

Saskatoon synchro team swims to national title

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The StarPhoenix

Monday, June 12, 2006

The Saskatoon Aqualenes pulled together to make synchronized swimming history for Saskatchewan on Saturday.

Accompanied by the beats of Big Voodoo Daddy, the Aqualenes bopped their way to victory in the 16-and-over division at the Canadian Espoir synchronized swimming championships in Etobicoke, Ont.

The Aqualenes are the first Saskatchewan synchro club to win a national team title.

Saskatchewan also reached the podium in solo competition. Jessica Guenther won bronze in the 15-and-under division. She also secured a spot on the national team (age 13-15) for a second straight year.

"There was the momentum of her doing well and being successful," said Aqualenes coach Laurie Wachs. "Then we had another soloist (Amanda Bristol) in 16-and-over . . . and she had a really great swim, kind of a personal best.

"After that, the team said, 'We can be great.' They had the self-confidence that they could do it."

Saturday's result will provide a major boost looking towards next year's Canada Games in Whitehorse, added Wachs.





"We've really been trying to work on that belief system that we can medal at Games or be in the top four."

Saskatchewan teams often play also-rans to powerhouse programs from Quebec and Ontario, but these Aqualenes entered nationals with some laurels after winning the Western Canadian title in Edmonton.

"When we compared our results to the eastern results, we were the top team," said Wachs. "We knew we were ranked No. 1 coming in. But sometimes it's hard to compare to easterns because it's different judges and a different group of figures."

The Aqualenes erased any doubt by posting the best score for both figures (66.193) and routine (73.500). That translated to a final score of 69.846. Three Ontario clubs -- York (68.494), Burlington (68.129) and Mississauga (67.208) --

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rounded out the top four.

Only two of the seven Aqualenes are 16. The rest were competing one division older than their 15-and-under age class.

"It was really refreshing because our kids swam to this high-energy and really fun music," Wachs said in reference to the New Orleans-influenced soundtrack. "They really pulled it off. They had great presentation and really got the crowd going."

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Canadian Champions

Members of the Saskatoon Aqualenes, 2006 Canadian synchronized swimming champions in the 16-and-over division:

Amanda Bristol

Kelsey Cochrane

Jeslin Genest

Jessica Guenther

Samanthia Lukash

Braeden Terry

Tess Wilfong

Ran with fact box "Canadian Champions" which has been appended to the story.

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