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Camaraderie Cleans Up at OMPA Championships Individuals Overwhelmed by Team Support

By Lou Fancher



Ranch fans cheer Photo Jordan Fong

friendly competition," said this year's team publicist, Josie

Kelley, "because kids stick with it and the team spirit builds year after year." It's true of each individual team, but remarkably, it's also true of the combined 1700-plus swimmers entered in OMPA this year.

Jane and Chip Wisner, whose son Charlie left no question he is a speedster, were suitably revved-up. "The spirit, with everybody rooting each other on: it's a whole different world!" said Chip. Charlie, caught up in the excitement noted, "When I breathe, I can hear the crowd through my cap."

If the star of the show is the spirit, the runner up is the bountiful talent residing in this area. Nicholas Deaver, a 16-year-old from Meadow Swim & Tennis Club, set new meet records with a 52.99 100 IM, a 24.02 Back, and a 22.59 Fly. Megan Colpo, 8, swimming for Sleepy Hollow, set aside meet records in Breast and Back..

Clearly, these swimmers, even at a young age, are hyper-focused. Ashleen O'Brien, an 8-year-old Campo Cabana Club swimmer, was looking to improve in the finals. Still, she wasn't discouraged. "My teammates help me to not just worry about getting first place," she said. "At first I really hated swimming, because I was afraid, but when I got the confidence, I forgot all that fear."

OMPA is more than a swim meet, more than simply an opportunity for local kids to feel good. "It's the epitome of a community event!" said Sleepy Hollow Head Coach Matt Ehrenberger, his arm sweeping wide to include the kids, the tents, the crowds, the fin-topped SUV's in the parking lot. He's watched generations of swimmers dive in and grow-up in the process. This year, McKenna Farrar, 18, got his nod: "She came back this year to do it right," he said. "What she's done for this team, her leadership, has been more beneficial than any points she scored at the meets." All nine clubs recruited their senior swimmers to coach the junior athletes, forming a never-ending chain of young swimmers and mentor coaches. "These teen age swimmers, when they were four or five, looked up to their coaches," Kelley explains, "Now, they get to coach. The effect is magic."

The nine teams competing in the Orinda Moraga Pool Association (OMPA) championship swim meet, held this year August 7-9 at Campolindo High School, know that winning doesn't happen in just three days. Winning is in the kids' camaraderie, inspiration comes from the coaches, dedication is supplied by the parents, and that is how champions are made for life, not just for water.

Even so, the 53rd annual OMPA, held August 7-9, offered no shortage of stellar accomplishments.

A total of 21 individual and six relay meet records were broken. Katie Bilotti, 18, this year's Outstanding SwimmerGirls, set three personal best records, beating her own times from 2008 in the Back and Fly events. Charlie Wisner, 14, the Outstanding Swimmer-Boys, decimated five meet records, including a twenty-three year relic from 1986, swimming the 50 Fly in 24.0.

Starting on Thursday, teams warmed-up and worked out; building enthusiasm for Friday's IM Relay Finals. "It's a



Charlie Wisser OCC Photo Deanna Wentzel



Christina Vidal Photo Jordan Fong

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