

Granbury swimmers splash into Class 5A

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Rick Mauch

Nothing like having an Olympic gold medalist join the team to get a high school swim coach excited about the coming season.

And is Granbury coach Robert Laura ever excited.

A few weeks ago 16-year-old junior Dana Vollmer announced she will swim with the Pirates in District 4-5A competition and beyond. Vollmer swam a leg of the women's 4x200-meter relay that set a world record in Athens, Greece with a time of 7:53.42.

Vollmer's older brother Nick helped Laura's teams achieve greatness at the Class 4A level in recent years. Nick, now swimming as a freshman at TCU, qualified for state three consecutive years, as did Matt Greene.

Georgia Steenberge, now a freshman on Notre Dame's swim team, qualified for state four consecutive years for Laura.



Members of the Granbury High School swim team

So it's easy to understand why Laura is thrilled about the addition of Dana Vollmer. Not only did he lose arguably the two best swimmers in GHS history, the Pirates are moving up to Class 5A this season, so bringing someone on board who will not only likely break school and state records, but perhaps national marks as well is a big plus.

But Laura is looking forward to the season, which begins today (Tuesday) with the Pirates hosting a meet at Southlake Carroll Natatorium, for more than Vollmer's participation.

"The Dana factor makes us very competitive at the district meet, but we also have much better depth than in past years," Laura said of his girls team. "With two freshmen, Seabre Pope and Xela Steenberge (Georgia's younger sister) to add to all our returning swimmers, we should be able to make it tough on Summit to win district."

As for the boys, Laura also spoke of the depth he will depend on.

"With the graduation of probably the two greatest swimmers in GHS history (Nick Vollmer and Greene), we will not have the same quality as the past three years, but we will make up for it with better depth.

"Our leaders this year will be Brier Steenberge, a state finalist and regional champion on two relays the past two years, and Matt Weyandt, a junior who has placed at regionals and district champion (on relays) the past two years."

Laura said he is expecting big things from his girls relay teams this season as well. Of course, Dana is expected to swim relays, but there is plenty of talented swimmers battling to join her.

"All three of our (girls) relays should be very solid," Laura said. "We have six to eight girls who will compete for the relay spots for district, three of whom were on the state relay last year (Carrie Greene, Erica Gillum and Christin Prater-Hidalgo)."

Also returning for the Lady Pirates are district and regional finalists Sharai Cypher, Mary Hidalgo and Lauren Farris, along with district finalists Caitlan Davis and Kristin Townsend.

"Dana is the only sure bet to place at regionals and qualify for state, but Carrie Greene will have a good chance in her events," Laura said. "And we should have two relays do well."

"But Region II in 5A is the second-best region in the state this year, so it will take a great effort by all four girls on the relays to make state."

Others who placed in district last season and are back for the boys team are Adam Moore, Justin Kindred and Jacob Shanahan. Robert Weber is new to the team, but has swam competitively regularly in the summer during past years and

Laura expects him to be a strong addition.

Also, Laura said freshman Jacob Cypher should do well in district.

Laura said it is uncertain whether Tim Greene, who swam on relays at state last season, will recover from shoulder surgery in time to compete at district.

As for the top teams in the boys district, Laura said Summit and North Crowley are the teams to beat. He said Summit's boys have the most depth.