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West Word Web Exclusives



Swim team struggles to find depth

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With the swim team's dual meet record at 1-1 (0-0 in the Central Suburban League South), head coach Dan Vander Jeudgt discussed the biggest issue that has hindered the team—depth. Vander Jeudgt cited the gap between the performance of elite swimmers and that of the rest of the team.

"We fall off really fast, and in championship meets, we will do okay, but it will be hard for us to win dual meets because we fall off so fast," he said.

The team's depth issues were never more in evidence than in Dec. 11's unexpted loss at the hands of district rival Niles North. Aided by a standout performance from junior Konner Scott, the Wolves won nine of 11 events, but lost the meet by five points, a circumstance that Vander Jeudgt characterized as singular. The team had "never done that before," he said.

Senior captain Ben Rees echoed his coach's assessment of the team.

"We need to work on depth; our lower guys will get faster by the end of the season, but there are some guys that aren't high up on the scale. Niles North had swimmers that were not as good as our top swimmers, but they had a lot of depth."

Rees said that the loss to North was unexpected

. "It happens, but you learn from it, and you get better," he said.

On a positive note, the team distinguished itself in invitationals, garnering second-place finishes at the inaugural Niles West Early Bird Invite (first place went to Mundelein) and the Shamrock Relays at St. Patrick High School (St. Ignatius won first place).

"St. Ignatius is a strong team and coming up second place behind them was good and Mundelein is a state-ranked team," senior captain Stu Topp said. "We are doing [well] considering where we are at right now and [that] everybody swam the best that they could. We are giving it all that we have."

As for the divers, head coach Lou Torres explained the current status of the team.

"Right now, we're still learning the basics," he said. "Diving entries are a big problem that takes time; hopefully, we will be better after winter break."

Senior captain Dylan Lovering said that the team is still adjusting to the new schedule of practices.

"We've never had two practices a day before, but hopefully [the team] will get used to it by the end of [winter] break," he said. "However, the good thing about having two practices a day is that during morning practice, we can focus on one set of dives, and during afternoon practices, we can work on another."

Vander Jeudgt outlined some key elements that would help the team.

"Right now it is all about building legs and endurance; [we must] pound and pound on yardage work."

Topp expressed his optimism for the rest of the season.

"There is a lot of room for improvement," he said. "Once we get through [winter] break, I think we will get on top of our game, and be good to go once we get to conference and sectionals."

Rees echoed Topp's belief.

"It's only going to get better," he said.

The team's next meet will be on Friday, Jan. 8, against the Evanston Township at the Wildkits' campus at 5:30 p.m.



Senior captain Ben Rees swims the 200 individual medley against North. Photo by Rexly Penaflorida II