

Dons take National Catholic Swimming Champion title

The Loyola Blakefield, Towson, Dons traveled to Villanova University on Jan. 27 to test their depth and determination and came home the National Catholic Swimming Champion for the third time in 12 years.

The Dons, also known as the Aqua Dons, blew the competition away, dominating from the first relay to the last event touch by swimming past 24 schools from as far away as Texas, and outscoring second-place Gonzaga by 72.5 points.

The Aqua Dons topped the National Catholic Swimming podium in 1997 and 2005, with runner-up accolades in 1996, 1998, 2000, 2004 and 2007. This year the Dons would not settle for second best. Unlike the Dons' 1997 and 2005 championship teams, this year's team made its run at the title with dominating depth, qualifying 15 swimmers for the finals.

Highlights of the meet included: Loyola Head Coach Keith Schertle named as "Coach of the Meet"; senior Evan Danz finishing first in the 50 freestyle, the fifth straight year a Loyola swimmer has won this event; and Sean Roddy's tie for first in the 100 breast. The Dons were also victorious in the 200 medley relay with an automatic All-American time - the team consisted of juniors Greg Pelton and Sean Roddy, Danz and sophomore Hugh Davison. In addition, the 400 free relay of Pelton, Danz, Davison and freshman Oliver Bennett closed the meet in what seemed to be a first-place finish and automatic All-American time, but they were called for a false start.

The Dons then hosted archrival Calvert Hall College High School, Towson, for Senior Day, and outscored the Cardinals 110-60 to end their dual meet season undefeated. Next up are the MIAA Championships on Feb. 9, where the Dons will seek their 13th consecutive championship title followed by the prestigious Eastern Preps Feb. 23 on the campus of LaSalle University. The Dons last won the Eastern Preps in 1978, making this a highlight achievement for this talented swim team.