

Local swimmers look to be in sync this weekend

SEAN DURACK

sdurack@insider.toronto.com

The Olympium Synchronized Swim Club is gearing up for the Provincial Synchronized Championships at the Etobicoke Olympium this weekend.

The prestigious meet - which receives bidding from clubs looking to host it each year - is being presented by Scarborough-based Variety Village Synchro this year. The event includes 175 swimmers who will be competing in Tier Six and Tier Seven level age group divisions.

All the athletes who have entered into the provincial meet are also national-level swimmers, according to Jo-Ann Durand, the meet manager and a long-time Etobicoke resident.

Durand, who also serves on the Synchro Canada committee, said Tier Six is for Ontario's top level swimmers aged 14-and-under, while the Tier Seven grouping is for older top level swimmers aged 15, 16 and 17. Tier Seven is for the more experienced swimmers and the Tier Six is for developmental teams, up-and-coming swimmers who are not quite there yet, she said.

Durand, who has an 18-year-old daughter on a synchronized swimming scholarship at Stanford University and a 15-year-old national-level swimmer at Etobicoke's Martingrove Collegiate Institute, said the swimmers at the provincial championships all showed well at the preliminary Provincial Trials in Guelph earlier this month.

The trials were the first of several qualifying meets that run until May, she said.

The meet this weekend runs Saturday from 7 a.m. to approximately 8 p.m. and starts back up again Sunday at 7 a.m.

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In addition to the awards being handed out at the end of the event, a presentation will honour Kristin Hayes, a former club member who represented Canada in Japan at the 15th Annual Festival for Athletes with a Disability in May. In addition to her synchronized swimming qualifications, Hayes is an envoy for Variety Village and a campaigner for the Ready, Willing and Able program, a Paralympics awareness initiative for school kids.

The provincial meet will open with the figures portion Saturday morning at the local swimming facility located at 580 Rathburn Ave.

The solos and duets will go during the afternoon Saturday. Sunday is the main day, all of the team activities will be held then, Durand said.

Following the provincial meet, the Etobicoke Olympium will host the Eastern/Atlantic Divisional Synchronized Swimming Challenge March 28 to April 1.

The regional qualifying event is a significant meet in the competitive season for those looking to swim with the top Canadian swimmers in the Canadian Open and the Canadian Espoir Championships in May, she said.

The following swimmers will represent Olympium Synchronized Swim Club at the provincial meet this weekend: Tier Six Chloe Brown, Sarah Graham, Rachel Kowalski, Lindsay Lukezic, Rebecca Maule, Natalie Mintz, Elizabeth Todd, Lara Turton, Kathryn Uhlman, Stephanie Uhrig, Jordan Field, Mali Foster, Samantha Hainer, Carlin Jessop, Angela Kokolakis, Tess Kruspe, Amanda Messere, Samantha Nealon, Xenia Reinfels, Kathleen Carpenter, Sophia Kokolakis,

Haley Miller, Antoinette Monardo, Bronte Murcor-Evans, Sydney Murcor-Evans, Avery Patrick, Sachel Robarts.

Tier Seven: Alyssa Bezeau, Candace Caskey, Jennifer Knobs, Natasha Kokolakis, Samantha Kowalski, Samantha Mawhinney,

Victoria Mintz, Renee Papineau, Annette Petersen, Stephanie Saunders.

Bezeau, Petersen, Kowalski, Mawhinney, Mintz and Saunders are a few Olympium swimmers representing both the club and province at the Canada Games

in Whitehorse, Yukon later this year.

The Olympium is also holding a Canada Games send-off party for the team on Feb. 21 at 7:30 p.m.

For more info on the meet visit www.olympiumsynchro.com