

Cherry Creek rules pool

The talented Brandon sisters lead the Bruins to their 25th team title.

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Smoky Hill's Caroline Piehl is on her way Saturday to winning the 200-yard freestyle in Fort Collins. (Andy Cross, The Denver Post)

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FORT COLLINS — The Cherry Creek Bruins were flirting with the notion of surpassing the Class 5A record for team points at the girls state swimming and diving meet. They didn't get it Saturday.

For a consolation prize, they'll just have to settle for winning their 25th team title, setting a 5A record in the 50-yard freestyle and setting state records in the 200 medley relay, 400 freestyle relay and 100 backstroke.

"Not a bad day," longtime Bruins coach Eric Craven said after drying off from a victory soak at Edora Pool Ice Center.

Behind their usual depth and standout performances from the Brandon sisters, Loren and Bonnie, the Bruins scored 369 points to outdistance second-place Fairview (331 points) and third-place Regis (235).

Loren Brandon, a senior, won the 200 and 500 freestyles and was named co-swimmer of the year along with Chatfield's Shelley Perkins. Bonnie Brandon, a 6-foot-2 freshman with realistic Olympic aspirations, smashed the state record in the 100 backstroke and won the 50 freestyle from Lane 3.

"This was like the funnest meet ever," said Bonnie Brandon, who also anchored the 400 freestyle relay.

And while she could factor into the 2012 Olympics, she isn't fretting about outdoing herself next season for the Bruins.

"I'm not too worried about it, even if I don't do as well," she said. "I can always look back on this year and remember how great it was."

Bonnie Brandon swam the 100 backstroke in 54.77 seconds, breaking the old mark of 55.86. Her victory in the 50 free showed off her competitive side and sheer talent. She is known more as a distance swimmer, and the 50 free is far down on the list of her strengths.

"She opened some eyes here, including herself," Craven said.

The Bruins were shooting for their 1998 record of scoring 392 1/2 team points.

They certainly got the meet off to an electric start as the Bruins and Regis set the water aflame in the 200 medley relay. Both squads were below the previous state record of 1 minute, 45.09 seconds, with the Bruins finishing in 1:43.75 and the Raiders in 1:44.93.

Regis sophomore Alexandra Todd held off Cherry Creek's Kelly Naze to win the 100 butterfly by 0.15 seconds.

"At the beginning of my last leg, I could not feel my legs," Todd said. "I saw (Naze) coming on in that last 25, and I was just trying to hold on as much as possible."

In what was generally a fast meet for times, records fell in the 200 individual medley, 100 freestyle and 100 breaststroke.

"I really wanted to kick it in on breaststroke," said Smoky Hill's Caroline Piehl, who blew by the competition on the breaststroke portion of the 200 IM to set a record of 2:02.96.

Rampart junior Jenna Gregoire broke her own record in the 100 freestyle with a time of 51.30. It was nice redemption after she placed fourth in the 50 free despite having the fastest time in prelims.

Ralston Valley's Raleigh Williams edged ThunderRidge's Mady Ingmire for first in diving.