

» SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING

Local swimmers win gold

WRSSC maintains its position in the number-one spot

DESIREE FINHERT

Winning a handful of gold medals and other hardware has kept local swimmers out in front.

The Waterloo Regional Synchronized Swim Club (WRSSC) maintained its spot as top club in the province with a first-place showing at the 10th annual Waterloo Regional Invitational meet at Wilfrid Laurier University Feb. 17.

Some 430 swimmers from across Ontario performed 94 routines during a 13-hour whirlwind.

"It was a real marathon, with the team competition starting at 9 a.m. and the last duet awards were completed at 9:35 p.m. It certainly was a long day, but a very exciting one for a lot of the swimmers, with the

Waterloo Invitational being the first competition of the year," said meet manager Catrine Klein.

Among the competitors were Wellesley's Delaney and Rhianon Klein, Maryhill's Katharine Hoffman and St. Clements' Kaitlyn Horner.

In the Tier 4 duet event it was Rhianon Klein and Horner who captured one of the five gold medals won during the event with 58.833 points.

Rhianon's sister Delaney and her partner Kayla Brooks brought in a second gold during their Tier 5 duet (60.667 points).

The club's other gold coins were earned by Tier 1 (50.133p), Tier 2 (younger squad, 55.333p) and Tier 4 (63p).

Silver showings were given by the Klein sisters, Horner, Hoffman, Ma-

rina Triebe-Gravel, Linda Pham, Sam Hiller, Jessica Smith, Kayla Brooks and Hunter Le-Truong-Nguyen in the Tier 5 combo event (63.167p) and by the Tier 5 team (63p). The Tier 3 squad and duet team both earned bronze medals (56.833p and 55.333p respectively).

With 202 total point, WRSSC maintained its top provincial placement over second-place Nepean (119) and third-place London (98).

The good showing puts the club in a prime spot to improve its situation at upcoming meets.

"Because this is the first routine meet of the season it allows coaches and swimmers to see where all our hard work and choreography stand against the rest of the province," said Tier 5 coach Carey Brooks. "For



PHOTO: DESIREE FINHERT

ALL TOGETHER NOW ... St. Clements' Kaitlyn Horner (front) strikes a pose with Tier 5 teammates (clockwise) Kayla Brooks, Jessica Smith, Wellesley's Delaney Klein and Sam Hiller. The Waterloo Regional Synchronized Swim Club competed at the 10th annual Waterloo Regional Invitational meet at Wilfrid Laurier University Feb. 17.

the next two months we will be training harder and making changes to our choreography to ensure we are at the top of the podium in April."

The coach said her Tier 5 swimmers will be look-

ing to maintain their first-place finish in the duet event, while improving on their second-place finishes in team and combo events.

"With just a mere 0.167 points between us and

first place we will be training even harder to close such a small gap," she said.

The club next competes at the Eastern Divisionals in Etobicoke Mar. 28 to Apr. 1.

» SOUTHERN ONTARIO JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE

Two out of three ain't bad

Jacks open up a 2-1 lead over St. George Dukes in opening round of SOJHL playoffs

DESIREE FINHERT

The 13 points that separated second-place St. George from number-three Wellesley proved luckier for the Applejacks, who opened up a 2-1 lead in the Southern Ontario Junior Hockey League playoffs this week.

The Dukes (who finished 27-15-01 in the Bauer Division) fell behind 2-0 last weekend before rebounding midweek against the Jacks (19-23-0-4). Wellesley chalked up two wins in as many nights, 3-1 on the road Feb. 17 and 5-2 at home the following night. St. George eked out a 3-2 win at home Tuesday night.

"We've all bought into the system that we want to play through the playoffs - two good steps in the right direction," said Wellesley coach Chip Seiling following the weekend action.

"We're getting fortunate by going to the net and we're getting breaks that hard work creates. We're attacking when we should be attacking and we're stepping back when we should be stepping back."

The game Feb. 17 was a simple case of may-the-best-team-win, and Wellesley's ace was between the pipes.



PHOTO: DESIREE FINHERT

EYE ON THE PRIZE Jacks' winger Scott Hanley watches the puck drop before taking to the opposition's end during the second night of playoff action. The Jacks won 5-2 over the St. George Dukes on home ice Feb. 18.

Netminder Chris Russwurm staved off 38 shots on the net, letting only one through in the second period.

In the first 20 minutes Wellesley was marginally out-shot 16-14, with Russwurm blocking all attempts. Eric Benesch was the only one able to knock the rubber into the net, scoring at 15:03, with Shane Cicchine picking up the helper.

In the second frame, the Dukes again out-shot the Jacks, managing to even things up on the scoreboard on Mike Hellyer's unassisted, short-handed goal at 1:13.

Two minutes later Wellesley regained its lead when Benesch capitalized on a power-play setup from Trevor Nissen and Scott Hustwitt at 2:54 to make it 2-1.

In the final period, Wellesley both out-shot (16-9) and outscored the Dukes, landing the insurance marker at 14:08. This time, Pat Doyle buried the biscuit, with an assist from Aaron Ryan.

"We've had fairly disciplined hockey on the ice according to what the game plan is. Too many penalties for my liking, but that's the way the game goes nowadays,"

said the coach of both weekend games, which were similar in style.

Sunday, the Jacks drew first blood when Richard Shantz set up Hustwitt's goal at 8:11. Similarly, the Jacks found themselves out-shot in the first frame 19-11, but Russwurm was the difference.

The Dukes evened the score at 12:43 when Alex Andrade put one between the pipes.

Following intermission Wellesley regained the lead, though the team was out-shot 12-10. Wes Hauck and Scott Litt flanked Doyle as he popped one in at 7:20 for a 2-1 lead.

The Wellesley crew maintained its calm, once again allowing itself to be marginally out shot 14-12 while moving in for the kill in the final frame

At 15:24 Hauck manipulated a short-handed goal into the twine with Patrick Shantz's aid. It was 3-1.

The Dukes retaliated, chalking up their final score of the night on the power-play - Andrade from Adam Wood at 4:00.

The Jacks took the final minutes to ensure a place in the win column.

At 2:43 Blake Martin tapped the puck in on a pass from Cicchine, and with 42 seconds left on the clock Patrick Shantz added a short-hander for a 5-2 finish.

"Our goaltender, Chris Russwurm, and all our captains [and assistants] stepped up to the plate," said Seiling. "There are a lot of guys here who are playing their last year of hockey at the Junior level. They've not only brought their game up a step, they've brought it up four or five steps. The heart we've been looking for all year is here with this team - keep working hard and hopefully we'll keep winning."

But in the best-of-seven contest in the first play-

off block, St. George couldn't afford to keep losing.

Tuesday's away game saw the Wellesley crew shut down 3-2.

The Jacks started well, matching the Dukes shot-for-shot (12-12) and potting single goals in the first two periods.

Weekend star Doyle kicked off the mid-week action with a power-play goal at 3:39 of the first frame.

Hauck etched the second power-play marker just 1:42 into the second period; Litt assisted.

After that the Jacks were stunted while the Dukes garnered all three goals to win 3-2.

"They're a hard hockey team to play against," said the coach. "They've got four lines that come at you with speed. They've got size."

"The playoffs are a game of mood swings and you've got to ride the high waves when you can and you've got to hope when you hit a low wave that you recover quickly. You can only go as far as your drive and your work ethic takes you. We'll just keep plugging away and see what happens."

Game four goes tonight (Saturday) at the Wellesley Arena. The puck drops at 7:30 p.m.