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By **Bill Keen**

Staff Writer

There were several basic reasons why school officials at **Lansdale Catholic** elected to leave the Pioneer Athletic Conference in favor of the Philadelphia Catholic League.

Having a chance to be a dominating force in the PIAA's District 12 was not one of the official ones, but it certainly has occurred to members of the Crusaders and their fans.

Let's face it: Swimming is not one of the most popular sports among teams in the Philadelphia Public League, who were, until September, the only members of District 12. Just how bad the times were was painfully obvious when the District 12 representative was listed along with all the other qualifiers for the state championship meet at Bucknell University.

Then the Catholic schools decided to join the PIAA.

Now, when the best of the best again gather in Lewisburg next month to see who is the best of them all, there's a very good chance lowly District 12 could have some of the fastest qualifiers in several events instead of the slowest. Now that the PPL has been joined by the PCL, some extremely good swimmers have moved from District One to 12, and LC will be right in the thick of things.

This year's Lansdale Catholic team is a classic tournament team, where four or five individuals can score a ton of points, especially when one of them - Al Augustine - is a strong candidate to win one, if not two, state titles.

It will also be interesting to see how the girls from both LC and **Archbishop Wood** do when they go up against the rest of the Keystone State. The teams' rosters are very similar, with several very talented individuals who should make their relay teams dangerous as well. Look for both to finish in the top five in the district team standings and to be well represented at states.

Back in District One

The departure of Lansdale Catholic means District One's remaining AA teams will get to score a few more points than they would have otherwise. One school that should benefit is the **Upper Moreland** boys, whose athletes got their feet wet last year as one of the contenders at Bucknell. The returning veterans - led by Stephen Rowland and Stew Conard - can't wait to try to move up in the standings and to return for a shot at state honors.

Great expectations

The excitement is building in the Suburban One League Continental Conference, where the boys and girls from **Central Bucks East** and **Souderton** are getting ready to go up against the "new kids" on the block, **North Penn**, in the league's championship meet.

One thing of note, a fact that could strike fear into the heart of any triskaidekaphobiacs on the Knights' and Maidens' rosters. It's the date of the SOL Continental championship meet in the pool at Central Bucks South: Friday the 13th.

Just the Facts

Keen's Top 5:

Boys

1. North Penn
2. Souderton
3. Central Bucks East
4. Germantown Academy
5. Central Bucks West

Girls

1. Souderton
2. North Penn
3. Central Bucks East
4. Germantown Academy
5. Archbishop Wood

Meet to watch:

The Upper Moreland boys have a chance to see how they do against another Class AA team, today at 3:30 p.m., when the Golden Bears visit Springfield.

Bill Keen is a staff writer. He can be reached at bkeen@phillyBurbs.com. □

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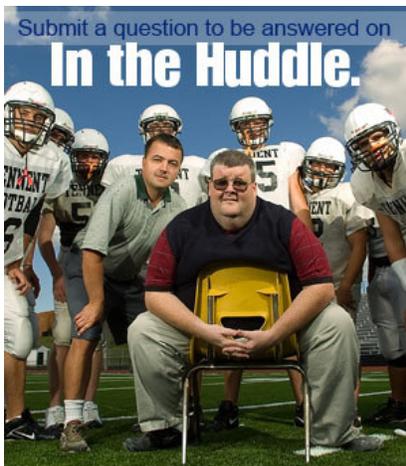
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