

A&M finishes swim season with gusto



With the season coming to a close, the Texas A&M Swimming and Diving Teams have time to reflect on their performances this year and where they need to go to put themselves in a position to creep up in the national rankings.

So Close...

Freshman diver Danielle Guaneri was a strength for the Lady Aggie team this year. Guaneri's strength on the ten-meter tower was evident in both the Big 12 Conference Championships and the NCAA Zone Meet. At the conference meet, Guaneri's performance showed she had improved greatly her springboard diving, making her a better diver all around. In addition to taking third on the 10-meter tower, Guaneri finished on the one-meter springboard and took third on the three-meter.

"I was happy with my performance on the three-meter springboard," Guaneri said. "I was not really a springboard diver (at the beginning of the year)."

At the NCAA Zone Meet, Guaneri gave a spectacular performance on the 10-meter tower, taking third place, and coming very close to qualifying for the NCAA National meet this weekend. Guaneri said the new weight program will make her stronger for her sophomore year. Guaneri hopes to continue improving her springboard performances, so she can qualify for the national meet next year.

"I am still getting used to competing in college," Guaneri said. "But I hope next year I will improve enough to make NCAAs (nationals)."

Stellar Performance

The Aggies are taking more athletes to the NCAA Championships this year. Compared to the four who went last year, this year's team includes seven athletes who will compete in the showdown in Minneapolis. Now the Aggies must better their performance and finish higher than last year's tie for 22nd place. The Big 12 Championships proved each Aggie on the team can perform well in individual events, but the relay teams seemed to be lacking some of that competitive fervor.

The Aggies have the chance to correct that with the 200-meter and 400-meter intermedley relays next week in the national meet. If every Aggie on these relay teams (Jerrod Kappler, Robb Pantano, Kyle Marden, and Ryan Slater) swims up to his potential, the relay team's finishes could bring in many points. Then Kappler might repeat his Big 12 Championship performance in the 50-meter freestyle and shock more sprinters than just the Longhorns.

Add to that the expected powerful performance on the diving boards from Mark Naftanel, and the Aggies just might finish in the Top 20. But it all needs to start with a solid performance from the relay team.

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A&M gears up for NCAAs

The Lady Aggies head to Indianapolis this weekend

By COURTNEY LYONS
THE BATTALION

The NCAA National Championships are a competition for which only certain swimmers are able to qualify. However, the Texas A&M Swimming and Diving Teams are sending several competitors this year to the men's and women's competitions.

The Lady Aggies will take to the lanes this weekend in Indianapolis, Ind. while the men will be in Minneapolis, Minn., next weekend.

Junior Stacie Karnes qualified for the meet in three events — the 200-meter and 500-meter freestyle and the 200-meter butterfly. Karnes' spectacular first-place finish in the 200-meter fly in a competitive field in the Big 12 Conference meet automatically qualified her for the NCAA meet. Her performance, a school-record time of 2:00.22, might have surprised her competitors, but it did not surprise Karnes or her coach.

Both were expecting her to do well, and Karnes pulled through,

taking the gold medal in the 500-meter freestyle as well. Karnes should compete well in Indianapolis, as this is her third trip to the NCAA meet. Karnes garnered All-American honorable mentions at NCAAs her sophomore and freshman years.

Joining Karnes will be freshman Monica Stroman, who will compete in the 200-meter and 400-meter individual medley events. Stroman took second in the 400 Individual Medley during the Big 12 Championships, and finished in the 200 IM.

Although the Lady Aggies are taking fewer women to the championships this year, the two athletes who will be competing are projected to rack up enough points to put the Lady Aggies back in the Top 25 nationally.

The men's competition will be held next weekend in Minneapolis, quite a trip in comparison to last year's competition in Austin. However, the Aggie Men are sending more athletes to the competition this year than last year's four. The



Ryan Rogers, THE BATTALION

Senior **Stacie Karnes** competes in the 200-meter freestyle at the Big 12 Championships Feb. 28.

Aggies are sending seven athletes who will be competing in two relays (200-meter and 400-meter intermedley) and nine individual events.

The team for the two relays is comprised of senior Robb Pantano, junior Kyle Marden, sophomore Ryan Slater and sophomore Jerrod Kappler.

Head Coach Mel Nash said one of the goals of the team at the beginning of the season was to qualify more people for national competition than last year. Now the focus is to top A&M's score and placement in last year's NCAAs. Although the competition is further away, and there will not be the crowd support of last year's meet, the Aggies are not concerned.

"A home crowd won't make or break a meet," Pantano said. "We know how to compete. Anyone who's there has the potential to score."

The Big 12 competition was a

good preview of the national meet for the Aggies, as Texas, Nebraska, Kansas and Iowa State will all be bringing strong teams to the national championships. The Aggies expect to score well as individuals in addition to the relays.

Kappler should score points in the 50-meter freestyle, freshman Devin Howard will be strong in the 200-meter butterfly and the 400-meter individual medley, and Pantano will be looking to final in the 100-meter and 200-meter backstroke events.

And, of course, there will be sophomore Mark Naftanel on the diving boards to score points for the Aggies.

Naftanel impressed the competition at the NCAA Zone Meet last weekend by taking first on the 10-meter and three-meter, and narrowly missing a sweep by taking second place to Southern

Methodist's Ali Al-Hasan on the one-meter board. Naftanel should be very competitive on all three boards at the meet, giving the Aggies an added edge in overall competition.

The Aggies are looking to this meet as an opportunity to show everyone what they are capable of.

"Some of the fastest swimmers in the world will be there," Pantano said. "If you do as well in the meet as you did to qualify, you will finish well."

This is Pantano's fourth and last trip to the national competition. As one of three seniors on the team, Pantano said the team has improved immensely over his four years. He said this season has been a solid one.

"I have no regrets," Pantano said. "I've made great friends and had a lot of fun. The team and the coaches made the sport what it was for me."



Rogge Hefflin, THE BATTALION

Freshman **Monica Stroman** competes in the butterfly at the Big 12 Championships Feb. 28.

Campbell traded 'Horns for maroon and white

By MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

In the world of college athletics, it is not often an athlete spends years training at one school and then chooses to attend its archrival.

But that is how it happened for Tim Campbell, a freshman freestyler on the Texas A&M Men's Swim Team, who got his feet wet, literally, on the campus of the Aggies' arch-nemesis.

"My club team practiced at the (University of) Texas Aquatics center, so I knew all the swimmers," Campbell said. "I was the biggest Longhorn fan, I'll tell you that. But I'm happy down here."

It is a good thing because Campbell has emerged in his first year as one of the nation's top distance swimmers. And do not think his coaches are not aware of it.

"We recruited Tim out of Austin," Men's Assistant Head Coach Jay Holmes said. "Obviously, from the time that he swam at the (Big 12) Conference Championships, he's good enough to go there (UT). But he came here and we're really excited about him."

As well they should be. But when A&M coaches first saw Campbell compete, they were less than blown away. Obviously tired, Campbell swam poorly, and turned in a less than scintillating time.

But the coaches kept recruiting him and their perseverance has continued to pay dividends this season, as Campbell's times have improved virtually each time out.

Campbell gave his most notable performance during the conference champi-

onships, where he swam a 15:20.01 mile, his specialty. Campbell wowed both coaches and competition alike, most notably UT Head Coach Eddie Reese, who was no doubt lamenting the one that got away.

For those wondering what reasoning makes a guy train for an event that requires more hours in the pool than anyone on the team, only to be overlooked in favor of the more glamorous sprinters, Campbell has a simple answer.

"Because I can't sprint," Campbell said. "I have no sprinting ability at all. I can hold pace hundred after hundred after hundred, I just can't sprint. It takes me about a hundred just to get going."

And what does one think about, lap after monotonous lap?

"You think about how you swim your race," the stringy 6-foot-1, 155-pounder said. "In practice, you sing songs and stuff like that (in your head). So you can always think you can sing better than you actually can, because nobody else hears you."

Once he gets going and gets a rhythm, though, look out. And coaches say the biggest improvement in Campbell's performance is his newfound ability to swim fast even when he is tired, which was admittedly somewhat slow in coming.

"That's been a big key," Holmes said. "Tim was the guy who had to make the changes."

Campbell also was the guy who had to make the decision to swim fast no matter what.

"When we saw him swimming fast even when he was tired, we knew there were going to be some great things coming," Holmes said.

"More than anything, performing like this as a freshman should give him confidence."

Jay Holmes
Assistant coach



File Photo

Freshman **Tim Campbell** dives off the blocks in the 500-meter freestyle at the Big 12 Championships Feb. 28 at the Student Recreation Center.

In addition to his impressive showing in the mile, which won him consideration for the NCAA Championships, Campbell posted a team-best time of 9:16.06 in the 1000-meter freestyle. The freshman's eye-catching times capped a stellar opening season and provide a glimpse of what may be in store.

"More than anything, performing like this as a freshman should give him confidence," Holmes said. "If he keeps his head on and keeps swimming with confidence and puts in the hard work that it's going to take, who knows where he's going to go? But I know for sure that he is a national caliber distance swimmer."

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