

Wood rallies past Father Judge

By Marty Katz
Sports writer

Right at the heart of Archbishop Wood's exciting Philadelphia Catholic League come-from-behind 88-82 boys' swimming victory over visiting Father Judge last Wednesday night were the performances of two seniors who have proven that hard work, patience and four years of steady improvement can lead to great individual and team success when nurtured properly.

Tom Whelan and Jim Hurley have both moved into the heart of their final seasons as Vikings' swimmers with great confidence regarding what they have already accomplished, as well as the potentially great things that the next two months may bring.

With the Vikings trailing Judge 72-68 and only two events remaining, Hurley captured first place in the 100 breaststroke in 1:06.87, with Whelan running second — just a shade over one second behind. The 10 points garnered by these two sent the Vikes into the lead, which they maintained with a victory in the meet's final event, the 400 freestyle relay.

Of course, Hurley and anchor man Whelan played a major role in the meet's decisive race, as they — along with Brendon McGhee and Sean Joyce — swam to victory in 3:37.43, 1.54 seconds better than Judge's four-seconds of Nick Montenegro, Brian

Quigley, Shawn Mitkus and Matt Harner.

Whelan is strongest individually in the breaststroke and sprint freestyle events, finishing runnerup in last year's PCL 100 breaststroke championship.

Named to the All-Catholic team as both a sophomore and junior, Whelan — according to coach Charlie Stillwell — has tremendous ability.

"Far and away, Tom has the most talent on our team," Stillwell said.

Whelan has followed in the footsteps of his older brother, Kevin, who was a senior during Tom's freshman year.

Kevin Whelan holds the Wood breaststroke record that Tom is pushing hard to break.

"Tom works very hard in practice," Stillwell said. "That would be something if Tom broke his brother's record."

Whelan — whose favorite event is the breaststroke — keeps it simple, using Stillwell as his lone instructor.

Earlier in the meet with Judge, Whelan, also a Wood lacrosse standout, captured the 50 freestyle, in 24.34.

Amazingly, Whelan had a bout with mononucleosis around Christmastime and has only recently overcome the after-effects of the disease.

"I'm just getting over it," the senior said.

To improve in the pool, Whelan started weight training

last year.

"I've been working hard," said Whelan.

Jim Hurley is a highly versatile swimmer, participating along the way in the breaststroke, individual medley, butterfly and sprint relays.

Four years ago, it was unlikely that Hurley would become such a major force for the Vikings.

"When Jim was a freshman, he had never swum on a year-round basis," Stillwell said. "He didn't really know how to swim (as a championship-style swimmer)."

So much has changed for Hurley, who has improved tremendously every year.

In fact, this winter alone, Hurley's butterfly time has dropped three seconds since the start of the season.

"Jim is so strong in the water," Stillwell said. "He just goes really fast."

As a junior, Hurley wasn't expected to do much.

"Last year, he came out of nowhere," Stillwell said.

In fact, as a junior, Hurley dropped almost five full seconds off his breaststroke time and almost made All-Catholic at the PCL championships.

Hurley really enjoys what he is doing.

"The season's going by too fast," he said. "I've improved my stroke, my turns and my technique."

Hurley, whose favorite event is the 100 butterfly — in which he took home a victory against Judge — credits his improvement to the entire Wood coaching staff.

"The coaches help me out a lot," Hurley said.

Recently, the senior has been competing in the grueling 200 individual medley, which combines backstroke, butterfly, breaststroke and freestyle.

"That's really tough," Hurley said. "I'm still working on that one."

Other individual Wood victories last Wednesday night were achieved by Joyce, in the 500 freestyle and David Keller in the 100 backstroke.

Keller, Whelan, Hurley and Brendon McGhee won the 200 medley relay while John Wright, Ron McIntire, Timothy Miller and Keller captured the 200 freestyle relay in the victory over Judge.

Steady improvement got the job done for Wood.

Archbishop Wood 88, Father Judge 82
200 medley relay— Archbishop Wood (David Keller, Thomas Whelan, James Hurley, Brendon McGhee) 1:48.28; 200 freestyle— Kevin Ozimkiewicz (FJ) 2:05.68; 200 IM— Matt Harner (FJ) 2:15.25; 50 freestyle— James Whelan (AW) 24.34; 100 butterfly— Tom Hurley (AW) 1:00.28; 100 freestyle— Matt Harner (FJ) 52.21; 500 freestyle— Sean Joyce (AW) 5:44.00; 200 freestyle relay— Archbishop Wood (John Wright, Ron McIntire, Timothy Miller, David Keller) 1:42.62; 100 backstroke— David Keller (AW) 1:04.18; 100 breaststroke— James Hurley (AW) 1:06.87; 400 freestyle relay — Archbishop Wood (Brendon McGhee, James Hurley, Sean Joyce, Thomas Whelan) 3:37.43.

Just the Facts

Keen's Top 5

1. North Penn
2. Germantown Academy
3. Souderton
4. Central Bucks South
5. Upper Moreland

Meets to watch

■ There is an SOL National Conference meet of note today at 3:45 p.m. when North Penn visits Neshaminy.

■ Saturday and Sunday, Archbishop Wood and Lansdale Catholic have a chance to see how they do against some of the nation's top Parochial teams in the National Catholic Swimming Championships at Villanova University.