

Linn-Mar swimmers enjoy stiff competition

Written by Jim Ecker

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Linn-Mar boys swim coach Thomas Belin loves good competition.

He's been a successful swimmer in masters competition and is always looking to send his high school athletes against the best competition he can find, even if it means not winning his own tournament.

That was the case Saturday as the Lions finished a strong third in the Linn-Mar Invitational at the gorgeous Linn-Mar Aquatics Center.

Monona Grove of Wisconsin trimmed Iowa City West, 279-277, for the championship. Linn-Mar placed third with 262 points and Pleasant Valley was fourth with 249.

Iowa City West, the defending state champion, is ranked No. 1 again this season. Linn-Mar is ranked sixth and Pleasant Valley is seventh, so it was an impressive field that also featured Austin (Minn.) and Clinton.

"I tell my guys, if we want to be the best we need to compete against the best," said Belin. "And frankly I'd like to grow this to at least 10 teams. Get some more competition; good competition."

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Iowa City West won eight of 11 events and set six pool records in the 2-year-old swim palace. Pleasant Valley broke two pool marks, which means eight standards were shattered in a single day.

"Wasn't that great?," Belin said enthusiastically. "What a great atmosphere to get a pre-championship meet."



Aiden Keen, Mark McGlaughlin and Oliver Martin led the way for Iowa City West, which will be seeking another state title next month in February.

Monona Grove did not win any events, but captured the championship with its superior depth.

Calvin Greve won the 100 backstroke for Linn-Mar and placed second in the 200 individual medley. He also swam a strong anchor to help the Lions place second in the 400 freestyle relay.

Greve, who has signed to swim at the University of Minnesota, enjoyed the strong competition.

"It's nice," he said. "It gets us experience for what the state meet and the district meet are going to be like."

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Justin Arebaugh placed third in the 50 freestyle and 100 freestyle for Linn-Mar. The Lions also finished third in the 200 medley relay.

Linn-Mar placed 17th at the state meet last year, but the Lions will be looking to climb higher this season.

"Ideally I'd like to be top-10," said Belin. "If we're top-10, I'll be happy. We're still a developing team. We're getting better."

TEAM STANDINGS

1. Monona Grove (Wis.) 279, 2. Iowa City West 277, 3. Linn-Mar 262, 4. Pleasant Valley 249, 5. Austin (Minn.) 164, 6. Clinton 71.

WINNERS

200 medley relay - Iowa City West 1:37.01
200 free - Aiden Keen, IC West, 1:43.56
200 IM - Nick Staver, Pleasant Valley, 1:56.29
50 free - Mark McGlaughlin, IC West, 21.12
100 fly - Oliver Martin, IC West, 53.59
100 free - Mark McGlaughlin, IC West, 46.48
500 free - Aiden Keen, IC West, 4:40.82
200 free relay - Iowa City West 1:29.50
100 back - Calvin Greve, Linn-Mar, 52.62
100 breast - Nick Staver, Pleasant Valley, 58.67
400 free relay - Iowa City West 3:07.49

LINN-MAR PLACEWINNERS

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Top 3

2nd - Calvin Greve, 200 IM, 2:01.60

2nd - Matt Peng, 100 fly, 54.06

2nd - 400 free relay 3:19.33

3rd - 200 medley relay 1:43.69

3rd - Justin Arebaugh, 50 free, 22.05

3rd - Justin Arebaugh, 100 free, 49.60