

2002 State Meet...

Ross girls giddy over trip to state

Canton trip planned to the minute

News-Messenger reports

0600 hrs. ... Wake-Up Call.

0615 hrs. ... Mess.

0700 hrs. ... Departure.

0730 hrs. ... Commence warm-up drills.

0930 hrs. ... Commence competition.

"Up at 6. Breakfast at 6:15 in a restaurant? Fifteen minutes to get ready. You're kidding, right?" asked smirking sophomore Jaymelee Glaspy as she listened to Fremont Ross swimming coach Phil Moran run down the girls' itinerary for this weekend's Ohio State Swimming Championships in Canton.

"A nap back at the hotel at 2:30? I haven't taken a nap since I was 4," laughed Sarah Berger.

Tuesday was a night for logistics.

Parents and swimmers huddled in the O'Connor family room figuring out provisions, transportation, reservations and room assignments and the acquiring and distribution of necessary identification.

There was even mention of a secret weapon, something called "Bucci Juice," a concoction formulated by Fremont Athletic Director Art Bucci back during his days as swim coach.

Swimmers use it during rubdowns before a meet.

"He mixes up a new batch every year before sectionals," senior tri-captain Morgan O'Connor said. "No one knows what's in it, but it's warm — well, actually hot — and relaxes your muscles so you can swim faster. But it smells bad."

Said Moran, "Last year, Brittany (O'Connor) was the only swimmer to make states, so it was easy. With five girls going this year, it takes a lot more planning."

While the coaches and parents were busy with the logistics, Little Giant swimmers Brittany and Morgan O'Connor, Sarah Berger, Jaymelee Glaspy and alternate



News-Messenger/Ben French

FREMONT ROSS swimmers, front row from left, Morgan O'Connor, Sarah Berger; second row from left, Sam Glaspy, Brittany O'Connor and Jaymelee Glaspy get together during practice Tuesday at Fremont Middle School. The Little Giants will compete at the state meet this weekend.

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Little Giants leave Thursday for state

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Sam Glaspy snuck into another room to talk about the meet, and the season.

"I only ever like being first. School, swimming, everything. That's just me," said Berger, a senior. "It's a lot of hard work, and you have to keep it all in perspective."

"In my mind," Morgan O'Connor said, "even if you're slow, swimming's fun. Improvement is everything. I watch some of the new freshmen, and it pushes me to do better, just to see how hard they've worked and how far they've come. We had freshman drop 20 and 30 seconds in their 500-yard freestyles at sectionals and districts. They could barely swim 500s at the start of the season."

Speaking of sectionals and districts, the 200 and 400 freestyle relays, both of which will be swimming at state, underwent a lineup change, with sophomore Jaymelee Glaspy moving to the anchor leg.

"We didn't want her to freak out at sectionals, so we told her all the good teams lead with their best, and work their way back," Brittany O'Connor said.

"So I get up on the block and look over and there stands Katy Carol from Notre Dame, who does a 51-second 100 free, and has never lost a relay race in seven years," Jaymelee Glaspy howled.

Is Glaspy nervous about this weekend?

"Most of the girls at states are Katy Carols. Yes, I'm nervous," she said.

Brittany O'Connor, the veteran, had some sage advice for the other four.

"Go to the bathroom before you get there," she laughed. "Really. In Division I, 24 girls swim an event. Then 24 girls from Division II swim the same event. That's 48 girls per event. There are 12 events. You do the math."

Said Sam Glaspy, "Being a Division I school makes it tough. The top schools are all Division I. If we were Division II, there would be 8 or 10 girls going from our team, at least."

"And it just keeps getting tougher," Brittany O'Connor said. "Last year, the slowest time in my 50 free was a 25.19. This year, it's a 24.97. I know that doesn't sound like a lot, but in the 50 free, 10 girls will finish somewhere between that 24.97 and 25.19. That's how close it gets."

Last year Brittany went in ranked 23rd in the 50 freestyle and 100 backstroke. This year, she's seeded eighth in the freestyle and 11th in the backstroke.

Morgan, who finished third at districts in the 200 freestyle, is seeded 21st at state. The 200 freestyle relay finished third last week; this week, they're seeded 21st. Fremont's second-place 400 freestyle district relay team is seeded 19th on Saturday.

"Most people don't realize how competitive Ohio swimming is when ranked against the other states," Berger said. "Every year, Ohio is ranked in the top five in high school times. Last year, we were Non. 2. Kids from this state own a bunch of national records

State slate

Following are the times and dates for Fremont Ross swimmers at the state meet on Friday and Saturday at Branin Natatorium in Canton:

Friday

9:30 a.m. — Preliminaries for 200 freestyle (Morgan O'Connor) and 50 freestyle (Brittany O'Connor).

6 p.m. — Finals for 200 freestyle and 50 freestyle.

Saturday

9 a.m. — Preliminaries for 200 freestyle relay (Morgan O'Connor, Sarah Berger, Jaymelee Glaspy, Brittany O'Connor), 100 backstroke (Brittany O'Connor) and 400 freestyle relay (Brittany O'Connor, Morgan O'Connor, Berger, Glaspy).

6 p.m. — Finals for 200 freestyle relay, 100 backstroke, 400 freestyle relay.

and go on to swim on some of the best college teams out there: Florida State, Texas, Molly O'Connor's at the University of Kansas."

Being competitive means staying focused. Before every relay event, the girls follow the same routine.

"We gather around coach on the pool deck for last minute instructions," they said. "Then we form a single-file line, in the order we're swimming, perfectly straight, and walk to the starting block. We stand in a perfectly straight line behind the block. If a timer or official gets in our way, we just shift the line a bit, but keep it straight. No one talks."

It takes that kind of dedication and determination to get to state.

It also takes a coach like Moran, the girls said.

"He gets on the swimmers for everything: what we eat, how much sleep we get, our grades. He's like having a third parent," Sam Glaspy said. "He's at the pool at 5:15 in the morning and probably doesn't get home until after 8 at night. That's dedication."

Said Morgan O'Connor, "Some people think there's too much emphasis on sports," Morgan O'Connor said. "But sports keep kids out of trouble. We're not vegging on the couch in front of the TV. And with swimming, our whole families are involved. Our parents are like road managers. We don't have trainers, so we take care of us, feed us, keep us going. If you want your kid to get good grades and you want to be involved in what they do, get them into swimming."

Finally, the girls would like to apologize, and say thank you to all their family and friends, for putting up with them these last few weeks.

"I'm not the nicest person toward the end of the season," Brittany O'Connor said.

"And last week before districts," Berger said, "let's just say I may have a few headless friends out there."

But they're all smiling now.

They made state.

According to Coach Moran's minute-by minute itinerary, the fun starts at exactly 09:30 hrs. on Friday.

O'Connor swims 12th at state meet

CANTON — Fremont Ross swimmer Brittany O'Connor has made a marked improvement in her placing at the Division I state meet.

O'Connor, a junior who came in last in both of her events at state last season, finished 12th in the 50-yard freestyle during the first day of swimming competition Friday at Branin Natatorium.

O'Connor swam a time of 24.79 seconds in the consolation finals to place 12th in the 24-swimmer event.

In the preliminaries Friday morning, O'Connor turned in a time of 24.58, good for the ninth-best qualifying spot. She missed qualifying for the eight-girls championship finals by two-hundredths of a second. Findlay's Lindsay Zirkle took the final spot in the finals with a 24.56 and finished sixth overall.

Brittany's sister, senior Morgan O'Connor, finished 24th in the 200 freestyle during her first trip to state. Morgan O'Connor recorded a time of 2:00.07.

Two Ross relay teams and Brittany O'Connor will compete today. The 200 and 400 freestyle relay teams — both made up of Morgan O'Connor, Sarah Berger, Jaymelee Glaspy and Brittany O'Connor — will swim as will Brittany O'Connor in the 100 backstroke.

Preliminaries begin at 9 a.m. today. Finals are at 6 p.m.

O'Connor moves on up

Ross junior improves drastically in second trip to state

News-Messenger reports

CANTON — How close to a state medal was Brittany O'Connor?

"A lot closer than last year," Fremont Ross swim coach Phil Moran said. "(She missed) by two-hundredths of a second in her 50-yard freestyle and eight-hundredths of a second in the 100 backstroke."

In both events, O'Connor finished ninth in morning preliminaries of the Division I state meet at Branin Natatorium.

The top eight swimmers move into the medal round,



B. O'CONNOR

and the next eight swim consolations.

At the state meet, a swimmer in the top eight places is guaranteed no lower than eighth place, even if a swimmer in the consolation heat beats her time.

"Last year, she finished 24th in both events," Moran said, "and this year she finished 12th in both. That's pretty good considering that

this was the fastest girls state meet in history.

"If her percentages hold true for next year, she'll be top five or better."

O'Connor scored 17 teams points, and earned a spot in the All-Ohio ranks.

The Fremont Ross girls finished 27th overall out of about 70 teams.

Senior Morgan O'Connor finished 24th in the 200 freestyle.

"When Molly O'Connor swam the first time at state, she finished 24th. Last year, Brittany O'Connor finished 24th," Moran said. "If you're

an O'Connor, you start out in 24th. Morgan worked hard all season just to make states, and she did. She has a work ethic that just doesn't quit, and this was a tough meet."

How tough was it? Five state records and a national record fell in the girls Division I bracket alone. Some of the marks dated back more than 20 years.

"Records went down all over the place, and not just by a little," Morgan O'Connor said. "The Upper Arlington girls smashed the national

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