

Wash swimmers win 52nd title in row

Written by Tom Fruehling

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Cedar Rapids Washington's dominance at the boys district swimming meet has to end sooner or later.

But not for now.

A bunch of pool records were set Saturday at the first-ever district meet at the luxurious new Linn-Mar Aquatic Center, most of them by a small fleet of fast swimmers from Iowa City West.

Still, for the 52nd year in a row, the team championship was claimed by a gutsy gang of Washington Warriors who refused to see the magical streak stopped on their watch.

It wasn't until the last race of the day in the 400 yard freestyle relay that they knew they had the title in the bag. Even if they were disqualified, they would have won by a half-point.

As it turned, West won the race as expected (in pool record time) but Washington came in third by a touch behind Linn-Mar to put the finishes touches on the district championship banner once again.

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The Warriors had just one meet winner with senior Jared Thorson in the 100 yard butterfly, but they used their depth to pile up enough points down the line of finishers to top West (last year's state champ) 258.5 to 234.

The host Linn-Mar Lions put in a solid all-around performance to come in third with 221 points, while Cedar Rapids Kennedy finished fourth in the eight-team field with 194. Jefferson was sixth with 85 points.

Led by their dynamic duo of state champions Aidan Keen and Mark McGlauglin (who both won two individual races on Saturday), West swept all three relays to claim seven of 11 events.



Besides Thorson and Muscatine's Alex Walton (who also won twice), the other winner was Kennedy junior Stefan Kitsos in the 100 yard breaststroke.

"All of our kids swam lights out today," said Cougar Coach Shawn Thomsen, who along with his assistants shared the district coaching staff of the year award.

As he has for all of his 17 years at Washington, however, it was Warrior Coach Chris Cruise and his longtime staff who put together the winning formula for success.

It almost takes a mathematician to figure out which swimmers will fare the best in each event to rack up team points. But then Cruise also teaches math at Washington High School. Just prior to competition he handicapped the meet as a tight three-team tug-of-war.

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“West has the top swimmers,” he said, “Linn-Mar has the most depth. And we’re somewhere in the middle.”

Stressing that the main priority was to advance as many as possible to next week’s state meet (where Washington finished a surprising second last year), Cruise acknowledged before the meet that he was unsure if his team would be able to defend its district title.

With the loss of 12 seniors, just six letter winners returned this year and only four of them qualified for the state meet last year.

“If you’d asked me a month ago, I would have had my doubts,” Cruise said of winning the district. “I will say I was optimistic about our chances and our kids’ performances. They take a lot of pride in our tradition.

“We knew it would take our very best effort today. And the kids rose to the occasion.

“It was a total team effort. From top to bottom, our kids swam fantastic. They worked hard, and they met the challenge.”

In addition to Thorson’s pool record victory over arch-rival Oliver Martin of West in the butterfly, junior Nick Saulnier set a school record while placing second in the 200 yard individual medley and sophomore Cameron Kelley set a school mark with his runner-up finish in the 500 yard freestyle.

Saulnier also came in second in the 100 yard backstroke and Kelley was second in the 200 yard freestyle.

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But the key to Washington's win, according to Thorson, was the performance of other squad members. Freshmen George Durin and Kaleb Donels, for instance, both turned in top five individual finishes and solidified relay teams.

"I'm so proud of all the guys," Thorson said afterward. "I had no doubt we'd be in the top three, but I didn't know where we'd land. Right from the beginning, though, a lot of guys really stepped up.

"There's not a person on this team who didn't drop their times today. And not a person who didn't do their very best.

"Write this down: The streak is still alive."

TEAM STANDINGS

1. Washington 258.5, 2. Iowa City West 234, 3. Linn-Mar 221, 4. Kennedy 194, 5. Muscatine 123, 6. Jefferson 85, 7. Iowa City High 82, 8. Burlington 44.5.

WINNERS

200 medley relay - Iowa City West 1:34.66
200 free - Aidan Keen, Iowa City West, 1:41.63
200 IM - Alex Walton, Muscatine, 1:53.11
50 free - Mark McLaughlin, Iowa City West, 20.54
100 fly - Jared Thorson, Washington, 51.16
100 free - Mark McGlaughlin, Iowa City West, 46.10
500 free - Aidan Keen, Iowa City West, 4:36.30
200 free relay - Iowa City West 1:25.52
100 back - Alex Walton, Muscatine, 49.76
100 breast - Stefan Kitsos, Kennedy, 58.96

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400 free relay - Iowa City West 3:07.65

STATE MEET QUALIFIERS (Unofficial seeds by IHSAA)

WASHINGTON

1. Jared Thorson 100 fly
2. Nick Saulnier 200 IM
2. Cameron Kelley 500 free
2. 200 freestyle relay
2. 200 medley relay
3. Cameron Kelley 200 free
3. Nick Saulnier 100 back
5. Kaleb Donels 100 back
7. 400 freestyle relay
10. Kaleb Donels 200 IM
12. Matt Jackson 200 IM
15. Matt Jackson 100 fly
22. George Durin 100 free
22. George Durin 100 breast

LINN-MAR

4. Calvin Greve 200 IM
5. Justin Arebaugh 50 free
6. 400 freestyle relay
6. Justin Arebaugh 100 free
6. Calvin Greve 100 back
9. 200 freestyle relay
13. 200 medley relay
16. Reid Snell 100 free
17. Matt Peng 50 free
19. Zach Hendricks 100 fly
20. Hogan Meyers 500 free
22. Matt Peng 100 fly

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24. Hogan Myers 200 free

24. Reid Snell 200 IM

KENNEDY

3. Brennan Urbi 50 free

5. Stefan Kitsos 100 breast

7. Brennan Urbi 100 free

7. 200 freestyle relay

12. 200 medley relay

14. Stefan Kitsos 200 IM

17. 19. Brady Gibson 200 free

21. Cade Schoenauer 100 fly

22. Cade Schoenauer 50 free

JEFFERSON

10. Paul Hummell 100 breaststroke

14. 200 freestyle relay

15. 200 medley relay

16. Max McChesney 500 free

20. 400 freestyle relay