a member of the Aquettes. "We're always pretty confident that we're going to do well."

For Jessica Grogan of Orchard Park, last year's silver medalist in the solo competition, the 2008 ESGs could be a grand stage. Grogan is the top soloist on this year's team and is expected to win the gold. She's also doing figures and trio with Bagley and Trisha Melber of Tonawanda. Grogan is the favorite to win the Dorothy Sowers Award for highest point total.

"I don't like to think about it, because it's added pressure," Grogan said of possibly winning the award and following in the footsteps of former teammates Laurie Wakelam (2007) and Katelyn Gedeon (2006). "I think just to go out and do my best is all I want



The Western Region synchronized swimming team is looking to keep its 30-year winning streak alive at this year's Empire State Games. Swimming for Western are, from left: front row — Cassandra Grizanti, Alyssa Baumgartner, Anna Hare; second row — Jessica Grogan, Trisha Melber, Lauren Spatzer; back row — Christine Gibbons, Kelsey Anderson, Meaghan O'Shei and Jessica Bagley.

to do."

Bagley, Grogan and Melber will lead the Western team this year along with Aquettes teammates Kelsey Anderson (Orchard Park),

Alyssa Baumgartner (Tonawanda), Cassandra Grizanti (Tonawanda), Meaghan O'Shei (West Seneca) and Lauren Spatzer (Kenmore). Western also

features two swimmers from the Buffalo Swimkins, Anastasia Hare (Snyder) and Christine Gibbons (Orchard Park). This is the first time in three years the team has included girls from outside the Tonawanda Aquettes.

"It was great to have the Buffalo Swimkins come back and try out again," said Western coach Jill Wright, who also coaches the Canisius College team. "It should be a pretty good team."

Most of the girls on the team just returned from the U.S. Open Championships in Cleveland, where the Aquettes team finished fourth using the same routine the Western squad will swim at the ESGs. That team routine features swing music and the girls wearing skirts with their suits.

"It's a lot of fun," Grogan said. "We wear skirts. It's very artistic. We kind of act it out more than other teams. We get to have a lot of fun with it."

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ESG — Swimming

SHAQ supplies several Western competitors

by CRAIG KANALLEY
Intern

The Western Region will be sending 54 swimmers to the Empire State Games this week. Nine of them are members of the Sweet Home Aquatics Club, also known as SHAQ.

Vincent Aquino, Jennifer Burgess, Tyler Carver, Paige Gutowski, Connor Hoffman, Allison Korta, Jim Losi, Lauren Losi and Theresa Munroe will represent SHAQ at the Games. SHAQ head coach Vince McCarthy will also be going as a coach with the Western Region team.

Munroe, soon-to-be an eighth-grader at St. Gregory the Great, will make her second appearance at the Games. She is set to compete in the 100 backstroke and 200 backstroke events.

At last year's Games, Munroe participated in the 100-yard butterfly and 50-yard freestyle, but she did not make the finals for either event.

"This time, I'm really trying to make the finals and do better in my times," she said. "I want to improve my times by at least five seconds."

In preparation for the Games,

Munroe said she's been practicing twice a day, Monday through Friday, and running a lot.

She said much of her success in the pool thus far can be attributed to SHAQ.

"It's a very good program," Munroe said. "Everybody's really fast there. We grow as a team and we train really hard to try to reach our goals. Since a lot of our swimmers are going (to the ESG's) it shows how much effort we put into our practices."

Munroe said what's most special is about SHAQ is the camaraderie.

"We're all really good friends and we have all these programs, like we do bowling and stuff like that," she said. "It's a group thing, and that makes it really fun."

Also off to the Games is Carver, a Kenmore resident and senior-to-be at Canisius High School, who will be making his fourth Empire States Games appearance. He'll be participating in the 100 and 200 breaststroke and 200 individual medley.

"My first and second years (at the Games), I was just really nervous, just breaking into it, but now I feel I can just focus on the swimming," he said.

Carver took part in Canisius' 200 freestyle relay team that placed third at states this year. He also made states in the 100 breaststroke and 200 IM. He likes his chances at the ESGs.

"I feel I'm seeded pretty high in the events. Hopefully I can make it to the finals, maybe get a medal," he said.

Carver also raved about SHAQ and its part in his success.

"I think it's a really good team," he said. "Our coach, Vince, knows everything about swimming. He works us really hard and it's a lot better because we're all kind of friends, too."

He said the fact that nine SHAQ members are bound for the games is no coincidence.

"I think it says a lot about SHAQ — how we can do so well at meets and we're in really good shape. It also makes for a good support

system with so many people going," he said.

Of the other SHAQ members, Aquino of East Amherst will take part in the open 100 fly; Burgess of Kenmore in the open 1,500 free, 400 free and 800 free; Gutowski of Amherst in the open 100 back, 100 breast and 200 IM; Hoffman of Williamsville in the open 200 back; Korta of Tonawanda in the open 200 fly; Jim Losi of East Amherst in the open 100 free, 200 free and 400

free; and Lauren Losi of East Amherst in the scholastic 1,500 free, 200 free and 400 free.

Other local swimmers expected to participate in the Games are Cami Farkas of East Amherst (open 100 fly, 100 free and 200 free); Alaina Laszewski of Williamsville (open 200 back); Emily Kopas of Amherst (scholastic 100 breast); Kendra Mayer of Williamsville (scholastic 100 free and 50 free); Declan McLaughlin of Orchard Park

(scholastic 100 breast); Matthew Partacz of West Seneca (scholastic 100 breast); Charles Rommel of East Amherst (scholastic 100 free and 50 free); Matthew Partacz of West Seneca (scholastic 200 breast); and Andrew Duszynski of Orchard Park (scholastic 200 free and 200 IM).

Though the Games are being hosted in Binghamton, the swimming competition will be held at Cortland State University from Thursday to Sunday.

 Fireman's Softball

Team	Wins	Losses
East Amherst	10	1
Clarence Center	8	3
Clarence	8	3
Newstead	7	3
North Bailey	7	4
Main-Transit	7	4
North Amherst	7	4
Akron	5	6
Snyder	4	6
Harris Hill	4	7
Eggertsville	4	7
Ellicott Creek	3	6
Bowmansville	3	7
Getzville	3	7
Swormville	0	10

July 25

Akron at Newstead
Main-Transit at Snyder
Harris Hill at Bowmansville
Clarence at Clarence Center
Eggertsville at North Bailey
Swormville at East Amherst
Getzville at Ellicott Creek



HOCKEY

Learn to Skate!

EVERY SEASON STARTS AT



Amherst Youth Hockey and Dick's Sporting Goods have teamed up to sponsor a **Learn to Skate Program** at the Amherst Pepsi Center. The **Learn to Skate Program** is available to boys and girls ages 4-10, who reside in the Town of Amherst school districts of Sweet Home, Amherst and Williamsville and have not played organized hockey before. The **Learn to Skate Program** will be run by experienced coaches whose only two goals will be for the kids to have fun, and learn the basics of ice skating. The cost for the **Learn to Skate Program** is only \$15; the program offers three 30 minute ice times, Saturdays, August 16th through August 30th.

Registration and details for the **Learn to Skate Program** will be in-store at the Dick's Sporting Goods on Transit Road on the following dates:

1) Saturday, August 2nd from 10:00 AM-1:00 PM

Please Do Not Call The Store

Skates, helmets and gloves are required. Elbow and shin pads recommended. Dick's Sporting Goods will be offering valuable discount coupons on hockey equipment. Experienced in-store personnel and Amherst Youth Hockey representatives will be available to answer your questions.

Amherst Youth Hockey

House Programs start
in mid-September

**Registration
Now Under Way**

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