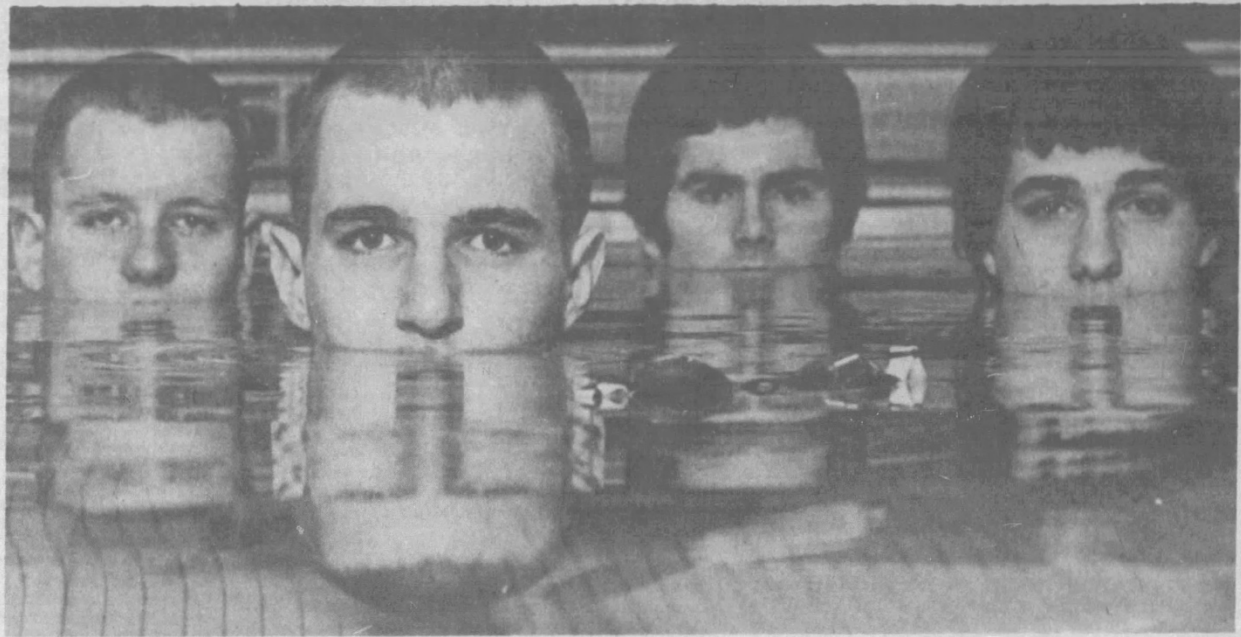


1976 District meet...



Ross district hopes

From the depths of the Fremont Junior High School natatorium pool come some of the hopes of the Fremont Ross swim team in district competition today and Saturday at Ayersville High School. Left to right (above) are Hal Hawk, Brett McKittrick, Kevin Casey, and Terry Nitschke, members of Ross's medley relay team. The team has the fourth best time for that event in Northwestern Ohio, a 1:45.6 and have

the best shot at qualifying for the state meet on March 5-6. Diving was slated to begin today at noon at Ayersville with Ross's Scott Heschel and Carol Gottron taking part. Saturday, swimming will begin at noon for the 31 competing teams in races against the clock. The top two teams plus the 11 best "at-large" teams from around the state will qualify for the state meet. (News-Messenger photo by Bruce Crippen)

Bucci is coach of the year

Ross is third in district

AYERSVILLE—Ross qualified the medley relay team and Coach Art Bucci was named as Northwestern Ohio's "swim coach of the year" following the Northwestern Ohio District swim meet here Saturday.

The Little Giants finished third behind annually strong pool power St. Francis and Buckeye Conference king, Sandusky. The Knights racked up 345 points to the Blue Streaks' 131 and Ross's 118.

Hal Hawk, Kevin Casey, Terry Nitschke, and Brett McKittrick splashed to a 1:44.559 to finish third behind St. Francis and Napoleon in the medley. The top two teams in the race automatically gained a spot in the state meet at Canton next weekend while Ross had to wait until 8 p.m. Sunday night to find out if its team had qualified.

The top two finishers in Ohio's six districts plus the 11 fastest on an at-large basis made the state show. Ross ended up 16th fastest in the state with its new school record time.

Ross's old school mark had been set by the same four-some earlier in the season with a 1:46.6.

On Friday night, Ross diver Scott Heschel finished fourth and qualified for the state meet in that event.

Bucci, in his first year at the Ross helm, was a little flab-

bergasted at the high finish of his team. "I did not expect it," he admitted. "I had expected to realistically finish fifth or sixth."

The Ross leader was also totally surprised with the coach of the year honor given to the coach who has accomplished with most with his team.

"Usually, you would expect one of the top team coaches would win it," he said, "and when I got it, it really surprised me."

Bucci had a squad of only 12 at the start of the season and at times was swimming with only 10.

Bucci proudly pointed to the effort put in by his team which peaked at the right moment for the district under his guidance.

"We had other kids who did not get points for us, perform with their best times of the year. Really, every one had better times than all season in the meet."

Besides the third place medley, Nitschke finished third in the breaststroke with a 1:05.996 and McKittrick was fourth in the 100-yard freestyle with a 51.434 effort.

Other swimmers who picked up points for Ross included McKittrick with a sixth in the 50-yard freestyle (23.6) and Hawk in the 200-yard individual medley with a 2:11.8. Brian Koenig was eighth in the IM with a 2:13.8.

Nitschke also racked up a

seventh in the butterfly in 57.7 and Hawk was seventh in the backstroke in 59.9. Koenig was ninth in the backstroke with a 1:01.4.

Casey finished sixth in the breaststroke in 1:06.5 and Tom Messina was eleventh in the same race in 1:08.1.

Bucci named his diver, Heschel, as the team's "swimmer of the week."

TEAM STANDINGS

St. Francis	345
Sandusky	131
Fremont Ross	118
Findlay	102
Napoleon	95
Lima Shawnee	89
Malabar	78
Perkins	66
Lima Senior	53
Col. Crawford	40
Ashland	29
Port Clinton	22
Ontario	21
Margaretta	10
Harding	10
Ayersville	2

Events Ross placed in top four

200-yard medley relay: 1-St. Francis (Marc Schlatter, Bill Bruecken, Doug Conrad, Tim Smale) 1:42.711; 2-Napoleon 1:44.535; 3-Fremont Ross (Hal Hawk, Kevin Casey, Terry Nitschke, Brett McKittrick) 1:44.559; 4-Sandusky 1:45.580
100-yard freestyle: 1-Doug Schwabb, Napoleon, 50.337; 2-Jack Waldo, Sandusky, 50.989; 3-Bob Ward, St. Francis, 51.364; 4-Brett McKittrick, Fremont Ross, 51.434
100-yard breaststroke: 1-Marc Schlatter, St. Francis, 59.487; 2-Tim Heck, St. Francis, 1:04.273; 3-Terry Nitschke, Fremont Ross, 1:05.996; 4-Chip Palazzo, Sandusky 1:06.162



ART BUCCI

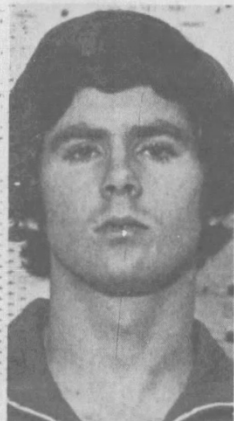
Redmen bounce Malabar

ASHLAND—The Bellevue Redmen easily defeated Mansfield Malabar 68-49 here Saturday night to advance to the championship game of the Class AAA sectional basketball tournament.

Bellevue jumped out in front 17-10 at the end of the first quarter and extended the lead to 35-22 at halftime. The Redmen were never seriously threatened by the Falcons.

Good shooting and a balanced attack were the keys for the high scoring Redmen. Ed Nasonti led Bellevue scoring with 17 points and was among four to score in double figures. Pat Smith added 15, and Kent Eisenhauser and Chris Manos scored 14. Bellevue hit on 29 of 51 from the field for 56 per cent, compared to only 22 of 58 for 38 per cent for Malabar.

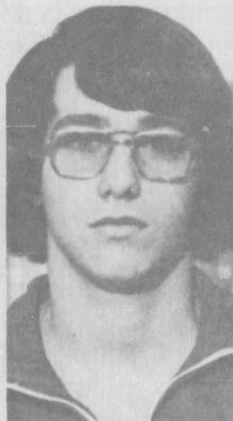
Bellevue will tangle with Northern Ohio League rival Galion Friday night for the right to advance to the Class AAA district tourney at Bowling Green State University. Bellevue



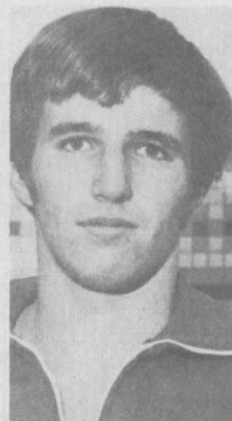
KEVIN CASEY



HAL HAWK



TERRY NITSCHKE



BRETT MCKITTRICK