

Indians make gains in spite of loss

By Kyle Koso
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Given the length of the season, one wonders how the girls on the Loveland High School swim team keep their edge.

Given the breadth of their aspirations, the Indians find it no struggle at all, really, even when facing daunting competition like they did Thursday in a triangular with Fairview and Fort Collins. The two powers of the Front Range League ended up topping Loveland on the scoreboard at the Mountain View Aquatic Center, but the Indians lowered times and pocketed some state-qualifying cuts by staying on task.

Jordan Mathews, a junior, made her state time in the 50-yard freestyle (25.63 seconds) and the 100 butterfly (1:00.19), as did Sydney Miller in the 500 freestyle (5:31.23). Felicia Graff topped 200 points in diving, taking first place, and the Indians' 200 and 400 freestyle relays each took second with state-cut times (1:45.96 and 3:51.33, respectively).

"It's good to see who you're up against, the best of the nest. We've got a small team, but we're doing pretty well considering our size," said Mathews, who is healthy and happily involved with sprint-type events. "I hate long distance, and I admire anyone who can do anything past 200 (yards). I love sprinting, and I'm doing better than I thought I would. I'm really hoping for my Junior National times ... I put a lot of pressure on myself, and I'm really hoping this year is the season."

Mathews' time in the butterfly is already better than her top clocking at the 5A state meet last season, and this time around she's not competing with a damaged shoulder.

Another nice effort came from junior Renee Stephens, who cut about four seconds off her personal best in the 100 breaststroke, taking third Thursday in 1:14.27.

"It was a total surprise. I've worked on my glide and getting down more," she said. "We had a really hard set in practice this week, and that kicked my butt but it got me in shape.

"All the girls here were seeded, like, six seconds faster, so I said, 'Can't look like a loser — have to go a little bit faster.'"

Extra motivation came to the lineup with a gaze at the schedule, with the Coaches Invitational set for a week from Saturday. The meet brings high-profile athletes from around the state, and the Indians don't want to be left out.

"I knew we had to get up and go anyway against Fort Collins, then Fairview asked to join the dual. **We found out Fairview is pretty darned good,**" said LHS coach Becca Norton. "We wanted them to go after some state cuts, and to pull together as a team. I wanted them to get real competitive, to try and get those (Coaches) cuts."