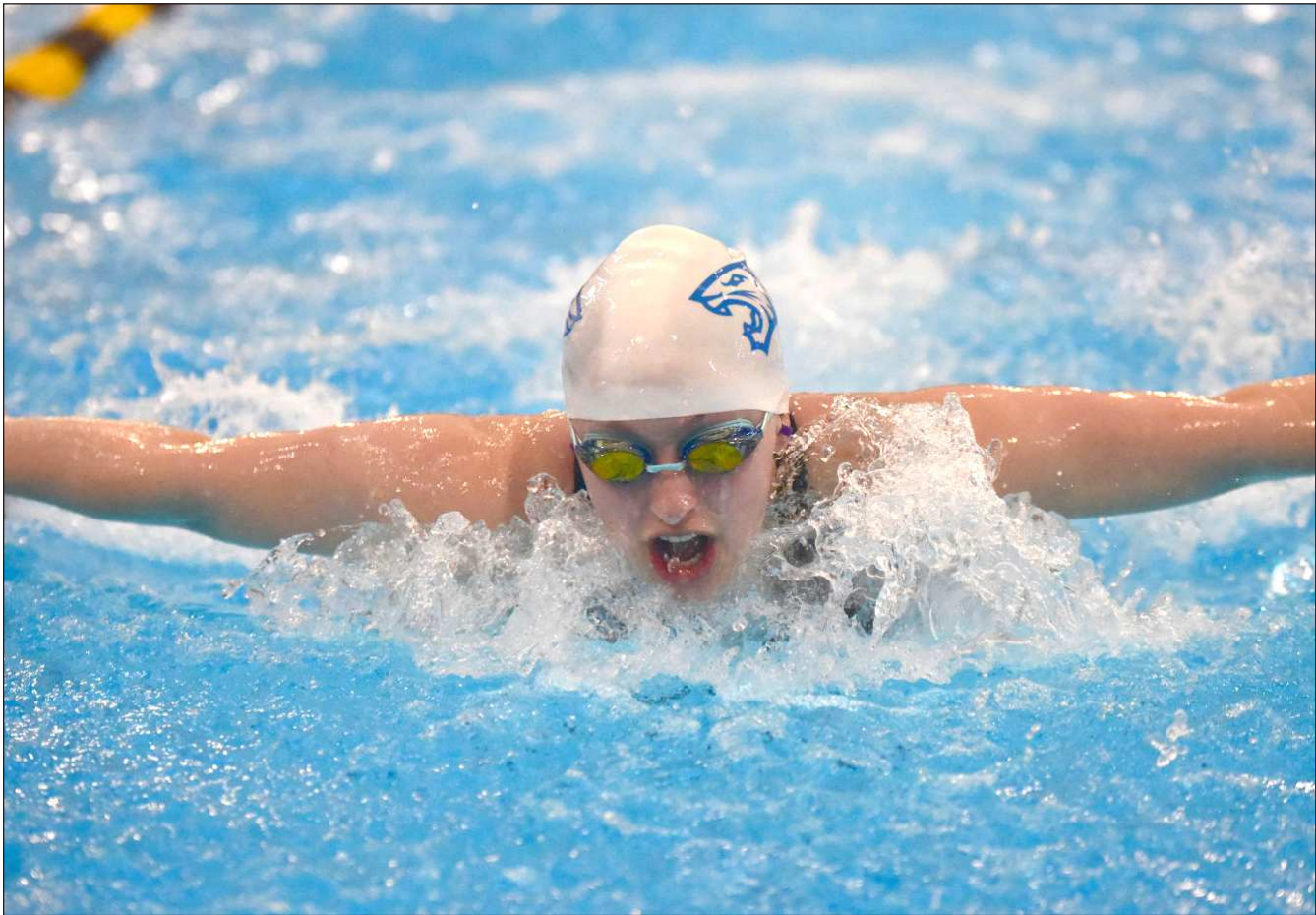




Staff photo by Ronald Bond

La Grande's Kristal Jensen took second Saturday in the girls 100-yard butterfly at the 4A/3A/2A/1A swim meet in Beaverton. As a team, the Tigers placed third with a program-record 49 points.



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

La Grande's Romaine Ricker competes Saturday in the girls individual medley at the 4A/3A/2A/1A swim meet.

Tiger girls make splash at state

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

BEAVERTON — All season long there was a hope that the La Grande girls swim team would be able to break through and claim the program's first state title. Those expectations increased after a performance in the district swim meet that had the Tigers entering the state swim meet projected to score the most points of any team in the field. And while the La Grande girls missed out on a state

championship Saturday night at the 4A/3A/2A/1A swim meet in Beaverton, it still set a program record as it scored 49 points to place third. That point total, in fact, is higher even than the 2012 team that scored 44 points and took second place. It's also the third third-place finish the Tigers have had in four years. "It was a good year," senior Kristal Jensen said. "It was very exciting. I was so glad that I got to come here with all these girls and do the

best we could with what we had and that we got to finish third again." Several of the athletes admitted to feeling the pressure of being in the discussion for the championship alongside Catlin Gabel and Sweet Home, the teams that ended up taking first and second, respectively. It did impact the team early on Saturday, but head coach Darren Dutto said once the athletes were able to put the added stress aside
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Staff photo by Ronald Bond

La Grande's Riana Scott competes Saturday during the girls 200-yard freestyle at the 4A/3A/2A/1A swim meet in Beaverton.

LHS boys surface with stunning fourth-place finish

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

BEAVERTON — Nobody saw this coming. The La Grande boys swim team lost several key seniors from last year's third-place finish at state, yet came through Saturday night at the 4A/3A/2A/1A swim meet in Beaverton to score 23 points and tie for fourth, bringing home yet another state trophy. "We didn't have any expectation to be in the top four," LHS head coach Darren Dutto said. "The guys just swam and had fun. That first relay, that medley made all the difference. That was a great relay. It kind of set the pace." The Tigers netted 10 points right off the bat when the 200-yard medley relay team of T.J. Clay, Glenn Ricker, Adam Remily and James Thurman surprised even themselves by jumping up to second place with a time of 1:46.49. "That race, it was insane," Clay said. "Coming in (ranked) third and coming out second — we all PR'd, we all raced super well. It



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

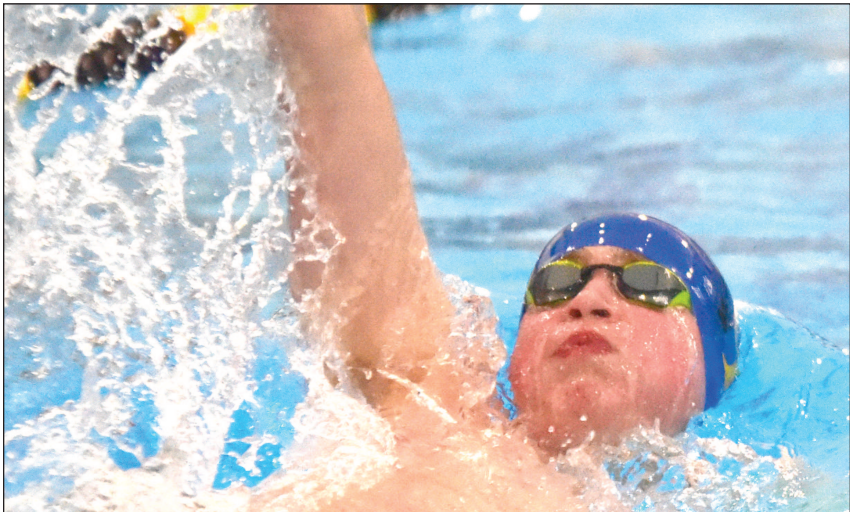
La Grande's Glenn Ricker competes in the boys 100-yard breaststroke Saturday night at the 4A/3A/2A/1A state swim meet. The freshman, who earlier won the 100 butterfly, placed third in the breaststroke.

was a blast to race and a blast to watch." Perhaps an even bigger shock

came a few events later. Ricker initially finished second in the 100 butterfly with a time of 55.57

seconds, but a disqualification of Salem Academy's Austyn Shelton boosted the freshman to the top of

the podium for his first state title. "I can't wait until next year to do it all over again and surprise everybody," he said, adding he learned of winning the championship moments before stepping up to receive his award. "It was right before I got onto the podium. I was being hyped up by my teammates." Dutto also had no clue Ricker had received the bump to the top, adding he found out moments before when he had been asked to head to the awards area to give out the medals. "To get up there and race, have an incredible finish, swim with poise, he set himself up for (moving) into that first-place spot when those things (like a DQ) happen," Dutto said of Ricker. "It was a great race. He has a lot of confidence. He knows himself well, and he really showed it in the 100 fly and the breaststroke." Ricker later placed third in the 100 breaststroke with a time of 1:02.88. His effort had teammates
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Staff photo by Ronald Bond

Cove's Tim Koza finished third Saturday in the boys 100-yard backstroke and in the 500 freestyle at the 4A/3A/2A/1A swim meet to become the first Cove swimmer to place in the state finals.

Koza snags two thirds for Cove

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

BEAVERTON — Tim Koza made history in Beaverton Saturday at the 4A/3A/2A/1A swim meet by becoming the first Cove Leopard to place, earning a pair of third-place finishes to wrap the first season of the Cove swim program. The sophomore placed third in the boys 500-yard freestyle in 5:03.79 and also was third in the 100 backstroke in 56.17 seconds, scoring eight points to help Cove finish 12th as a team. "My 500 free didn't feel as good

as last night (in the preliminaries) but it was a drop (in time)," Koza said Saturday. "It was good overall. My 100 backstroke, it was great. Just went out there, put everything in the pool." Steve Koza, Cove's head coach and Tim's father, was proud of the effort his son displayed. "I couldn't have asked for more, especially on a second day swimming in the finals," he said. "It's hard. You already swam hard the night before, and to come in and drop more time is a real accomplishment. He's got a good future."

Both hope the sophomore's finish will spark more interest in the program at Cove. The coach said he was aware of students who kept an eye on what the program was doing, and getting one athlete into the finals and two to state — freshman Taylor Fox also competed in the preliminaries — could draw those in from the sideline. "I know there are some other kids who are interested, and I think they kind of watched this year to see what happened," Steve Koza said.
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