

Dec. 28 Girls Hornet Relays

Steinert scares defending champ Lawrence before settling for second

By Mark Pratico II

Fish4Scores.com

Dec. 28: The Steinert High girls' swim team came close to dethroning the four-time champion and battled in every race.

When it all was said and done, the Spartans settled for a solid second place at the 29th Annual Hornet Relays held at Hamilton West today. Although their inspirational performance did not end with gold medals, the Lady Spartans have loads to be proud of. Their 80 points fell short of Lawrence, who finished with 94 to earn a fourth straight title.

For starters, the swimmers are exceeding the expectations of coach Jacquelyn Nami, and everyone is dropping times according to schedule.

"This was great because we get a second chance to swim everyone. I am thrilled with the progress, and everyone is right where we want them to be. They are all developing nicely," Nami said.

The Hornet Relays provided a chance for Steinert to continue to improve their speed and form, in a competitive venue that demands a more focused approach than the often monotonous two-a-days.

The meet is always fun," Nami said. "It is great for everyone to come out and compete during the break. It is something different than practice, and it gets us ready for the second half of the season," Nami said.

Led by the senior duo of Lauren Cruz and Sara DeAngelo, the Spartans were able to outlast Robbinsville for second place by 16 points. It was a nice remuneration for Steinert, which was beaten by Robbinsville in the season opener.

"We knew everyone was going to be pretty competitive in the meet. We wanted to get close or win every relay," Cruz said.

Cruz and DeAngelo teamed up on multiple occasions to earn the Spartans quality points. They warmed up in the meet's first relay placing third in the 400-meter medley (5:09.93). Later in the meet is when the duo got into a flow.

Cruz and DeAngelo swam third and anchor leg, respectively, in both the 750-meter crescendo and the 4x40 meter butterfly relays. The Spartans won the crescendo relay in 9:18.24 and the butterfly in 2:19.05, which helped secure the runner-up spot.

Taylor Kwok and Margaret Herbert rounded out the crescendo team, while Haley Thayer and Mackenzie Schlosser completed the 4x40 squad.

"Swimming this season has been refreshing. It is my last season, and it is nice to see everyone at training and in meets," said Cruz, who took her sophomore year off, and was also contemplating whether to return this year or not.

Her return after an All-CVC junior campaign brought ease to the minds of her coach and teammates.

"We are glad she came back," DeAngelo said.

Both Cruz and DeAngelo were county finalists last year, and they both hope to improve better their finishes.

"We are excited for the second half of the season," DeAngelo said. "We know everyone is going to do awesome in dual meets, counties, and in states."

Steinert took second in the 4x50 backstroke relay and the 200 free, and thirds in the 400 medley, 4x100, 4x200 and 4x50 breast.

Hamilton and Nottingham finished fifth and sixth, respectively, with 30 and 26 points.