

Wreckers splash Bears

From A11

a chance to get used to different situations and different pools. Really in a sense it's getting us ready for the championship meets because it gives us experience to constant change.

"And practicing at the 'Y' pool hasn't been a problem," she added. "The girls from McMahon had to travel to practice anyway, so the 'Y' is actually located in the middle for both schools."

"The only problem is we have no blocks at practice," Katie Timmerman, a double winner for the Bears on Wednesday, pointed out. "That makes it tough for our relays. But we're hoping we'll get to use the Darien YMCA or maybe Wilton and use their blocks to practice on for the championship meets."

"Other than that, though, always being on the road hasn't been that bad. It gives all the girls on the team time to bond. On the bus rides we have a lot of rituals and traditions we do."

Meanwhile, Staples enjoyed the friendly confines of their home pool as the Wreckers improved to an impressive 7-3 with two winnable dual meets left.

Hennessy, the defending FCIAC and Class L state champion in the 50 and 100 freestyles, won both events Wednesday, capturing the 50 in 27.95 seconds and the 100 in 1:00.97.

Last year's All-Area MVP also anchored the winning 200 medley and 400 freestyle relay teams.

"This was a big win for us," Hennessy, who last season broke the FCIAC record in the 100 free that stood for 28 years, said. "I expected a very close meet. Norwalk is very strong, but we got psyched and every-

body did their best. Every place counted, even fifth."

She was right. Staples won seven events compared to five by Norwalk. The Bears added seven second-place finishes and were one-two in the 200 and 400 meter freestyles.

But the Wreckers were able to pull away on the scoreboard because of their superior depth.

"In our hearts we swam faster than them, but they scored more points because of their depth," Timmerman agreed. "We had firsts and seconds, but they had more thirds, fourths and fifths, which won the meet."

It also didn't help that Norwalk wasn't able to enter anyone in the diving competition. The Bears' top diver, Hannah Merrill, has been out ill the last three weeks.

That cleared the way for a sweep of first, second and third by Staples, good for 13 points, which stretched a 35-27 lead at the time to 48-27. The margin never got under 17 after that.

"Diving was the big difference," Timmerman said. "That's 13 points right off the bat."

"If it weren't for diving, the final score would have been 93-77," Staples coach Mike Laux pointed out. "The same thing happened to us against Darien. We beat them in swimming, but they beat us in diving and won the meet."

Catalina Reihardt won the diving (147.52) for Staples, while freshman Molly Loftus added a win in the 200 IM (2:32.22) and Helena Neuhaus garnered top honors in the 100 backstroke (1:08.96).

Loftus added a runner-up finish in the 100 butterfly (1:09.86), while sophomore Natalie LeBlanc was second to Neuhaus in the backstroke

(1:13.27), junior Savitri Horrigan took second in the 100 breaststroke (1:18.78), and Megan Kraky was runner-up in diving.

Horrigan was also third in the 100 fly (1:10.02), as was Neuhaus in the 100 free (1:02.81). They joined Loftus and Hennessy on the winning medley relay team (2:07.49), while Neuhaus, Loftus and Hennessy teamed up with Cat Friel to win the 400 free relay (4:12.29).

Timmerman led Norwalk with her first-place finishes in the 400 meter freestyle (4:53.63) and 100 breaststroke (1:18.00).

"That was definitely the best I've done all season," Timmerman, a junior who was also a double winner in Norwalk's last meet, said. "But all the girls worked hard today and swam well."

Senior Jennifer Lopez added a win in the 200 freestyle (2:18.9) and finished second to Timmerman in the 400 free with a time of 4:55.4.

Sophomore Marissa Shields finished second to Lopez in the 200 free (2:19.65) for the Bears' other one-two finish.

Norwalk's other first-place finishes were recorded by Meredith Pramer in the 100 butterfly (1:09.78) and the 200 freestyle relay team (1:57.31) of Lauren Timmerman, Anna Gryglewska, Lopez and Sarah Suchoff.

Lauren Timmerman was also second in the 200 IM (2:34.25) and 100 free (1:01.53), while Suchoff was runner-up in the 50 free (28.21).

"We swam some strong times today and had a lot of personal bests," Rubin said. "Staples is always good and they always have great depth. But our strength is not in dual meets. Our strength is in championship meets."



Hour photo/MATTHEW VINCI

Molly Loftus of Staples swims the butterfly during Wednesday's meet against Norwalk. Loftus won the 200 individual medley and finished second in the fly. The Wreckers beat the Bears, 106-77.

"Hopefully we'll beat Staples at the championship meets," Katie Timmerman added.

Championship meets are also Hennessy's favorite time of the season.

"We have only two dual meets left, so starting (today) we're going to start training hard for the postseason," she said.

"It's been tough to train because we usually have three meets a week," Laux added. "We have a tough meet, then a day off, then another tough meet and a day off, and you can't really train hard on your days off because you don't want to be

exhausted for the meet the next day. So we'll start training hard now."

The Wreckers were certainly feeling pretty strong on Wednesday, however, as the final score indicates.

"Norwalk came here very psyched," Hennessy said. "They made Staples shirts and came out of the locker room cheering. We knew they were excited, but we just had to match their enthusiasm."

And they did. "All our girls came to school dressed up as hunters today and brought Bears," Laux said. "They were ready to go Bear hunting."

Senators turn back Norwalk

From A11

beat us last year," McMahon coach Bobbi Kijek said. "(Wednesday) I'm not sure if it was us stopping them or if they were just a little off."

Seaburg felt his team could have played better.

"We didn't pass the ball well and we didn't bring our 'A' game tonight," Seaburg said.

For McMahon, Wadolowski used her speed to create scoring chances throughout the game, nearly connecting with Shannon Kiebertz midway through the first half. Ten minutes later, Wadolowski again raced through the Bears defense before she was stoned by Norwalk goalie Sam Zezima.

"She's so fast and talented she always creates chances," Kijek said. "She's the backbone of our team."

With 3:23 to play in the half, McMahon took advantage of another free hit when Devon Satnik found Watson for the deflection goal.

The second half was all Senators as they outshot the Bears 7-1.

"This game's not always about skill but heart," Kijek said. "We came into the game with the same amount of points in the FCIAC but (Wednesday) I think we wanted to win more."



Hour photo/MATTHEW VINCI

Brien McMahon's Madonna Wadolowski, left, and Norwalk's Shannon Bloom battle for possession of the ball during Wednesday night's meeting of the crosstown rivals. McMahon won, 3-0, ending a three-game losing streak against the Bears.

Rachel Ramsey beat Zezima, who guessed correctly, on a penalty stroke with 19:44 remaining to put the game well out of reach.

Norwalk, which saw its five-game unbeaten streak snapped, will look to put the loss behind them quickly.

"It's a big game because it's an inner-city rivalry and it hurts to lose to you cross-town rival," Seaburg said. "But we have to remember it's still just

one game."

The two rivals could meet again with potential rematches looming in both the FCIAC playoffs and Class L state tournament.

"We could see them again," Seaburg said. "Actually, I'd like to see them again."

McMahon returns to action today when it hosts defending Class M champion Wilton. Norwalk plays at lowly Trumbull Friday.

City continues efforts to upgrade playing fields

From A11

way. I think it's a beautiful spot to watch a baseball game. Now it's going to be even nicer."

The overhaul at Calf Pasture is also in progress. The Little League field, which has stood at the top corner of the complex for decades, has already been torn down. In its place, a new softball field is being built. Home plate for Field 3 will sit in the corner where the outfield fence of the two existing fields meet. A large chunk of the parking lot will be removed to make room for the new diamond.

The third field, which is expected to be completed before the start of the 2008 softball season next spring, will enable the Rec department to expand its slow-pitch softball leagues, adding more co-ed games as well as the creation of a wood-bat league, which will play on Wednesday nights. There are already seven teams signed up.

The new field will also allow the city to garner additional income from people entering the complex. With a three-field multi-plex, Norwalk is hoping to host more state and Regional softball tournaments. That's one of the main reasons why the city went ahead with the project.

With the elimination of softball at Vets Park, the consolidation also makes things easier on everyone involved.

"There's no more confusion about where the games are," Anastasia said. "Everyone will know where to go now."

Mike Mocciaie, the Director of Norwalk Rec and Parks, is also looking into replacing the out-dated lights at Calf Pasture. That would help quell the complaints from residents in the Harborview section of Norwalk about the glare of the lights bouncing off the water, while at the same time creating better playing conditions.

Mocciaie is reseraching lights that point more toward the ground. He might even seek alternative means of supplying energy to the lights, whether it's solar or wind power.

New lights could be installed as early as next year pending approval from the city.

"The efficiency would far outweigh the cost of installation," Mocciaie said. "It would

also help to reduce the glare off the water, which has been an important issue on the table for a few years now, and for good reason."

The two Little League fields at Vets Park will be a vast improvement over the old Calf Pasture location. Instead of a dirt infield, our young players will now have grass infields beneath their feet. The fields will be totally fenced in and dugouts will be installed in the style of the ones at City Hall. Mocciaie and Anastasia envision a first-class Little League complex that might attract Regional tournaments as well.

The Rec department is also pushing for the installation of lights at Vets Park and would love to see the construction of a mini golf facility and batting cages over the near future. With Norwalk Junior Lacrosse and Norwalk Junior Soccer already making their home on the side field closer to the water, improvements like that would make Vets Park a great destination for families — which is the ultimate goal.

The city is also doing some much-needed work at the Nathan Hale Middle School field, which is used for soccer and lacrosse. The sod has already been replaced. There will also be FieldTurf installed in the 30x30 goal boxes beginning the second week of November.

How much is all this costing? Amazingly enough, because all the work is being done by the Recreation and Parks Department staff, just \$75,000 of the taxpayers' money will be spent.

"We're doing the whole project in-house," Mocciaie said. "I would estimate it would have been well over \$150,000 if we went outside."

If that's not enough, the Rec department is also conducting a study to see about finding space for additional fields on the campus at Norwalk High School.

"There's a whole bunch of things happening that affects everyone in the city," Mocciaie said. "There's a lot happening, and we're all pretty excited about it."

Things are definitely coming together in Norwalk.

Now all the city has to do is figure out a way to get McMahon's softball field playable again.

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Torre remains in limbo

From A11

unconditional Torre ally among the key decision-makers, there's room enough for his return — with certain riders attached.

It appears that pitching coach Ron Guidry will be replaced, possibly by the younger Dave Eiland, who helped groom the likes of Phil Hughes, Joba Chamberlain and Ian Kennedy.

Other staff changes and the length of contract — probably two years at most — could be in play. Cashman spoke with Torre on Wednesday but did not reveal any of their conversation, though it's possible that they've already started to discuss parameters of an extension. Torre was said to be at home in Westchester County, N.Y., and in good spirits.

After taking the Yankees to 12 postseason appearances in 12 seasons, Torre essentially is being asked to reapply for his position as manager.

But it's up to the Steinbrenners to make the final call.

The increased power of Hal, the 38-year-old board chairman, and Hank, the 50-year-old senior vice president, has slowed down the decision-making process.

"We're having a dialogue with all the relevant parties," Cashman said, referring to the Yankee hierarchy, not the managerial candidates. "All I can tell you is, when we come to a decision and a conclusion, then we'll share it with you."

"As long as we have the Yankee interest at heart and what's best for us as we go forward, you know, that's the right call. So give it the time it needs."

Internal talks will continue Thursday, but the Yankees came to one definite conclusion Wednesday.

"I can reaffirm that if Alex Rodriguez opts out of his contract, then we will not participate in his free agency," Cashman said. "That is accurate and that is definitive."

This was Cashman's suggestion to ownership, in order to combat agent Scott Boras' leverage. A-Rod has until 10 days after the World Series to opt out of the final three years of his deal. If he does so, the Rangers will cease their obligation to funnel another \$21.3 million to the Yankees, to offset the contract A-Rod signed with Texas before coming to the Bronx.

However, the Yankees are formulating plans for an aggressive extension to keep Rodriguez in pinstripes.

Yankees officials also discussed plans to re-sign Mariano Rivera and Jorge Posada, who have pledged their allegiance to Torre. Andy Pettitte (player option) and Bobby Abreu (team option) each could be brought back for \$16 million, and Pettitte might warrant a one-year extension.

But Torre's status remained a front-burner item.

Club president Randy Levine was first to arrive Wednesday, at 9:30 a.m., followed separately at 10 by Cashman and Hal Steinbrenner. Clad in a jacket similar to his father's trademark blue blazer, Hank Steinbrenner arrived at 10:30, and later took several brief cigarette breaks on a balcony.

At 4:04 p.m., Cashman, assistant GM Jean Afterman and chief operating officer Lonny Trost were headed to the airport when Cashman had their driver stop just outside the Legends Field security gate, where several reporters had waited. And waited.

Though Mattingly or former Columbus manager Trey Hillman might succeed in New York, there's been internal debate about replacing Torre's tendencies with unknown factors. There's also the potential harsh backlash by the public, press and players if Torre is pushed out — and there's no slam dunk candidate out there.

Whatever the decision, at least it hasn't been hasty.

Louisville offers stern test of UConn 'D'

From A11

yards per game, including 398 yards through the air.

While the Huskies will be trying to rebound from a loss, the Cardinals are coming off their most impressive victory of the season, a 28-24 road win over then-No. 15 Cincinnati.

Heisman hopeful Brian Brohm threw for 350 yards and three touchdowns, and senior wide receiver Harry Douglas returned from an injury to make seven catches for 118 yards.

The Cardinals offense could get another boost this week with the expected return of wide receiver Mario Urrutia from injury.

UConn cornerback Darius

Butler said the key to beating Louisville will be pressuring Brohm and keeping him from finding those targets.

"As long as he doesn't have time, he can't be as good as he is," Butler said. "We've got to get him rattled. We've got to get some hits on him and knock him off his game a little bit."

Louisville is 3-0 against the Huskies, including a 48-17 route last year in Kentucky. The Cardinals are 2-1 on the road this season.

"We have a chip on our shoulder," said defensive lineman Earl Heyman. "That's how we have to play. We enjoy the challenge of going into hostile environment. That's exactly what that is. We would have it no other way."

UConn is fighting for some respect. Their five victories this season have come against teams that have combined for just nine wins all year.

"It wouldn't really say this is a defining game, it's just another challenge, a bigger challenge," UConn defensive tackle Dan Davis said.

It's the first of several big challenges that both teams will face coming down the stretch.

After Louisville, UConn has games left against No. 2 South Florida (6-0), Rutgers (4-2), No. 23 Cincinnati (6-1), Syracuse (1-6) and No. 8 West Virginia (5-1).

Louisville must play the Mountaineers, Scarlet Knights and Bulls along with Pittsburgh.