

Swimmers ready to defend SWC crown

BY JASON TUREK
Sports Reporter

On Friday, the Brookfield swim team will travel to Pomperaug High School to try to win its fourth consecutive SWC swimming and diving championship. Last year, the Bobcats won handily over second-place Pomperaug by 124 points.

The swim team has compiled a record of 12-1-1 after losing seven swimmers from last year's team.

"A lot of the kids have stepped it up this year," said Brookfield swim coach Brian Reiff. "We have had the targets on our backs this year and everyone will try to take us down on Friday."

"For a team to win the title, they'll have to knock off a lot of Brookfield swimmers to do so," he added.

Pomperaug has the best chance out of any to take down Brookfield. In January, the Panthers gave the Bobcats their first defeat in three years by defeating them 107-79. One of the reasons Pomperaug has an advantage is it has 44 swimmers compared to 14 for the Bobcats.

"They have a lot of depth and will be able to put four swimmers in every race," said Reiff. "I can only put two or three in each race, so they'll have more of an opportunity to rack up points."

Other teams who have a chance to compete for the SWC crown will be New Fairfield and Newtown. Brookfield had com-

petitive meets against both teams, but came up victorious.

One thing that's the same from last year's team is that the Bobcats fielded a small team as well. It had only 18 swimmers and divers, but the swimmers placed well in every event that placed high and collected big points.

"We have a core of swimmers that can place well and get us many points," said Reiff. "If the kids swim exceptionally well, I like our chances in the end."

The core swimmers Reiff is referring to are seniors Carl James and Alysse Melville, juniors Billy Magin, Max Sackerson, and Chris DelCasino, sophomores David Ely, Matt Reiff, and Carl James, and freshman Matt Sorena and Danny Palmiotto.

The divers will have to come up big as well for Brookfield. Adam Duffield, Matt Ryan, and Conor Dunn all have a chance to score big points in the meet.

"There is no clean-cut favorite in the diving competition," said Reiff. "The divers can be the X-factor in the meet and could determine who the winner will be."

Last month during their school break, the Bobcat swimmers and coaches traveled to Florida for a training trip. It was the first time any Brookfield team had done this.

The team was able to raise more than \$22,000 for the trip by going out to the Brookfield business community and soliciting ads from the businesses.

"Each kid needed to raise between over \$1,000 in ads to obtain in a book that will be sent out to everyone in the school directory and the community," said Reiff. "The ads have the swimmer's bio and picture so everyone can see who they sponsored to help the kids go on the trip."

The team spent five days in Florida at the Orlando Aquatic Center and at a pool in Cocoa Beach. One thing the team didn't have to worry about was lack of lanes to practice in.

"We are the only team in the SWC without a home pool," said Reiff. "The Greenknoll YMCA has been good in getting us at least two lanes to practice in, but it is tough to get the kids to do a good practice when everyone is crammed in."

Coach Reiff said out of the 13 years that he has coached, he has never been around a closer group of kids.

"They go together everywhere," he said. "They went to the theme parks as a group and had a wonderful time and had a great bonding and training session."

Reiff also wanted to acknowledge the residents of Brookfield for their donations as well to the swim team.

"They really made it possible for us to go on this trip," he said. "They know about the success of this program and will do what they can to help this team get to the next level."