

FHS takes No. 1 ranking into 5A state swimming

By Joshua Lindenstein

Tuesday, February 13, 2007

Beating league rival Cherry Creek in a dual meet two weeks ago hardly makes Fairview the favorite to win the Class 5A state title this weekend, Knights coach Bob Smartt said Monday.

Qualifying entrants for 36 of 39 possible event slots at state, however, gives the Knights a fighting chance.

The Knights' 25 state qualifiers filling those 36 slots is the most in school history for the state meet, which begins Thursday at Edora Pool and Ice Center in Fort Collins with Class 4A swimming prelims. The question will be whether the top-ranked Knights' depth can pile up enough points to outweigh those that No. 2 Cherry Creek's star power will inevitably score.

"Cherry Creek is still the big favorite if you look at how strong their Centennial League meet was," Smartt said. "It will be clear how far ahead they still are when psych sheets come out (tonight)."

Cherry Creek scored 385 points at last year's state meet to beat runner-up Fairview by 183 points.

But the Knights beat Creek in the dual this season for the fourth time in six years, giving them confidence. Creek ran away with the Centennial League Championships title on Saturday, but 10 of Fairview's top 12 swimmers sat out of the meet to rest for state.

The Knights will be at full speed Friday when the 5A prelims start, led by senior distance ace Julie Giehl, who could come away with individual titles in the 200 and 500 freestyle races. The Knights are also ranked first in the state in the 200 free relay, while Sophie Lucas is in the top three in the 100 butterfly.

Cherry Creek is led by All-American Michelle Menezes, who is ranked first in the state in the 100 and 200 frees and the 200 individual medley.

Smartt points to the fact that 21 of his 25 qualifiers are underclassmen as proof that the Knights are slowly building back toward their state title form of 2004.

"Last year we weren't in the same universe with them," Smartt said. "Now we're getting close. They're in our sights."

For Boulder, the state meet is a chance to rebound after illness slowed many of the Panthers at last season's championships and caused the team to slide to 22nd place.

With most of its firepower back this season and healthy, Curt Colby's squad should be in line for a top-10 finish and is gunning for the top five.

"It's a possibility," Colby said.

The Panthers have entries in 11 of 12 events. Their 200 free relay is ranked third in the state, while Sophie Allen sits in the top 10 in multiple events.

Monarch freshman Whitney Dougherty also figures to make some noise as she is ranked in the top five in both the 200 IM and 100 breaststroke.

In Class 4A, Broomfield's Kia Dobie has the chance for multiple state titles, including the 500 free where she has the top time in 4A.

Centennial League rest

With many of their top swimmers resting for state, Boulder placed fifth and Fairview sixth at the Centennial League championships on Saturday.

Cherry Creek won the meet with 410 points. Boulder had 103.5 and Fairview 99.

Fairview diver Casey Cerny, one of the Knights' regulars, led the way for her team with a fourth-place finish.