

## Sectional pool test a breeze for Hawks

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN  
Wednesday, 13 February 2013 18:14

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### Seven first-place finishes in Plymouth challenge pave Grafton boys' road to state swimming and diving meet

You couldn't have asked for a much bigger splash than the one made by the Grafton boys' swimming and diving team last Saturday at Plymouth High School.

Winning seven events and turning in state-qualifying performances at nearly every turn, the Black Hawks churned to their first-ever WIAA sectional team championship in a Division 2 meet.



"I'm ecstatic. It was quite the day," said Grafton coach Mark Minz, who saw his squad score 378 points and hold off Plymouth, which was second with 338.

"I knew we had a chance to do well, and everything fell into place for us. We had great time drops, and everyone stepped up for us."

When it was all done, Grafton had 10 individual performances and all three of its relay teams qualify for this week's state meet.

As he has done throughout his career, senior Al Nennig led the Hawks' charge by winning two races in impressive fashion. Nennig placed first in the 50-yard freestyle (21.61 seconds) and the 100 backstroke (52.55) and will return to state with the top-seeded times in both events.

In the backstroke, Nennig's time was more than two seconds faster than runner-up Jan Hansen of Beaver Dam (54.69).

The Hawks also got wins from Kieran Paddock in the 200 individual medley (2:10.44); Brad Kempka in the 100 breaststroke (1:03.33); Tyler Kish in the 500 freestyle (5:22.12); the 200 medley relay of Kish, Nennig, Paddock and Bailey Bodart (1:43.53); and the 200 freestyle relay

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of Ben Gosselin, Bodart, Kempka and Nennig (1:29.63).

All are seniors except Bodart, who's a freshman.

Grafton's other state-qualifying performances were seconds by Gosselin in the 200 freestyle (1:50.83), junior Zach Greenwood in diving (333.3 points) and the 400 freestyle relay of Gosselin, Bodart, Paddock and Kempka (3:21.18); thirds by Kempka in the 100 freestyle (49.75) and junior Killian Mielotz in diving (284.4 points); and a fifth by Gosselin in the 100 freestyle (50.75).

Nennig has been a swimmer on a mission all season as he heads to the state meet for the fourth consecutive year. He returns to Madison to defend his Division 2 title in the 50 freestyle and will be favored in the backstroke after taking second at state last year in the breaststroke.

"Al could have qualified in several different events, but he wanted to give the backstroke a try," Minz said. "He looked very good. We're expecting great things from him in Madison again."

Grafton has no shortage of state veterans, with both divers, Kempka, Paddock and Gosselin joining Nennig at the 2012 Division 2 finals. Minz said all of them rose to the occasion in the sectional meet, with a number of the swimmers lowering their seed times by large margins.

The coach was also impressed with Bodart's contributions. "For a freshman, he did a heck of a job solidifying our relays. He was the linchpin in getting all three relays to state," Minz said.

The Hawks' other top-five finishes were a fourth by Paddock in the 100 butterfly (58.08) and fifth by Spencer Kish in the 500 freestyle (5:39.48).

Among other local squads at the Plymouth meet, Port Washington turned in solid showing with 187 points, good for fifth place out of 12 teams. However, the Pirates had no state qualifiers.

"I think we did very well, but I'm pretty bummed that we aren't sending anyone to Madison," Port coach Melissa Hoogester said. "We had a good chance in several events but just came up short."

Port's top finishes were a second by sophomore J.B. Nosko in the 500 freestyle (5:25.96) and thirds by senior Alex Mehre in the butterfly (57.28) and the 200 medley relay of Nosko, junior Callum Toal, Mehre and senior Connor LaCosse (1:50.31).

The Pirates also got a sixth from the 400 freestyle relay of Mehre, Nosko, Toal and LaCosse (3:40.68) and sevenths from LaCosse in the 50 freestyle (23.62) and 100 freestyle (53.25) and the 200 freestyle relay of Diego Anderson, Christian LaCosse, Dan Gardner and Nelson Benning (1:45.38).

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"I'm really pleased with the way our swimmers continued to improve this season," Hoogester said. "The seniors did well, and we have some good young talent coming back next year."

The Division 2 state meet will be held Friday, Feb. 15, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Natatorium. Diving starts at 2:30 p.m., followed by swimming at 6:30 p.m.

The Hawks should be in the fight for a team title as well as high individual honors. Minz expects tough challenges from teams such as defending champion McFarland, Milton, Monona Grove and Madison Edgewood.

"We have a lot of kids with state experience, so we should do well," he said. "They've been there, and they know what to expect."

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Image Information: MEMBERS OF THE Grafton boys' swimming and diving team were happy to pose with the championship trophy they won at a WIAA Division 2 sectional meet in Plymouth last Saturday. Shown (front row, from left) are Bailey Bodart, Zach Greenwood, Ben Stewart, Killian Mielotz, Justen Hilgart, (middle row) diving coach David Heraly, Matt Salm, Brad Kempka, Michael Zager, Tyler Kish, Brett Rasmussen, head coach Mark Minz, assistant coach Kathy Seitz, (back row) Kieran Paddock, Ben Gosselin, Al Nennig and Spencer Kish.  
Photo by Sam Arendt