

Vollmer's first GHS swim meet Thursday

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Ron Forrest helped Dana Vollmer achieve the worldwide success she has enjoyed by training the Olympic gold-medal swimmer since she was 11 years old. Now he finds himself in a strange position. He is coaching against her. Forrest is coach of the Arlington Heights swim team in Fort Worth. His team will face Granbury in a dual meet Thursday at 6:30 p.m. at Wilkerson-Greines Activities Center in Fort Worth, Vollmer's first high school meet.

"Yes, it is kind of neat that Dana is swimming against a team I coach for her first meet," said Forrest. "It should be fun."

Vollmer announced shortly after helping the women's 4x200 relay win a gold medal and set a world record (7:53.42) in Athens, Greece in August that she would swim district and beyond for GHS. After looking at the schedule, she, Forrest and Pirate coach Robert Laura decided it would be interesting to have her make her high school debut against Forrest's squad.

"It just seems pretty cool that this is how it worked out," Vollmer said. "I am so excited about swimming for Granbury High. I can't wait."

So excited was Vollmer that she spent the weekend getting everything in order equipment-wise.

"I've got my bag packed already," Vollmer said Saturday. "You really want to represent your high school well and make them look good."

"I have really looked forward to this."

Another reason for swimming Vollmer in this meet is to try and get her name on the record board several times at Wilkerson-Greines. Laura and Forrest figured between this meet and the District 4-5A Meet, which will also be held at Wilkerson-Greines, Vollmer has a chance to set six records.

Vollmer also swims for the Fort Worth Area Swim Team, a club team coached by Forrest that trains at Wilkerson-Greines.

But even though Vollmer has trained for years at the center, she competes elsewhere.

"There are some pretty quick records up there. I'll have to really be at my best," Vollmer said. "It's special to have your name up in your home pool. It's nice when people walk by and see your name and the record, and so many little kids look up to you."

Vollmer will swim the 200 individual medley, 100 backstroke and lead off the 4x100 freestyle relay Thursday. The lead leg of a relay can count her time toward a record.

"Ron said every day he stares at that record board and he got to thinking how many could she get?" Laura said. "She deserves to have her name up there several times. I've been a visiting coach to that pool many times, so it's a priority with me as well."

Vollmer's events at district are yet to be decided, Laura said, although it's pretty much a given she will swim the 200 free. She qualified for the Olympics by winning a gold medal in the event in the Olympic Trials in Long Beach, Calif.

"There's no way back in September Ron and I planned this," Laura said. "We just looked at the schedule right before Christmas and thought it would be kind of neat."

Laura said Vollmer, who normally practices twice a day in Fort Worth at Wilkerson-Greines, attended her first practice with the GHS team recently. "That kind of got the team excited to see she really is a member," Laura said. "The girls are really looking forward to swimming with her."

Vollmer will also swim in Saturday's Midway Invitational in Waco. She will compete in the 500 free and three relays (400 free, 200 free and medley relay), probably anchoring each, Laura said.

"I want all of the girls on the relays to have a chance to swim with her," Laura said. "The Waco meet has annually helped me decide who swims what in district. That's the way we've done it two years in a row and it has really helped the kids do well in district."

The District 4-5A Meet is Jan. 28-29. Vollmer said she felt it was important to swim a couple of meets prior to that competition with the team to get herself and her new teammates used to her being on board.

"After this meet I'll bond more," Vollmer said. "I just want to be with the team more, to help us all get pumped up before district."

Vollmer is no stranger to GHS meets, however. She often attended meets when her older brother Nick, now a freshman swimmer at TCU, was competing and qualifying for state three consecutive years.

"She really enjoyed being around it with her brother," Laura said. "It's good to have a Vollmer still swimming for us."

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