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NP's Nees stood alone

By KEV HUNTER

Staff Writer

Zac Nees has come a long way since he was a wiry kid competing at North Penn for the first time.

"When I came in as a freshman, I was a nobody because I hadn't been diving for that long," he recalled.

Just about everybody knew who Nees was at the state championships earlier this month. Over his four-year career for the Knights, he had built a reputation as one of the best divers in the state, and he capped that career in fitting fashion.

Chosen as The Reporter's Athlete of the Year for boys swimming and diving, Nees finished off his diving days at North Penn by winning a silver medal at the PIAA State Championships at Bucknell University.

Nees racked up a score of 533.05, one of the best in the history of the event.

"I'm happy with my score," the senior said afterwards. "I would have liked to come out with a gold my senior year, but who doesn't want that?"

In a funny moment as the medals were being awarded, Nees was having his silver draped around his neck, and the medal slipped off the clip and fell into the pool.

One of the swimmers would dive in and retrieve it. He smiled as he finally got his reward, a symbolic sign of how his patience paid off. And his dedication was huge too.

Along with working with NP diving coach Sue McDonald, Nees was up on the board even more this season.

"I've been practicing a lot more than in past years," he said. "I have a second diving coach now, and I have almost two practices every day."

Nees wants to dive in college but is undecided where he will attend. The senior was key in helping the Knights win the Suburban One League Continental Conference this year, and he also went on to win the SOL Conti

mental diving title and the District One Class AAA title.

He even showed some versatility, winning the 50 freestyle in a dual-meet victory over Penndel early in the season. He swam a solid time, under 24 seconds.

"He's kind of toyed around with it over time, and he's just a talented athlete," Knights coach Brian Daly said of Nees after the meet.

As his versatility grew, so did his leadership.

"With Dan Schoendorfer there as a leader for me throughout my freshman year, it helped me out a lot, and when he went to CB South, I had to be the leader," Nees said. "I had to play the leadership role, and playing that for three years I learned to dive better."

Nees came very close to not only winning gold at states - North Allegheny's Connor Kuremsky beat him by eight points and change, but Nees also was right around the state record set by North Penn's Steve Bohner, who won gold with a 541.60 in 1998.

Nees had two top-three finishes at states - he won bronze as a junior. He always seemed at ease at the bigger events.

"I was expected to perform since tenth grade, so I'm used to the pressure by now," he said. "By now, the state meet is just another meet."



ZAC NEES

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