

Blair seeks state diving crown

Competes in fourth state meet

By BOB MARKER
Staff writer

What's in a name?

Dean Panero of Cincinnati Sycamore had the name the past two seasons after winning the last two Ohio High School state diving titles to go along with a pair of national one-meter diving crowns.

This weekend, B.J. Blair hopes he has the name.

Blair, the first Fremont Ross High School athlete to qualify for four state meets, is aiming at the Ohio High School diving title.

He has the credentials to back up his quest. As a freshman, Blair was 17th; his sophomore year produced a fifth-place finish, and last year, he was third. This season, he has the highest six-dive total in the state — 338.80, six points better than Matt Boreman of Cincinnati Moeller. Boerman was fifth last year.

This time around, Panero is gone but Blair's chief rival for the title, Andy Kendrick of Cincinnati St. Xavier is back. Blair nailed an inward 2½ gainer on his final dive of last year's meet to edge Kendrick for third.

"I only beat him by two points," Blair said while relaxing between classes Tuesday at Ross High School.

While Kendrick looms on the horizon, Blair has other problems he is battling.

"It's my health," he said. "I had the flu that is going around but I am starting to feel better."

"Besides that, I have been working on my 11th optional dive which would be a twister group."

Blair said he is feeling the

pressure of being the favorite. Whether he wins the title could come down to that 11th dive that he and Ross diving coach Bob Lozano are trying to perfect.

"We are trying to decide which way to go; do we want to gamble and go with the higher D.D. (degree of difficulty) or be safe," Blair said, "but as of now, I think we are going to gamble because we only have one shot and we have to make it work."

Blair said he has increased his degree of difficulty over last year.

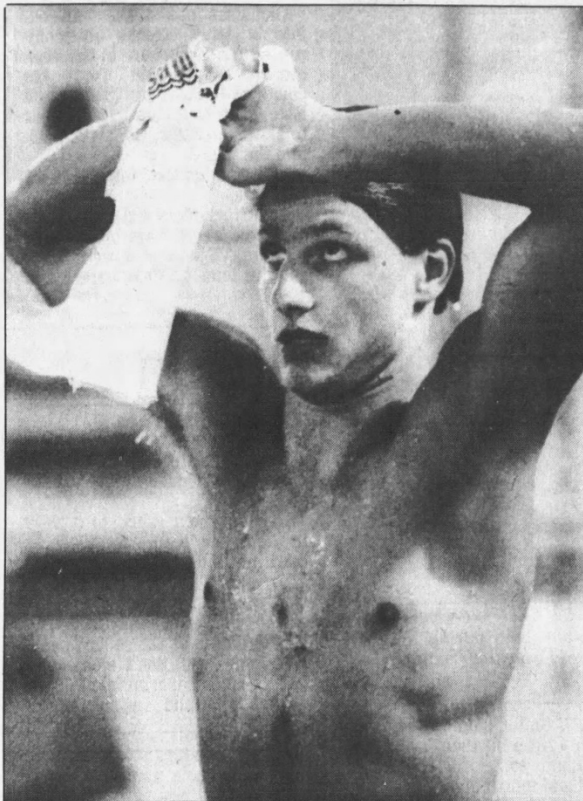
"I've jumped up," he explained. "Last year, I had twist-ers that were 2.6 and I used an inward one-and-half pike which was 2.4 and this year I think we are going to go with the straight 3.0 list and one twister that is 2.9."

The 3.0 list includes backs, inwards, reverse and one of the twisting groups that would make four 3.0 groups which is the highest D.D. that you could have, Blair said.

"It is more difficult," Blair admitted, "but a lot of the judges at the state are not like the judges around here in our district where they see the three-oh dive and they are like, 'Wow! let's score high,' where down at the state, they see more of them and know what to look for."

Blair said his diving list is a compilation of those he and his coach have seen in his years at the state meet, duplicating that which Panero used in 1989.

"We want to throw the same list at them (judges) that he threw last year," Blair said. "It worked for him, we'll see



News-Messenger/Scott Lightfoot

B.J. BLAIR of Fremont Ross in between dives at the sectional meet in Oak Harbor two weeks ago.

what it does for me."

Panero had 512 points to Blair's 473 in last year's state showdown.

"I thought I dove excellently," Blair said about last year's meet, "but being around Dean, all the judges were like, 'Dean Panero national cham-

pion,' he's got the name. So obviously they are going to score him a little more by his name."

Is B.J. Blair the name this year?

"I think so," he said. "It's got there. It took four years but let's see if it works."

Blair second in state meet

News-Messenger reports

CANTON — B.J. Blair of Fremont Ross was second after the first five dives in the state high school diving at C.T. Branin Pool.

Blair trails Matt Borman of Cincinnati Moeller 213.55-212.70. Third is Andy Kendrick of Cincinnati St. Xavier with 210.60.

The final six dives are slated to begin at 3:15 p.m. today.

"B.J. has done his hardest dives," Ross diving coach Bob Lozano said, "and is saving his best dives for tomorrow (today)."

In swimming events, Lakota sophomore Fathom Houtz finished 16th in the 50-meter free-style in 25.13 seconds.

Ross diver credits parents for state title

By BOB MARKER
Staff writer

CANTON — B.J. Blair of Fremont Ross won the Ohio High School diving title Saturday, the first state title for the school since the 1973 golf team won the Class A (big school) crown.

Blair had 496.10 points on 11 dives over two days at the C.T. Branin Natatorium.

In three previous state meets, Blair had finished 17th as a freshman, fifth as sophomore and third in 1989.

Ironically, Blair has honed his diving skills without a place to practice in Fremont. He practices during the season at Port Clinton High School and in Columbus.

Blair is the son of Sandy and Dan Blair, 1516 River Drive, Fremont.

"We bought a new car in October last year," Dan Blair said. "We have 38,000 miles on it now and it's been mostly between Columbus and Fremont. It has been a lot of hard work for him and for us, too."

"Many times, his mom would come home," Dan Blair said. "B.J. would be tired from studying and she would be tired from work, but she would hop in the car and drive him to Columbus."

"This championship is a dream come true."

"I owe so much to them," the

STATE CHAMP: A lot of practice, and some pain, were part of B.J. Blair's road to a state championship. **Details, B-1.**

state champ said about his parents, "that's what got me here — what they have done for me."

Ross swim coach Neal Wensinger was wearing a broad smile.

"This is a great day for Fremont, B.J., his parents and especially for Bob Lozano and Gil Root (diving coaches)," Wensinger said. "They have put in hours and hours of time working with this young man since the seventh grade."

"It's just a great day for Fremont."

Sandy Blair watched her son from nearly the same seat she has been in for all four trips he has made to the state meet. She was dressed in purple and white, the Ross colors.

"Yeah, and these are my lucky purple shoes," she said, "and these are my praying hands."

She spent much of the time moments before her son was to dive with her head buried in those hands.

"All I could do was pray," she said.

Moments after receiving his state championship plaque, B.J.



News-Messenger/Terry Reimer

FREMONT ROSS senior B.J. Blair hugs his mother, Sandy, after capturing the state diving title Saturday.

Blair presented his mother with two yellow roses. It was his way of thanking her.

"She gave me flowers here last year," he recalled, "and I had to return them."