

Vollmer breaks three pool records

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FORT WORTH -- At only 17 years of age, Dana Vollmer's seen the world and won an Olympic gold medal. But she had not earned a letter jacket for participating in a high school sport. Until now.

Vollmer officially made her mark on Granbury High School swimming history Thursday, setting three pool records at the Wilkerson-Greines Activity Center in Fort Worth in a dual meet against Arlington Heights.

Vollmer broke pool records in the 200-yard individual medley (2:06.25), 100 backstroke (57.82) and the 100 freestyle (51.33, her time in leading off the 400 freestyle relay).

And she earned that letter jacket. So no more borrowing her brother Nick's or her boyfriend Dustin Massey's.

"I really wanted a letter jacket, and now I'll have one of my own," an excited Vollmer said, following with an unintended pun. "Dustin's is huge. I'm swimming in it."

Vollmer was a member of the women's 4x200 freestyle relay in Athens, Greece in August. That quartet set a world record with a time of 7:53.42.

Vollmer didn't set any world records Thursday. She didn't even post any personal-bests, but she was clearly the class of the meet in leading the Lady Pirates to a 76-9 victory against the Yellowjackets. It was the sixth victory in seven meets for the Lady Pirates this season.

The Pirate boys squad tied Arlington Heights 48-48.

Arlington Heights is coached by Ron Forrest, who also coaches Vollmer on the Fort Worth Area Swim Team (FAST). He trained her in preparation for the Olympic Trials in Long Beach, Calif. last summer.

"She's just having fun," Forrest said. "This is fun because it's with kids she grew up with. It's almost like old home week for the [Granbury] SEALS."

Many of the swimmers alongside Vollmer, who was decked out in her GHS suit, cap and warmup jacket, swam with her on the SEALS when Vollmer was 6 to 11 years old. Even her SEALS coach, Janet Steenberge, also an assistant with FAST, was there.

"I've been swimming with her since second grade," said junior Lauren Farris. "Even then she was so fast that I'd get second to her in a race and I'd say I got first because Dana doesn't count."

Carrie Greene, a sophomore who qualified for state as a freshman, has known Vollmer for years also. She said her first thought is she's thrilled Vollmer is on her team, but she stopped for a second and put herself in the place of an opposing high school swimmer.

"I'd go, 'Oh no!'" Greene said, laughing. "They look at her and...no hope. The best they can do is come in second."

Vollmer, a senior, is only the third Olympian swimmer in history to also swim for her high school. She is the only swimmer from this past summer's games to do so.

"Until now the focus was on the Olympics," Vollmer said, adding being a part of the GHS squad will be among her fondest memories in life. "High school swimming in general is a lot of fun."

"There's just something special about being a part of your high school team."

Vollmer has practiced at Wilkerson-Greines for years, but had never competed there in a scholastic event. Thus, her name was absent from the record board.



Dana Vollmer makes a splash for GHS

"It would be weird not having the best female swimmer in Texas not having her name up there," Forrest said. "With the exception of the 100 breast, she's beaten every one of those times in practice."

Granbury coach Robert Laura said the stage is set for Vollmer to try for three more records at the District 4-5A Meet on Jan. 29 at the same pool. It is almost certain she will swim the 200 free, the event in which she placed sixth in Athens, and she will be on two relays, but her other individual event is still up in the air.

One of the records Vollmer broke Thursday belonged to Lamar senior Codie Hanson, the reigning state champion in the 200 free (although it is not certain she will swim that event in competition for state this season). Vollmer bested Hanson's 100 free mark of 51.36 set in 2004.

The other two records Vollmer broke had stood for more than a decade. Ashley Bigbie had the previous mark of 57.91 set in 1992 and Lori Werth's 2:07.30 in the 200 IM had stood since 1989.

"The girl who had that record (200 IM), I coached her when I was an assistant at the Fort Worth Swim Team," Laura said. "We swam at [Tarrant County Junior College] then."

"That's the last one left from my era, but I'm not sad. Our plan is to get Dana up there several times because no one deserves it more."

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