



October 9, 2008

Mercy leaves county field in its wake

By *DAN STICKRADT*
O&E Staff Writer

Farmington Hills Mercy is making winning a habit, especially at the Oakland County Swimming and Diving Championships.

The Marlins, ranked No. 1 in the state in Division 2, made it four straight dominating titles at the annual meet Saturday at Lake Orion High School.

Besides winning three of the 12 events, Mercy also displayed its unmatched depth and cruised to victory in a field of state-ranked programs, totaling 404 points.

"I think it goes down to depth at this meet," Mercy coach Shannon Dunworth said. "There are a lot of very good (front-tier) swimmers at this meet. Depth is where you score points. I think that shows how hard working your team is, where you can have a lot of people contribute."

In recent years, it's been rare that a school not named Mercy, Birmingham Groves or Birmingham Seaholm finished in the top three.

Birmingham Marian, which is a co-No. 1 in the state in Division 3, was a distant second at 219.5 points to snare the runner-up trophy.

The last team other than Mercy, Groves or Seaholm to bring home a first- or second-place trophy was Rochester Adams in 2000.

"It's been a long time since we were in the top three," veteran Marian coach Bill Thompson said. "I thought we could be up there, but it's never easy considering how good some of these teams are."

"I think we changed up our training a little bit, and it's starting to pay off. I think we might be better (at this time) than last year."

Seaholm, Groves and Novi rounded out the top five, and Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Kingswood, South Lyon, Farmington Harrison, Milford and Rochester Adams wrapped up the top 10.

Mercy's Nikki Barczak took the 200 free (1:55.70), and Carley Sevald topped the field in the one-meter diving (439.30 points), an event she won by over 50 points.

Barczak also anchored the winning 400 free relay (3:38.50) that included Kaitlyn Jefferson, Taylor Steffl and Megan Gegesky.

"Last year I think we only won one event, and this year we were able to win three," Dunworth said. "I thought we had some very good performances overall. I couldn't be more pleased with this group."

A year ago, Mercy had 36 slots inside the top 16 throughout the 12 events. The Marlins outdid themselves this year with 37 placers.

Mercy took six places in the 500 free, including runner-up Sato Kakihara. In all, Mercy was second in two events and third in two others.

Seaholm's Lauren Nichols won the 50 free in a pool-record time of 23.98 and also touched first in the 100 free. She joined teammates Charlotte Yaw, Sam Arnold and Melanie Rogers for a win in the 200 free relay. Nichols was the sole three-event winner on the day.

Groves won the 200 medley relay with the foursome of Ashley Mitson, Molly Tyler, Annie Lazor and Elsie Dalley.

West Bloomfield's Karly Moore won the 200 IM and took second in the backstroke. Cranbrook's Maeve McHugh was victorious in the backstroke, and teammate Rachel Dekar touched first in the breaststroke.
