

Swimmers, divers dominate
The boys' and girls' teams are Division II VSIS state champions.
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3/9/11 12:00 am

Finishing their season very strong, the swim teams from Seton School in Manassas recently brought home the state championship.

Seton boys won their third straight (and fourth in six years) Division II state championship and finished sixth overall. Seton swimmers won two silver medals and two bronze medals and had 16 Top Eight finishes in the 24 total events.

The girls' 200 medley relay team — Alex Doonis, Cat Rogers, Bridget Wunderly and Lauren Donohoe — surpassed the state record for the event, but settled for silver under St. Catherine's School, a Division I five-time state champion from Richmond.

In VSIS Swimming, Division I and Division II compete in a single state championship meet and score against each other all together. Then, VSIS Swimming awards the overall state championship to the top scoring team overall and the Division II state championship to the highest scoring Division II team.

Seton set four new team records and had five athletes recognized as All-State. For the third straight year, Seton beat diocesan Division I schools Bishop Ireton, Alexandria, and Paul VI Catholic, Fairfax. All this from a school with 350 students, grades seven-12.

The secret weapon for the Seton team is coach Jim Koehr. Like many coaches at Seton, Koehr is a volunteer parent, but he is also a partner in several businesses, father to 12 children (all swimmers) and a math teacher at the school. Koehr has attracted 76 students to the team, the largest at Seton and nearly one-quarter of the student body. "This was my ninth year coaching the team, and with a 4-year-old in the house, I think I'll have at least another 14 years of doing this," he said.

If Koehr is an overachiever, he certainly has inspired many swimmers to follow his example.

Not to be outdone by the swimmers, Seton divers scored more points than the swimmers in an individual event. Freshman Joe Duran's silver medal combined with senior Joey Rubin's eighth place and freshman Michael Manley's 12th place for a total of 33 points in the boys' one-meter diving.

Coach Maureen Duran, who started the dive team just three years ago, is amazed at the progress of the group, especially since the school has no pool, no professional coaches and no year-round program.

"Seton's diving team just keeps getting stronger," Duran said. "Last year we earned our swim team 5 points. This year we earned 39."

Seton had started racking up the trophies beginning with the VSIS Division II Invitational Meet three weeks ago. The meet was held at the Freedom Center in Manassas, where Seton dominated nearly every event.

The following week the team traveled to Fredericksburg, where they again dominated the conference championship. They won 27 of the possible 48 individual medals and 15 of the 22 gold medals. They also had 17 All-Conference swimmers who earned at least a bronze medal.

The team then headed to Christiansburg, where they defended their title at the brand new Christiansburg Aquatic Center, with more than 25 lanes and a video board on which finals were streamed live.

Friday morning, the first day of the championship, Seton produced stellar performances in nearly every event.

Friday night Seton lit the stage up even more when the girls' 200 medley relay team started off the night by breaking a state record. Although they got silver, both first and second places broke the old state record.

Each top qualifier from the morning gets to pick a favorite song that will be played before the event. The top eight swimmers process out of a black tunnel with two 850-watt fog machines

and lasers flashing. Koehr started this tradition last year while hosting states at home, and since it was such a big hit, he decided to reconstruct it again this year — only better. Friday night came to a close with Seton on top and ready for day two.

Saturday brought more excitement and more victories. One tradition at states is the senior walk. All the seniors dress up in different costumes and parade around the pool. Seton seniors wore their state shirts and super-Seton capes in the march.

“I feel like I am getting out of my seat every minute to cheer because it seems like Seton is in every event,” said senior Jonathan Rosato.

Seton swimmers continued their tremendous efforts and pulled ahead even farther. In the end the girls won states by 27 points and the boys by 28 points. Seton girls also received the sportsmanship award.

Although Seton will lose 11 seniors this year, the seventh-graders gave some promising hope to the team. Seven new seventh-grade girls swam a relay that beat most high schools' B relays.