

Four Outlaw swimmers head to state

By **Charlie Kanzig**
Correspondent

Sisters High School will be represented by four star swimmers at the OSAA 4A/3A/2A/1A State Championships this week at Tualatin Hills Aquatic Club in Beaverton after stellar performances at Districts February 8 at South Albany High School.

Snowy weather resulted in travel concerns and the league decided to conduct the meet in one day with no preliminaries, just timed finals. Though highly unorthodox, Singleton said her swimmers adjusted just fine.

“Everyone stepped up despite the unexpected changes, and many swam their best races of the season.”

Sisters is part of Special District 3 for swimming which includes teams from Blanchet, Stayton, Sweet Home, Cascade, Junction City, Kennedy, Marist, North Marion, Philomath and Salem Academy. The top finishers in each individual event and relay qualified automatically for state, while the rest of the field was determined by top times from the four 4A/3A/2A/1A special districts that are comprised of 40 teams in all.

“We had to wait until Sunday to find out who all made it to state, which was a bit nerve-racking,” said Head Coach Bryn Singleton.

Lydia Bartlett enters the meet with the top seed time

in the 200-yard free after winning the district title with a best time of 1:58.89, which set a new school record. Bartlett is the third seed in the 500-yard freestyle with a time of 5:15.23. Bartlett placed a very close second last year in the event at state, but will face some new competition this year as a freshman, Elena Gingras of Valley Catholic, has the top seed time at 5:10.07. Bartlett’s lifetime best came at state last year when she clocked 5:04.77.

With a time of 1:03.52 on her way to winning the 100-yard butterfly, Meredith Mandal is the number-five seed for state. The state leader, Lizzy Cook of Catlin Gabel, is a strong favorite to win, with a best of 55.83, nearly 5 seconds better than the next best qualifier.

Mandal also qualified in the 100-yard freestyle.

Bartlett and Mandal will team with Brooke Robillard and Maddie Busick in the 200-yard freestyle relay where they are seeded fourth with a time of 1:46.50 in what could turn out to be one of the most exciting races of the state meet based on seed times among the top six schools. The quartet is also ranked fourth in the 400-yard freestyle with a seed time of 3:55.03.

Robillard will also compete as an individual in the 100-yard breaststroke, where she is seeded ninth (1:14.16), but expected to finish higher, according to Singleton.



PHOTO BY KATIE KERANEN

Brooke Robillard, Lydia Bartlett, Meredith Mandal and Maddie Busick will compete at state.

Singleton singled out Busick, the least experienced of the four girls qualifying for state, for her tremendous improvement at district. “Maddie cut two full seconds off of her 50-yard free time and four seconds in the 100, which was amazing.”

None of the Outlaw boys rose to the top of the heap for state qualifying, but that is not to say they swam poorly.

“Although the boys did not qualify for state, they edged closer in many events,” said Singleton. “Sam Mayes set a personal best of 24.44 in the 50 free, and all three boys’ relays placed well and took off significant time from their previous bests,” she said. “If they continue to work hard next season, there is great potential for them to reach state.”

As expected, Sweet Home’s girls dominated the

team race, winning with 257 points. Sisters placed fourth with 144. For the boys, Salem Academy edged Philomath by just 8 points, winning with a total of 203. Sisters’ boys finished eighth with 58.

Expectations for state from Singleton’s perspective are for

the girls to do what they’ve been doing all their careers: “Swim hard and to the best of their ability.”

Sisters snagged a fourth-place trophy last year, but that might be a stretch this year as the team is entered in fewer events overall.

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