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Kennedy swimming: Together everyone accomplishing more

KJ Pilcher

CEDAR RAPIDS – A team concept can lead to success, and Cedar Rapids Kennedy's girls swim team has relied on it.

The close-knit Cougars look to extend their regular-season success into the championship season, competing in the finals of the Mississippi Valley Conference Championships on Saturday at Cedar Rapids Jefferson, beginning at noon. The diving competition is tonight at 6 p.m.

Kennedy Coach John Ross has highlighted the team's camaraderie when discussing its strength to others.

"The girls are good friends. They're all getting along. It's been a lot of fun this year," Ross said. "Just like last year, we had a lot of success in our meets. A lot of that deals with them being unified in their goals, both team and individual goals, and it's really made a big difference the last couple years."

With just three seniors, Kennedy leans on a core group of swimmers from each class to lead the way. Ross praised seniors Lexi Scharmer, who is ninth in the state for the 100 butterfly with a time of 1:00.97, Jordan Muir and Kelsi Carney for their efforts in reinforcing the program's tight bond.

"They have been here all four years," Ross said. "They have had the privilege of having quality young ladies come before them to set good examples. The idea is we always want to carry on a tradition, if not improve on that tradition."

Ross said the Cougars are young, and powered by a deep and balanced roster, demonstrated by nine swimmers who joined the team's "sub club" by breaking the one-minute mark in the 100 free. The Cougars relay performance also supports the claim. The Cougars have the seventh-best recorded time in both the 200 free relay (1:43.68) and 200 medley relay (1:55.27) and the ninth-fastest 400 free relay time of 3:47.57.

Kennedy, 10th in the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union Power Rankings, earned an 8-2 dual record with the losses to No. 2 Cedar Falls and No. 4 Iowa City West. The Cougars are attempting to win its first overall MVC title since 2007, which snapped Cedar Falls' long streak of championships. The task will be tough considering the field includes Cedar Falls, West and seventh-rated Linn-Mar.

"They are very talented and deep teams," Ross said of Cedar Falls and West. "Linn-Mar is a very talented team, too."

The competition doesn't attract as much of the Cougars' attention as the stopwatch. A strong showing will come from racing the clock.

“We’re looking forward to this weekend,” said Ross, expecting an electric atmosphere. “What we try to do is stay focused on the small details. We can’t control anything else that other people do.

“They focus on the things they can control and everything else they leave up to whatever happens.”

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