

By Randy Whalen

Coming off its first sectional championship in over two decades and having a new coach, it would have been easy for the Lockport Township boys swimming team to have a letdown this season.

Instead, the Porters had a great campaign. They narrowly missed winning another sectional title and qualified for state in four events.

Leading the way at state was Andy Giorgetti. The sophomore diver placed 12th in the Illinois High School Association State Finals which were held on Friday and Saturday, February 23-24 at the FMC Natatorium in Westmont.

His medalist finish was the highest one for a Lockport diver since Wrigley Fields in 2019. It was the seventh time that a Porter diver has medaled in state history. Connor Howard did it twice, with a 12th-place finish in 2010 and a 10th-place one in 2011.

With two years left in high school, Giorgetti has an opportunity to become the second Lockport multi-medalist in diving. But he was happy with his 430.55 score and 12th-place finish at this season's state finals.

"I'm extremely proud of my 12th place finish at state this year," Giorgetti said. "Last year at state (he placed 33rd with a score of 181.95) was a learning experience and helped me to set goals for this year. It made all the extra time with my high school coach, Coach (Kristopher) Norton, and my off-season practices with my club team, Windy City, pay off. I made the full-time switch from gymnastics to diving four years ago after doing a few lessons in the summer."

Giorgetti wasn't the only Porter diver at state either. Fellow sophomore Logan Fields also made it. Fields, the younger brother of Wrigley Fields, finished 39th out of the 48 divers in the preliminary round with a score of 170.10. Giorgetti made it out of the preliminary round with a mark of 203.45, placing 18th. The Top 20 make it out of the prelims.

"One of the highlights of the state competition was diving with a lot of my club teammates and high school teammate, Logan Fields," Giorgetti said. "Logan and I are both competitive, so we push each other hard all season long. We're not afraid to give each other corrections and we push each other to be the best we can."

Although Fields wasn't diving alongside his teammate, he still helped push Giorgetti past another cut and into the round of 16. He eventually finished 12th.

"Andy Giorgetti had a phenomenal postseason," Lockport boys swimming coach Nick Surman said. "Making it past two different cuts and ending 12th overall was an impressive feat for a sophomore. It was also incredibly beneficial to have Logan Fields there for the first time diving - so he got some exposure to that meet."

Surman got exposure to being the head coach this season. A 2006 Lockport graduate, Surman swam for the Porters. Now he gets to coach them after taking over for Jason Ozbolt.

It helps to have someone like Shane Gabel on your team. The junior made it to state in three events and he's qualified for the finals in at least one event for the past three seasons.

This year at state, he placed 44th (22.09 seconds) in the 50-yard freestyle and 43rd in the 100-yard freestyle (47.97 seconds).

"It was exciting to see Shane make it to state in his two individual races," Surman said. "He was a third-time state attendee so he knew what to expect going into such a big meet. I look forward to next year when we will be looking to place in the Top 16 overall."

Gabel was also in the 200-yard freestyle relay, which placed 30th in the prelims in a time of 1:30.22. The relay members were senior Jacob Baltiewicz, Gabel, sophomore Ian Allen, and junior Zachary Piechocinski.

"I was excited to send two freshmen (Benas Stonys and Adrian Ogradny) and two sophomores to state, giving them some exposure to such a huge meet," Surman said. "One of the freshmen looked at me during the state meet with his mouth wide open, stunned at the speed and intensity that the meet had. We talked about how the state meet for high school was very different from a meet for age group."

After capturing their first sectional title in 22 years last February, the Porters almost pulled off another one. But they fell just a little short on Saturday, February 17 at the Sandburg Sectional.

There the host Eagles won with 299 points. It was their 21st sectional title since 1992. Lockport (269) was second. Andrew (220), Stagg (189), Richards (117), Shepard (107), Brooks (57), Eisenhower (35), Agricultural Science (24), Washington (20), and Julian (20) rounded out the field.

At the sectional, Gabel won the 50 free (21.71 seconds) and 100 free (48.12 seconds). The 200-yard freestyle relay team of Stonys, Piechocinski, Ogradny, and Gabel won with a time of 1:30.78.

"Sectionals were good, we saw some pretty impressive swims," Surman said. "I was incredibly impressed by freshman Adrian Ogrodny, who went a 1:03.44 (finishing second) in his breaststroke. He dropped a pretty big chunk of time.

"I was happy to see the relays be competitive and it was great having the 200 free relay win. We had a pretty successful season, especially with how young the team is. We graduated three seniors, of which only one (Baltiewicz) swam sectionals."

Quinn Stanislawski and Adrian Zamudio were also seniors for the Porters.

At the sectional, Giorgetti (453.70) placed third, and Fields (430.30) was fourth in the diving. Junior Logan De la Vega from Andrew, won the sectional diving with a score of 484.00. Andrew diving coach Angie Arnold, a former diver and coach at Lockport was named the Sectional Diving Coach of the Year. Junior Ronald Latwis from Stagg was second with a score of 459.00.

Latwis also made the Final 16 at state, placing 15th (421.55). But, although he was third at the sectional, Giorgetti had the best score of anyone from there at state. He credits his teammates for the encouragement and believes both he and the Porters will do even better next season.

"The swimmers are very supportive of us, even though we are usually separate," Giorgetti said. "The coaches did a great job of bringing us all together and making us one team.

"Being a part of the Lockport swim and dive team has been fun. Last year, we took first place in sectionals, and with the young team we had this year, I know we'll be able to get back on top next year."