

## Jan. 12 Swimming



*Hamilton West freshman Jacob Torres swam to two third-place finishes today against a formidable WW-P South program (Photo by Dennis Symons Jr./purchase photos at [www.dennissymons.com](http://www.dennissymons.com)).*

### **Steinert boys qualify Mabin and 400 free relay team for state meet**

**By Rich Fisher**

**Fish4Scores.com**

**Jan. 12:** When is 68-point dual meet loss a good thing?

When good things happen, of course.

Granted, Steinert's boys' swim team dropped a 119-51 decision at Princeton today, but that's not a big deal. The Little Tigers are 9-0 and could very well be state champions before it's all over this year.

A Steinert win would have been the upset of the young century in Mercer County swimming, so the Spartan coaches went into it with an ulterior motive, and it worked.

The 400 free relay team of Zach Mabin, Kevin Diefenbach, Tommy Wright and Tyler Gulsby clocked a 3:29.56, which beat the cutoff time to reach the state tournament. Mabin also reached states as an individual again, when he broke his school breast stroke record for a fourth time with a cut time of 1:01.21.

"We definitely wanted to make states," Mabin said of the relay team. "When we were at (West Windsor-Plainsboro) South on Tuesday, we realized we could do it and we decided we were gonna try it at this meet. We figured we'd have our best chance, and we did."

While Mabin has been to states before, this will be the first time for the relay quartet.

"We knew Zach was going to get the state time," coach Jen Smith said. "We knew coming in today we probably weren't going to come out on top. I mean, there's always the chance, but we kind of set up the meet today for the relay team to get the state time."

“We knew this was a fast pool, so that was our goal. We had to do it today. So some people didn’t really swim their normal events. We saved Tyler, he didn’t swim the backstroke today, and it worked. We got the time by three seconds. It was exciting.”

It was triple the excitement for Mabin, who not only qualified in two events but also put his breaststroke record a little further out of reach.

“It feels good to know I’m improving,” Mabin said. “I love this (Princeton) meet. I knew there were a lot of good kids and I love racing people who are really fast and I like trying to push myself.”

As happy as he is with himself, Mabin is even more pleased that several of his teammates will experience the excitement of states.

“I’m really excited,” he said. “I’m close with all the guys, at meets like that you grow closer and it’s a lot of fun, I’m glad I have someone else to share it with.”

Not only that, but he will also have some support from other Spartans when he’s swimming the breaststroke.

“I definitely believe having people there to cheer you on helps your performance,” he said.

“It’s usually him, me, his parents and Jacqui (Nami, girls’ coach) down there,” Smith said. “Now he’ll be there with the guys. They’ll have that camaraderie, more of an incentive to do well. It will be fun for us too.”

As for the remainder of today’s meet, Diefenbach took second in the 50 and 100 free, while third-place finishes came from Mabin (200 free), Gulsby (200 IM), Wright (500 free) and Stephen Huie (100 back).

The Spartans fell to 6-2 with their second straight loss.

\* \* \*

In the girls meet, Steinert (3-4) was also a major underdog and dropped a 114-56 decision to Princeton (7-1). Like Smith, however, Nami had something else in mind other than the outcome.

“Princeton is great, they’re gonna go all the way,” she said. “We’re going to try to use this meet for power points for (team) states with these times.

“This is a nice pool, there’s good competition. You put in your two fastest meets for power points, and this will be one of them since we’re at that point of the season where times are starting to drop. And it’s good to have a nice facility to get nice times like this.”

Lauren Cruz won twice in the 50 free (26.24) and 100 free (56.10), while Sara DeAngelo won the 100 fly (1:05.27) and took second in the 100 breast (1:14.42).

Mackenzie Schlosser (200 IM), Tess Dalton (500 free) and Haley Thayer (100 back) also finished second, while Sarah Sacco (500 free) had a third.

“We were pleased,” Nami said. “We knew it would be a tough meet.”

And while Steinert’s girls still don’t have any state cuts, Nami said several are aiming for them.

“We have some people looking at the times and seeing where they might go, so we’ll see what happens,” she said. “The girls that do that are always looking for the drops at the end of the season, hopefully they pull it off.”

## **Hutton continues to shine for Hamilton West boys**

Freshman Griffin Hutton has looked good for Hamilton West’s boys’ team all year, and now that he’s going against the big boys of Mercer County his star is shining even brighter.

The Hornets dropped a 130-40 decision to West Windsor-Plainsboro South today, but Hutton

won two more events. He took the 200 free in 2:06.22, and claimed the 100 butterfly in 1:05.13.

Fellow freshman Jacob Torres also provided a few highlights, finishing third in the 200 IM and 100 freestyle.

The girls' team also had a bright spot in their 122-47 loss to undefeated WW-P South, as Sofi Walter won the 100 freestyle in 1:10.