

Sailors swim past McDonogh's 51 consecutive wins

Talk about a whirlwind week for the Mount de Sales Academy swim team.

To start the week, the Catonsville Sailors faced perennial power McDonogh School on Jan. 23 during their regular IAAM A Conference season and up-ended McDonogh's 51-game winning streak for the win. The team took that momentum right into Jan. 27 and the 73rd-annual National Catholic High School Championships at Villanova University to place a strong second behind Good Counsel, D.C.

The Mount de Sales swim program is relatively young; it began in 1997 when the team's current head coach, Courtney Gahagan, was a sophomore. Now back to coach this year-round swim team, Gahagan is in her fifth season with the team and has patiently watched it grow and blossom into a team that will truly vie for the IAAM Championship title Feb. 3 at University of Maryland, Baltimore County beginning at 9 a.m.

The Sailors knew on paper that beating McDonogh in this regular season meet was possible. They worked the numbers and maneuvered the swimmers into their best events. Even so, the meet was tight, 79-77 going into the final event, the 400 free relay. The Sailors swam their hearts out. When the relay's anchors tapped the timers, the Sailors had scored enough points to lift them to a final score of 89-81 for sweet, total-team victory.

"Our team is deep with 14 seniors, and since they were freshmen, I knew we were going to be strong," said Gahagan. "This is what the seniors have dreamed of - they wanted to make this win happen."

After the Sailors broke the Eagles' 51-game winning streak, they traveled to Villanova University to compete in the National Catholics where they broke more records.

Mattie Riley took first place in the 100 free with a time of 54.35. The 400 free relay team broke a school record with a third-place finish of 3:39.21 swam by Theresa

Gallagher, Erin Shea, Emily Dean and Mattie Riley.

De Sales' 200 free relay also set a school record behind the effort of Jenny Nevin, Hilary Badger, Jenna Moore and Mattie Riley who finished in second place at National Catholics with a time of 1:41.08.