

CG girls aim to make splash in finals

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Center Grove High School girls swimming coach Jim Todd hasn't experienced an IHSAA state swimming and diving finals like this year's meet.

For the first time in school history, Center Grove has participants in all 12 events, including two each in the 200-yard individual medley, 100 backstroke and 100 breaststroke.

Overall, nine Trojans swimmers and one diver will compete in the state finals today and Saturday. The depth provides No. 6 Center Grove the opportunity to score its highest point total ever.

It also gives the Trojans a chance to achieve their goal of placing among the top five, something they haven't done since the 1998 and 1999 seasons, when they finished as runner-up.

"We have nine (swimmers), and several girls have more than one individual event plus relays," Todd said. "By having that many (participants) and that many in multiple events, they've given themselves the opportunity to obtain their goals. It gives you more opportunities to score points."

After finishing 10th in the 2005 state meet, Center Grove is prepared to perform even better in this year's meet at the Indiana University Natatorium on the campus of IUPUI.

Sophomore Michelle McKeehan returns to defend her 200 individual medley and 100 breaststroke titles.

Senior diver Tien Tran is in top form and looks to improve upon



STAFF PHOTO BY MATT DOOLEY/moolley@thejournalnet.com

Center Grove High School senior Katy Todd swims in the 500-yard freestyle during the sectional at Indian

Creek on Saturday. The Trojans will send 10 athletes to the state finals, starting tonight in Indianapolis.

last year's seventh-place finish.

Armed with more confidence and experience, the Trojans believe they can achieve their goal and finish in the top five.

"All nine (swimmers) are really excited," said senior Katy Todd, who will swim in the 100 butterfly and 500 freestyle. "The past few years it's just been a small majority of us. I think this year will turn out better at state."

"The morale of the team is better this year. We're all ready, really excited and psyched up to go fast."

And the Trojans should be well-rested to do so.

Traditionally, Jim Todd had the Trojans significantly reduce their yardage the week before sectionals so they could swim faster times and qualify for state. This year, he revamped the strategy.

Instead of tapering off considerably during sectionals, Center Grove swimmers reduced their yardage total only slightly during the past two weeks, from 6,000 to 4,000 yards a day. This week, they dropped their yardage down to the 2,000-yard range, and on Thursday, they barely got wet, swimming about 1,500 yards.

"I felt like those girls could make it to the state meet through sectionals without being totally rested, which they were all able to do," Todd said. "Now, we're resting them for state. We'll find out (today) if it works or not."

"The kids are rested. Hopefully because of resting, we should go quite a bit faster."

Sophomore Shelli Kopetsky has noticed that the yardage drop has given her more energy heading into the state meet.

"We're doing (fewer) yards at this time than we did last year," said Kopetsky, who will swim the 100 butterfly and 100 backstroke. "I feel pretty good. It's been really beneficial."

IF YOU GO

What: IHSAA state swimming and diving championships

Where: Indiana University Natatorium on IUPUI campus, 901 W. New York St., Indianapolis

Times: Swimming preliminaries, 6 p.m. today; diving prelims and semifinals at 9 a.m. Saturday; consolation and finals at 1 p.m. Saturday

Admission: \$8 per session; \$12 for both days

Local teams and participants
Center Grove

Melody White (200 freestyle, 100 backstroke, 200 medley relay, 400 freestyle relay); Michelle McKeehan (200 individual medley, 100 breaststroke, 200 medley relay, 400 freestyle relay); Katy Todd (100 butter-

fly, 500 freestyle, 200 medley relay, 400 freestyle relay); Shelli Kopetsky (100 backstroke, 100 freestyle, 200 medley relay, 400 freestyle relay); Morgan Davis (200 individual medley, 200 medley relay, 400 freestyle relay); Tien Tran (diving); Kelsey Coffey (100 breaststroke, 200 medley relay); Holly Reed (50 freestyle, 200 medley relay, 400 freestyle relay); Kristen Marley (200 medley relay); Katie Loscar (400 freestyle relay); Ashley Chambers (400 freestyle relay)

Franklin

Greta Hass (100 butterfly), Natalie Grissom (diving); Courtney Watson (diving)

Whiteland

Jami Sears (diving)

Besides the late yardage reduction, the Trojans have also benefited from a hard practice regimen. Junior Melody White said teammates have pushed each other to swim faster by comparing their practices to last year and analyzing how they swam.

She, McKeehan, Todd and Kopetsky also stayed devoted to their commitment to improve and get faster. The four attended all optional summer and pre-season practices.

White, who finished ninth at the state meet last year in the 200 freestyle, said last year's state experience helped, as did her extra work this year.

"Last year, I raced against the top girls and stayed with them and beat fast people. I never thought I was as fast as them," said White, who will swim in the

200 freestyle and 100 backstroke. "It gave me more confidence."

"I think I have a really good chance. My goal times are right up there. I'm feeling really good."

Three of the girls will also swim in the 200-yard medley and 400 freestyle relays.

They didn't need much of a push from their coach to get into top form, either.

"When it's a goal and the kids truly believe in it and want to accomplish it, then they push themselves," Todd said. "By making it a team goal, they push each other also."

"If everything falls the way it should, they have a chance. If we swim better than we did last week-end, then we have a shot at getting into the top five. We've got some room to grow. I hope the rest will help. That's why we did it."

Report: Gretzky taped talking about illegal gambling ring

The Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J.

Wayne Gretzky was recorded on a wiretap talking to the reported financier of a gambling ring, discussing how the hockey great's wife could avoid being implicated, a person with knowledge of the investigation said Thursday.

Gretzky, coach and part-owner of the Phoenix Coyotes, can be heard on wiretaps made within the past month talking about his wife with assistant coach Rick Tocchet, the person said, speaking on the condition of anonymity be-

cause the investigation is ongoing.

Gretzky's wife, actress Janet Jones, allegedly bet at least \$100,000 on football games during the course of the investigation by state authorities, the person said.

There is no evidence that Gretzky placed any bets, according to the person.

"At no time did I ever place a wager on my husband's behalf, period," Jones said in a statement provided by the Coyotes on Thursday night. "Other than the occasional horse race, my husband does not bet on any sports."

Authorities say from Dec. 29 through Feb. 5, the day of the

Super Bowl, bettors placed a total of \$1.7 million in wagers with the ring run by a New Jersey state trooper, Tocchet and a South Jersey man.

All face charges of promoting gambling, money laundering and conspiracy and are scheduled to be arraigned in Superior Court in Mount Holly, N.J., on Feb. 21, the state Attorney General's office said Thursday.

Jones has not been charged.

Elliot Mintz, a spokesman for Jones, said in a statement that she may be called as a witness before a grand jury in New Jersey.

"Janet is merely one of a num-

ber of witnesses, and there is no allegation whatsoever that Janet has violated any law," he said.

Investigators are looking into whether anyone involved in the 5-year-old ring, which authorities say had a connection to organized crime in Philadelphia and southern New Jersey, bet on NHL games. Gretzky is not the main focus of the probe, the person said.

The Star-Ledger of Newark, citing unidentified law enforcement sources, first reported of a wiretap involving Gretzky in Thursday's newspapers. The newspaper also reported that Jones bet \$500,000 during the

investigation, including \$75,000 on the Super Bowl.

Earlier in the week, Gretzky denied any involvement in the ring.

"My love for (Jones) is deeper than anything. The reality is, I'm not involved, I wasn't involved, and I'm not going to be involved."

"Am I concerned for both of them? Sure there's concern from me. I'm more worried about them than me. I'm like you guys; I'm trying to figure it all out," Gretzky said Tuesday.

Gretzky did not attend the Coyotes practice in Phoenix on Thursday. He was not available

until after Thursday night's game against the Dallas Stars in Phoenix, and the team would not comment, said Coyotes spokesman Rich Nairn.

Lawyers involved in the case said details of the investigation should not be made public.

"I have never been involved in a case where the prosecution has engaged in such inappropriate conduct in terms of making investigators available to the press, appearing on nationally syndicated television," said Kevin Marino, a lawyer for Tocchet, who was granted an indefinite leave from the NHL on Wednesday.

OLYMPICS

TURIN, Italy

Witty will be flagbearer for U.S. Olympic team

Olympic gold medal speed-skater Chris Witty will carry the U.S. flag at the opening ceremony of the Turin Games.



WITTY

The 30-year-old Witty won gold while setting a world record in the 1,000 meters at the 2002 Salt Lake City Games. She won silver and bronze medals at the 1998 Nagano Olympics.

"It's an amazing team to be part of, but to lead them into the opening ceremonies, I'm thrilled, and I can't imagine a bigger honor than this," Witty said.

Witty, a native of Waukesha, Wis., also was in the Summer Olympics, competing in track cycling at the 2000 Sydney Games, becoming the ninth U.S. athlete to compete in both the Summer and Winter games. She was an alternate at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

Since the Salt Lake City Olympics, Witty has revealed that she was sexually abused as a child by a neighbor in suburban Milwaukee, a secret she held for 20 years. She has since become an advocate for child-abuse awareness.

TURIN, Italy

Eight skiers suspended after pre-Games test

Eight cross-country skiers competing in the Olympics, including two Americans, were suspended for five days after they were found to have excessive hemoglobin levels, the International Ski Federation announced Thursday.

None of the skiers were considered serious medal contenders, and it was not immediately clear whether any would be kept from competing under the ban. It was not clear when the ban began.

Calls seeking comment from the ski federation were not immediately returned.

This was the first hint of a drug scandal at this year's games, where the IOC has said it plans to conduct about 1,200 drug tests. As of Tuesday, more than 100 IOC drug tests had been conducted.

FOOTBALL

INDIANAPOLIS

NCAA rules committee approves instant replay

Coaches would be allowed to challenge close calls, and officials in the press box could stop games to review plays with instant replay under new NCAA rules that all Division I-A football teams and conferences would use next season.

An NCAA panel decided Thursday that a uniform video review system should be implemented in college football.

The NCAA allowed conferences to experiment with instant replay the past two seasons, allowing it to be used to review game officials' calls on the field. Most con-

ferences used the booth review. Only the Mountain West Conference allowed coaches to challenge plays.

The NCAA Football Rules Committee approved one procedure for all schools and conferences that choose to use replay. The committee's recommendations will be considered by the Playing Rules Oversight Panel for final approval.

Under the procedure, head coaches would request reviews by calling timeout. If the challenge overturned the call on the field, the coach would retain the right to challenge later in the game and would not be charged a timeout.

If the call were upheld, the team would be charged a timeout.

BASKETBALL

NEW YORK

Four Pistons chosen as All-Star game reserves

Detroit was rewarded Thursday night for one of the best starts in NBA history when four Pistons made the All-Star team as reserves.

Chauncey Billups, Richard Hamilton, Ben Wallace and Rasheed Wallace all were picked for the Eastern Conference team that will be led by Detroit coach Flip Saunders. Tayshaun Prince was the lone Pistons starter not chosen in voting by East head coaches.

The Pistons (40-8) became the first team with four players in an

All-Star game since the Los Angeles Lakers sent Shaquille O'Neal, Kobe Bryant, Eddie Jones and Nick Van Exel to the 1998 game in New York.

Joining the Pistons on the East team for the Feb. 19 game will be Toronto's Chris Bosh, Boston's Paul Pierce and Vince Carter of the New Jersey Nets. No Indiana Pacers players made the team.

The Western Conference reserves are guards Ray Allen of Seattle and Tony Parker of San Antonio, and forwards Dirk Nowitzki of Dallas, the Clippers' Elton Brand, Memphis' Pau Gasol, Minnesota's Kevin Garnett and the Suns' Shawn Marion.

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