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Steve Geoghegan - Weston shows it can hang with big dogs

Posted on 11/11/2009

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Following the 500 freestyle event, Weston High girls swimming coach Tom Grace had a good feeling.

A feeling that maybe, just maybe, the little Trojans of Weston could shock the entire South-West Conference and capture the league championship. As it turned out, however, they came up a little short at Saturday's SWC Championship meet but that doesn't lessen the accomplishment of the Trojans.

Despite not having great numbers, they wound up placing second overall, their highest placement in league competition in quite some time. They finished ahead of larger schools such as Newtown, New Fairfield and Brookfield.

It just goes to show that talent has a way of rising to the top over depth any day of the week.

"After the 500, I could see something very good happening," said Grace, who had two swimmers place in the top three in the event. "I just let the girls do their thing. Their competitiveness really came through."

He said the team aims to place in top five in the conference every year.

"If we finish there, we've done OK," he said. "As long as we don't get beat by teams we beat in the regular season."

But this year's performance surpassed his expectations. With his team racking up points throughout the competition, Grace thought his team would be in the mix before Pomperaug pulled away late.

Pomperaug finished with 439 points, compared to Weston's 346.5 points.

"Competing against the Pomperaug and Newtowns is really tough," he said. "Things just fell into place for us."

Grace was pleased with all of his swimmers who competed but a few really made a splash, no pun intended, including Shelby Fortin and Christina Brasco.

Fortin, who was last year's All-Area Girls Swimming MVP, turned in a fantastic meet and was named the Most Valuable Swimmer for her efforts. She won the 100 freestyle in a meet-record time of 53.02, she took the 200 free with a time of 1:57.48 and anchored the 200 and 400 free relays to second and third place finishes, respectively.

Brasco, meanwhile, won the diving with 340.05 points.

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"They're both captains and they've shown year-round commitment to the sport," Grace said. "The girls look up to both of them."

Karen Bottger and Victoria Arel also made key contributions, according to Grace.

The Trojans will now prepare for the Class S state meet, looking to improve on last year's third-place finish. If they can take anything from Saturday's runner-up finish going into states, it's that they have what it takes to vie for a title.

"It gave the girls some confidence, confidence I already knew they had," Grace said.

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On Thursday, the Southern Connecticut Soccer Officials Association (SCSOA) will present the Norwalk High girls and Brien McMahon High boys soccer teams with the SCSOA Sportsmanship Award for 2009 at the Waveny House in New Canaan.

It's a tremendous honor for both programs, considering the SCSOA officiates more than 60 boys and girls teams. Even though the teams had their struggles this season, the players never took it out on their opponents and showed class and dignity.

The head coaches of the teams, Norwalk High girls coach Jess Stamos and McMahon boys coach Chris Bacco, should be proud and commended for the way they run their programs.

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