Written by Steve Ostermann
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Grafton girls ride wave of personal-best efforts to 7th place in Division 2 swim final; divers set pace for Port

A championship was not in the cards for the Grafton girls' swimming and diving team at last week's WIAA Division 2 state meet.

But the Black Hawks did ride a wave of individual-best performances to a seventh-place finish in a 38-team field that vied for honors Friday at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Natatorium.

Pacing Grafton were third-place efforts by a pair of seniors — Molly McElligott in diving and Sadie Nennig in the 100-yard backstroke.

"We were really pleased with the way the meet went for us," said Hawks coach Adan Burgos, whose squad scored 127 points one year after it finished second at state with 180.

"Just about everybody had a season-best or personal-best times, so we can't complain about that. There were some really good teams in the meet.

"You can't control what other people do, so you just have to do the best you can."

Sturgeon Bay/Sevastopol won the team championship with 201 points, snapping a three-year title streak by DeForest, which finished second with 186.

Whitefish Bay took third with 179.5 points, and Shorewood was fourth with 167.

Among other local teams, Port Washington placed 32nd with 12 points.

McElligott capped her Grafton diving career with a personal-best score of 384.4 points, and teammate Katelyn Zarem, a sophomore, was fourth with 361.3. The duo combined to score 31 of the Hawks' points.

Milwaukee Lutheran's Kristin Capcik won the diving title with 425 points, edging runner-up Rachel Stave of Whitnall, who had 419.9.

Nennig, who spent the season being recruited by college swimming programs, wrapped up her high-school career by helping the Hawks score in four events.

In addition to her third-place time of 57.45 seconds in the backstroke, she finished fifth in the 200 individual medley (2:09.63) and was a member of two seventh-place relay teams.

Nennig was joined by sophomore Caitlin Hanney, junior Kelsi Chesney and senior Morgan Wilkey on the 200 medley team (1:52.05) and the 400 freestyle team (3:40.45).

Nennig's backstroke finish was her fourth top-three state performance in the event, which she won in 2006 and 2007 and was second in last year.

"Sadie swam well," Burgos said. "The top three or four girls in her events were all capable of beating each other, so it just came down to who had the better meet that day."

Among Grafton's other scoring finishes, Hanney placed 10th in the individual medley (2:14.13) and 11th in the 500 freestyle (5:22.52), Chesney was 14th in the 100 butterfly (1:01.45), and Wilkey was 15th in the 50 freestyle (25.48).

Port Washington got most of its points from two young divers. Sophomore Claire Kinzer finished 10th in the 16-diver field with 274.55 points, and freshman Hayley Seitz was 14th with 254.1.

"They both did all right," Port coach Maureen Jajtner said of her divers, who were making their state debuts.

"They're young, and that's a pretty tough venue to perform in."

The Pirates' other state qualifier was senior swimmer Erin Jajtner, who finished 16th in the 200 freestyle (2:04.7) and 500 freestyle (5:37.9).

"Her swims were rough, but that's the way it goes sometimes," the Pirates coach said of her daughter. "We'll see better things from her in the future (in college)."