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Caper Tigers enjoying terrific season in the pool

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

PLEASANTVILLE — Co-ed swim teams can be at a disadvantage in New Jersey because they can compete only against other co-ed teams or against boys teams. When it comes to the playoffs, they are in the boys brackets.

Lower Cape May Regional High School's co-ed swim team is hoping for its shot at the sectionals this season, sporting a 6-2 record and currently ranked fifth in Power Points in South Jersey Group C.

"I wasn't expecting to have as much talent as I do," head coach Brittany O'Donnell said at Friday's away meet against Pleasantville High School.

The Caper Tigers easily handled the smaller Greyhound team two days after winning a tri-meet against Holy Spirit and Millville. Lower had been between numbers four and five in Power Points, but had dropped to seventh before this week's meets.

"I said to these kids, if we stay at fifth, we could get a home playoff meet. We've never had one of those. Then we had the tri-meet and it was our best Power Point meet, so I guess whatever I said made it work out," O'Donnell said. "Now our goal is to get a home playoff meet and then get a win. If we make it that far, it's something we've never done before."

fore."

The Caper Tigers lost to Wildwood Catholic 95-75 to open the season and also to Oakcrest 93-77. They defeated the six other teams they faced.

LCMR beat Cape May Tech 114-57, Buena Regional 121-46, Salem 135-30, Millville 55-39, Holy Spirit 69-25 and then Pleasantville 140-17.

The smaller numbers for the Holy Spirit and Millville tri-meet were because it was held in a four-lane pool requiring multiple heats.

The team was second in the United Division behind Wildwood Catholic at the end of last week with the final meet of the regular season coming up at 4 p.m. Thursday against Middle Township.

"Because we're co-ed, we swim in the boys league. We can either swim all boys teams or other co-ed teams, so when it comes to the postseason all co-ed teams are in the boys bracket," O'Donnell explained.

Does that put the Caper Tigers at a disadvantage? "A little bit," she said.

The girls can qualify girls for the Cape-Atlantic League girls meet or the state individual championships based on their times.

"We haven't had a state qualifier, but we have had CAL qualifiers," the coach said.

"We just want to be competitive and we're in a good league where



David Nahan/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Senior Eddie Fucci competes in the medley relay during Lower Cape May Regional High School's meet Jan. 17 at Pleasantville High School. The Caper Tigers won 140-17 to improve their record to 6-2 on the season. See more photos at ocnjsentinel.com.

we can be competitive. When they went to three divisions in the CAL instead of two (adding Unified to the American and National divisions), it kind of gave us a little leg to stand on," she said.

"You only really get five meets (six teams are in the division) unless you try to schedule more, which sucks, because we don't have easy pool space to have meets. To add meets, we have to find people who have their own pools. We'll swim you, but we need to come to you," she said.

The team practices at the Cape May City Elementary School pool, but it has only four lanes and no starting blocks. Caper Tiger meets are held at the Von Savage pool in Wildwood Crest.

LCMR had a bit of a resurgence this year, which is why O'Donnell said she had more talent than she expected.

"We lost a lot of numbers, so when we came back from COVID we went co-ed. We have the most kids we've had this year — 31. We maxed out in the low 20s in the past. It's nice because it gives me the opportunity to fill a meet sheet," she said. "When it was boys and girls teams, I had a lot of open lanes. We don't really have a lot of kids who swim year-round. We have some kids who come out their junior year to join the team, so we don't have a lot of kids who can do other strokes, such as butterfly, breaststroke and backstroke.

"When you have separate boys and girls teams, you need six people to do butterfly when I used to struggle to get three," she said. "We gained a few freshmen who swim club, so that's nice. For once we don't leave an open lane, which we haven't done in a really long time."

Asked about her team leaders,

O'Donnell pointed first to her seniors who do much of the scoring — Drew Kronemeyer, Kaitlyn Flynn, Eddie Fucci and Kallen Garagozzo. She has nine seniors, including a team manager.

"They're all important to the team," she said.

The other seniors are Sam Benigno, Tran Nguyen, Ryan Gibson, Bronson Goodavage and Colin McAnaney.

The coach also noted three junior girls who can do strokes other than freestyle — Addie Lagares, Layton Arenberg and Reilly Satt. Joey Cannavo, she said, is a sophomore who used to swim for the Dolphins "and is someone we can rely on."

"Our freshmen, AJ Granera and Giacomino Ruff, swim for the

Dolphins as well. So they were big additions" because they can swim multiple strokes, she said.

"That is where we usually struggle. We have a lot of kids who can swim freestyle, but I need to put people elsewhere and I don't normally have that," O'Donnell said.

LCMR 140, Pleasantville 17

The Caper Tigers had an easy go of it Jan. 17, beating Pleasantville 140-17.

In the opening 200-meter medley relay, they won the top three places led by Joseph Cannavo, Giacomino Ruff, Eddie Fucci and Drew Kronemeyer winning in a time of 2 minutes, 10.79 sec-

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David Nahan/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Senior Drew Kronemeyer swims the breast stroke during a meet Jan. 17 against the Pleasantville Greyhounds. He led a 1-2-3 sweep in the event, winning in 1:25.58.



David Nahan/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Senior Kaitlyn Flynn competes in the 200 individual medley. She and teammates AJ Granero (first) and Addison Lagares (second) went 1-2-3 in the event.



David Nahan/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Seniors on the 2024-25 Lower Cape May Regional High School co-ed swim team, that had a 6-2 record at the end of last week, include, from left, in front, Sam Benigno, Tran Nguyen, Kaitlyn Flynn and Eddie Fucci; and in back, Ryan Gibson, Drew Kronemeyer, Bronson Goodavage, Kallen Garagozzo and Colin McAnaney.



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