

Flu thwarts Dons' buoyant swim season

After a brilliant swim season, the Loyola Blakefield, Towson, Aqua Dons had one more item to scratch off of their 2007-2008 seasonal "to do list." This was the year that the Aqua Dons were going to make their mark Feb. 22-23 at the 108th Eastern Interscholastic Swimming and Diving Competition at LaSalle University, Philadelphia.

Leading up to "The Easterns," the Dons had an easy run through their MIAA A Conference regular-season schedule going undefeated.

In post-season competition, the Dons handily secured their 14th consecutive MIAA A Conference championship title. From there, the Aqua Dons nailed their performances at the National Catholic Championships in January, taking first place there, brought home several All-American times and now looked to this one final competition to make the perfect season come together.

Those who follow swimming know that "The Easterns" is one of the most prestigious and competitive high school meets in the country. It is the largest Prep School aquatic event in the United States for both men's and women's swimming and diving competitions. In fact, more national and prep school swimming records are set during this competition than any other meet in the nation.

Early on, head coach Keith Schertle knew it would be tough going into this competition, but he had a plan, that is until one of his top swimmers, Hugh Davison, came down with the flu. It's certainly no surprise that the flu has been making its way around a number of schools in the area, but it could not have come at a more inopportune time.

According to Schertle, the Dons looked poised to take second place overall, behind Tennessee's Baylor School, but the Dons were prevented from additional scoring when the flu hindered Davison's performance. To his credit, Davison made it to the final round of two individual events and two relays, but his illness severely

hampered his performance.

“Hugh was scheduled to final in both of his individual events and the two relays he was in, but with the flu, he gave it his best shot but was not even close,” said Schertle.

The Dons placed fourth overall (135 points) and despite Davison’s illness, the Dons carried on and certainly finished with a respectable score.

Junior Greg Pelton place fourth in the 100 backstroke and senior Evan Danz placed fifth in the 100 butterfly.

Junior Sean Roddy had a good day taking second place in the 100 breast stroke and fourth in the 200 Individual Medley.

Freshman Oliver Bennett placed second in the 200 Individual Medley and finished seventh in the 100 backstroke to make him the highest scoring freshman in the meet.

“Overall this was not the finish Loyola was looking for but it was still an excellent year,” said Schertle.

The National Dual Meet rankings will be out in early June. With the line-up Loyola had this year, they will be looking to improve on their 21st place national ranking and will hopefully break into the top 15-20.