



Montclair Swimming: Fresh start for Cougars swimmers



Junior Arian Jobst will be a key for the Cougars girls team, and MKA coach Patrick Collins expects her to perform well in the 50 and 100 freestyle races.

PHOTO BY ANDREW GARDA/STAFF

by Andrew Garda

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Deep in the bowels of the Montclair Kimberley Academy high school campus, the Cougars swim team is prepping for the upcoming season.

Head coach Patrick Collins saw an increase in the numbers of swimmers this year, which he thinks will help both the boys and girls compete.

“The boys team, this year we’ve got six freshmen coming in so that really builds up my numbers,” Collins said as his teams got ready for a dual meet against West Orange on Tuesday, Dec. 3. “We only had seven boys last year, so it’s a little tough to compete in the county against teams that have 20-30 guys coming in against us. This year is kind of like a fresh start. We’ve never had those numbers before. So, I am really looking forward to the boys being equal with the girls in terms of size.”

The girls team graduated several seniors, but Collins said the team is about where they were last year in terms of depth.

On the boys side, Collins is looking towards Patrick Flint, while the girls will lean on senior Arian Jobst and Junior Natalia Eichmann.

"[Flint] can kind of swim it all. So he'll do the 500 free, the 200 IM — he consistently competes in everything," Collins said. "Natalia, she's been our reliable free-styler, she can swim it all too. Ariana is another sprinter; 50 free, 100 free, she does both."

While there's no one discipline that the Cougars focus on, they do try to compete in the tougher races.

"We don't have one strong group of, like, sprinters per se, or distance swimmers," he explained. "So we try to even it out and swim all the events strong. Especially those kids who are proficient in all four strokes, we have them doing the 200 individual medley or 100 fly. "

According to Collins, while other teams have a larger amount of students, they don't seem to have the variety of ability the Cougars have.

"They may not have the kids to swim all those strokes, so we try to fill up those harder events and make sure those are our strengths."

Along with targeting the tougher events to gain an advantage in the meets, MKA is also aiming at schools that they barely lost to in the 2017-18 season.

"We had a few dual meets last year that were really close," he said. "So our goal is, if we lost a meet and it's within, say, 10 points, then that's going to be a focus for the next year. Where can we try to chip away anything we can from [that lead]?"

There are some teams MKA sees every year they know they will be within striking distance of.



*The MKA boys swim team will be led by senior Patrick Flint. "[Flint] can kind of swim it all," said head coach Pat Collins.
PHOTO BY ANDREW GARDA/STAFF*

"Definitely Caldwell, West Essex for the boys. I would say Mount St. Dominic for the girls," Collins said. "Verona, Glen Ridge - those are some of the teams that are our size, our caliber."

Aside from the smaller schools, there are a few different points during the season where Collins is hoping his team will be peaking.

"The County Championships [in January] is our midseason meet to see where we're at," he said. "Then we have Preps in February, and that's our culminating meet at the end of the year."

The Cougars got off to a strong start against West Orange, though they fell short in the end. Despite the loss, MKA could take heart in keeping the results close losing by just a few points, where normally they would fall much further behind.

MKA can build on that as they turn their focus to their meet against West Essex on the road Thursday, Dec. 13.