

Vollmer going for records at state

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by RICK MAUCH

Dana Vollmer has faced moments of truth before. Re: the Olympic Trials in Long Beach, Calif. this past summer. She won the 200-meter freestyle competition and earned a spot on the U.S. Team. Re: the Olympic games in Athens, Greece, also this past summer. She swam on the 800-meter freestyle relay, helping set a world record of 7:53.42 and winning a gold medal.

And now this weekend she has a final chance to set a couple of national high school records at the UIL Swim Meet at the University of Texas at Austin.

Vollmer will be competing in three events, the 200-yard freestyle, the 100 butterfly, and anchoring the 200 freestyle relay.

"I do want those records, and I feel I have a good chance to get them," Vollmer said. "I don't want to say they're easy. They're not. They're definitely difficult times.

"But I'm very pleased with the way I'm swimming. I dropped two seconds from my district time (1:49.23) in the 200 free, and I'm very happy about that. But I can go faster."

Vollmer will be going after the national record of 1:45.98 in the 200 free, set by Cynthia Woodhead of Mission Viejo, Calif. in 1982. Vollmer's state qualifying time was 1:47.18 at the Class 5A Region II Meet in Addison two weeks ago.

Vollmer is 26 hundredths of a second away from beating the state record of 1:46.93, set by Arlington Lamar's Codie Hansen in 2002. Hansen, who has never lost a high school race, switched from the 200 free to the 100 and 500 free this season, and will compete at state in both events.

Vollmer has a best time of 1:45.37 in the 200 free. But that was in a club meet in Oklahoma City, not at a sanctioned high school meet, and it is therefore not recognized as the national high school record (even though a high schooler swam it).

Vollmer's time of 54.10 in the 100 fly at regionals has already bested the previous state record of 54.25 by Alison McLead of Cedar Park in 2003. It has not been certified by the UIL, though, because Granbury coach Robert Laura believes she has a faster time in her this weekend.

"I figured we'd wait and see what happens," Laura said with a grin after regionals.

Misty Hyman, of Shadown Mountain High School in Phoenix, set the national record in the 100 fly with a time of 52.41 in 1996.

Barring a mishap, Vollmer is virtually assured of gold medals in each of her events. She has a lead of more than three seconds over the runner-up qualifier in the 200 free and has a lead of nearly two seconds in the 100 fly.

But records, that's going to take a little more work, Laura said.

"She's preparing for the World Championship Trials (in April in Indianapolis)," Laura said. "A lot of what she does this weekend is going to depend on how her training is going there.

"It's going to be a matter of how she feels. By the end of regionals, she was very tired.

"Without question I think she can swim that fast. And I know she wants all the records she can get."

In addition to her individual events, Vollmer and her teammates on the 200 free relay (sophomore Carrie Greene and freshmen Seabre Pope and Xela Steenberge) will be trying to make school history. No girls relay has ever reached the finals at state.

"I think we're all extremely motivated," Vollmer said. "All three girls dropped a lot of time (at regionals), and I think we all have our best swims ahead."

The quartet swam a 1:40.47 at regionals, finishing second behind Plano (1:38.36, tied for third seed at state). The Lady Pirates are seeded 13th at state, but are slightly more than a second behind No. 8 seed Fort Bend Elkins (1:39.39) and just slightly farther behind No. 6 seed The Woodlands (1:39.04).

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