

1989 State Meet...

Blair, Root among Ohio's best divers

Ross pair set
for state meet

By BOB MARKER
Staff writer

Bob Lozano comes right to the point.

"This is the best diving team in the history of the school," Lozano says.

Glowing words easily backed up.

B.J. Blair and Chad Root have had to create their own competition this season while continually giving the Fremont Ross High School swim team 1-2 finishes.

Blair and Root were 1-2 last weekend in the Northwest Ohio District meet — a repeat of 1988 — and finished the same way in the Buckeye Central Conference meet, also a repeat of 1988.

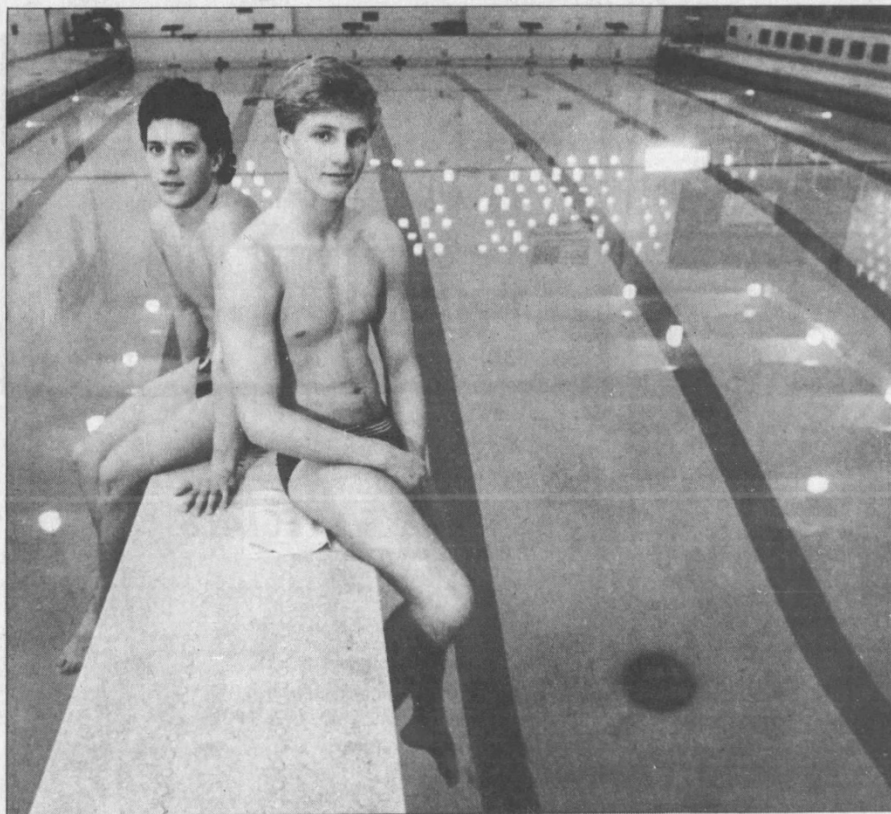
With them diving, it's points on the board for Ross.

This weekend, Lozano hopes it will be no different as Blair, a junior, and Root, a senior, compete for the second successive year at the state meet in Branin Natatorium at McKinley High School in Canton.

A year ago, Blair, making his second appearance in the state high school swimming and diving showcase, was fifth and Root 16th.

This year, Lozano feels Blair

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News-Messenger/Terry Reimer

ROSS DIVERS Chad Root, left, and B.J. Blair will be competing at the state meet this weekend.

Blair will make his third appearance in the state meet and Root his second.

Divers

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can finish third and Root as high as fourth.

The two main reasons the two may have to settle for other than first and second are Cincinnati divers Dean Penaro and Andy Kendricks.

Penaro, of Sycamore High School, is the world one-meter diving champ and Kendricks of St. Xavier was the nation one-meter runner-up.

Blair and Root began diving early — Blair in the seventh grade in the backyard pool, and Root in the eighth grade — but the sport did not reach a serious scale until high school.

Blair made the bigger stride earlier, qualifying for the state meet as a freshman and finishing 17th. Root's first state exposure was last year.

"I was 12th after the preliminaries," Root said, "but then, I think, the pressure got to me.

"I know what I have to do this year," Root said. "My goal is to finish eighth or better."

"Most people get nervous," Blair said, "and have trouble diving under pressure, but I feel I am a better diver under pressure."

Blair felt that pressure Saturday in the district meet and responded.

After winning the district title with more than 500 points last year, he managed 498 Saturday.

"I had harder dives than last year, too," he said, "but last year, we had a lot of high scores and I think they decided to score us a little tougher this year ... they tightened up (the scoring)."

Even with that, the only competition for the Ross divers was between themselves.

"We make each other better divers," Root said. "We both try to beat each other, but we both help each other.

"Yes," Blair agreed, "we have had to create the competition (in meets) between us this season."

Being number two has not rubbed Root the wrong way.

"I pretty much take it as how it is," Root said. "If he starts to fall down, I am there to give him a push and he is there for me. What he does for me is make me try harder."

Root was there for Blair last spring, not to give Blair a push but instead, a boost out of the pool when he was unconscious.

Blair and Root were diving at Cooper Natatorium on the Bowling Green State University campus when Blair, attempting a reverse 2½-somersault off the 3-meter board, struck his head on the board.

"We called the life guards," Root recalls, "but since I was above him, I jumped in. He was unconscious when we pulled him out."

Cool reaction to a pressurized situation; much like the duo will face this weekend but hopefully without the same dramas.

Blair is looking forward to it.

"I'm getting pumped for it,"

Blair said. "I feel good."

And Root is confident.

"I can take the pressure better now," he said.

The preliminaries in the 11-dive competition begin at 3:45 p.m. Friday and the finals are 3:15 p.m. Saturday.

Blair, Root qualify for state diving semifinals

News-Messenger reports

CANTON — B.J. Blair and Chad Root of Fremont Ross are in the thick of the state diving competition.

Blair rested in fourth place and Root in sixth after Friday's preliminaries at C.T. Branin Natatorium at Canton McKinley High School.

After five dives, Blair has compiled 197.50 points and Root 181.40. Dean Panaro of Cincinnati Sycamore leads the compe-

tition with 249.80.

Rob Svets of Cleveland St. Ignatius was second with 219.25 and Andy Kendrick of Cincinnati St. Xavier third with 200.15. Matt Borman of Cincinnati Noeller was fifth with 185.85.

The field was cut from 24 to 16 for today's semifinals, which begin at 3:15 p.m. The top 12 divers after the semifinals will dive three more times in the finals.

"The scoring isn't as high as

we thought it would be, but our divers are doing real well," Ross Coach Bob Lozano said. "They're popping the dives and are right in the thick of things."

The boys' diving trials were interrupted for about 30 minutes by three power surges that cut the lights at the natatorium late in the afternoon.

Meet officials said work on a nearby utility pole caused the problem, which was resolved before the evening swimming finals.

Ross's Blair, Root place at state diving competition

News-Messenger reports

CANTON — Both members of the Fremont Ross diving team stood on the awards block Saturday.

B.J. Blair and Chad Root finished third and sixth, respectively, in the state diving competition at C.T. Branin Natatorium at Canton McKinley High School.

Blair, who was in fourth place after the semifinals, finished with 425.70 points. Root, who was in seventh place before his final three dives, finished with 376.30.

Blair, a junior, nailed an inward 2½ gainer on his final dive to overtake Andy Kendricks of Cincinnati St. Xavier.

"To him, it was like winning the state championship," Ross diving coach Bob Lozano said.

Root, a senior who missed the cut (final 12 divers) last year, was consistent throughout the finals, Lozano said.

"He lost (sixth place) but got it back," Lozano said.

Dean Panaro of Cincinnati Sycamore and Rob Svets of Cleveland St. Ignatius, who led the competition after Friday's preliminaries, finished 1-2 in the final standings with 509.10 and 443.50, respectively.

"We knew B.J. could finish in the top three," Ross swim coach Neal Wensinger said. "Chad really came on strong."