

Sports



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Photos by Brad O'Neil

Forest Lake swimmer Ella Anderson's skill in the butterfly (upper left), backstroke (upper right), breaststroke (lower left) and freestyle (lower right) added up to a new school record in the 200-yard individual medley on Oct. 16.

After many attempts, Ella Anderson smashes school IM record

Brad O'Neil
Sports Editor

Every member of the Forest Lake girls swimming and diving team, and every fan and supporter thereof, has known that one of the marks on the team record board, hanging on the wall opposite the stands in the Southwest Junior High pool room, was under serious threat this season.

Amanda Nelson's 200-yard individual medley record, set 12 years ago at 2 minutes, 19.33 seconds, has been quaking since junior Ella Anderson swam that event in 2:19.69 in a dual meet against Roseville on Sept. 13.

Since then, whenever the varsity IM — the sixth event of 24 in a standard varsity/JV schedule — came up at any Forest Lake meet, talk of new school records could be heard among team members poolside and fans in the stands. The cheering always became a little more intense than usual as Anderson inevitably pulled well ahead of her

competitors and was left to race only the clock as she worked through one down-and-back leg each of butterfly, backstroke and breaststroke.

The cheering would always reach a fever pitch as she completed the down lap of the freestyle leg and made her turn for home. Every eye would shoot to the clock as soon as Anderson hit the wall — and in so many meets since that Roseville race, her supporters would see a time just slower than the standing record. At a meet against White Bear Lake on Oct. 4, her time was no more than a tenth of second off.

The general scene described above repeated itself at the Rangers' final home meet of the season, a dual with Park on Oct. 16 — with one slight alteration.

"[Before the race] I was really nervous because I was starting to hit that point where I didn't know if I was going to get it," Anderson said.

As she had so often, Anderson quickly pulled

ahead of two teammates and three opponents. Swimming in lane four, usually reserved for the top competitor from the home team, Anderson rolled through the breaststroke leg in 30.51 seconds, the backstroke in 35.89 and the breaststroke in 40.01.

The differing stroke speeds makes the mathematics of pace calculation difficult, but everyone present seemed to sense that the record was in reach at last as Anderson made the final flip-turn and drove for home. The clock counted up in defiance of Anderson's strokes — 2:13, 2:14, 2:15, 2:16 — and then she made the last overhead lunge for the wall. Beside Anderson's lane assignment, the clock's giant numbers hung frozen: 2:18.97.

The cheers echoed throughout the cavern of the Southwest pool room.

"When I first touched the wall, I didn't see the time; I knew I broke it because of everyone's reaction," Anderson said.

"The reaction of everybody after it happened meant more to me than actually breaking the record."

Preparation for a record chase that required proficiency in all four strokes was often a process of analysis of previous results and variations in training.

"Every time I would swim it, we'd always look at which split time was the slowest, and then I would practice that stroke as much as I could all week, in hopes that I could get a little faster the next week," Anderson said.

There was, of course, still a competitive meet going on, and Anderson's first-place finish added six points to the Rangers' total. The IM was a lucrative race for the Rangers, with eighth-grader Haley Bent scoring four points in second place (2:32.59) and senior Lindsey Biehl splitting a five-point haul with Park's Cheyenne Nelson when both finished in the exact same time, 2:32.57. (Normally,

third place scores three points and fourth place two points, thus a tie for third granting each swimmer 2.5.)

Those points contributed to an eventual Ranger victory, 96.5 to 83.5.

Beyond the IM, the Rangers picked up eight victories among the remaining 11 events. Anderson contributed to meet-best times in the 200-yard (1:50.06) and 400-yard (4:01.03) freestyle relays, in both cases teaming with fellow juniors Ellie Thiele, Jane Burk and sister Paige Anderson.

Paige took a pair of individual freestyle victories, in the 200-yard (2:07.43) and 500-yard (5:43.69) distances. Thiele picked up wins in the freestyle sprints (50-yard, 26.92; 100-yard, 58.25).

Freshman Lauren Eddy was top finisher in the 100-yard breaststroke (1:17.78). Junior Mckinley Leavitt placed first in the 1-meter diving (214.50 points).

With the dual meet

season complete, the Rangers are in the midst of a long training period ahead of the JV Suburban East Conference meet (Nov. 3 at Stillwater Junior High) and the Section 7AA championship (Nov. 8-10 at Northdale Middle School in Coon Rapids).

The two best swimmers or relay teams in each race at sections advance to the Class AA state meet (Nov. 15-17 at the University of Minnesota), as will the top four divers.

Senior diver Taylor Ritchot is the only past qualifier on this year's team and will be favored to make it back for the third straight season.

Now that Ella Anderson's chase for the school record is complete, her attention now shifts to the chase for a state berth.

"I don't know if that will happen this year, or if I'll need to train and get stronger and have it happen next year, but that's the ultimate goal," she said.

Ranger, Husky volleyball teams learn section tournament paths

Brad O'Neil
Sports Editor

The Forest Lake and North Lakes Academy volleyball teams will each see home action in their respective section tournaments.

The Rangers, defending champions of Section 7AAA, will sit atop the bracket as the No. 1 seed.

That seeding had already been determined before the Rangers took part in the Rochester Exchange Club Volleyball Tournament Oct. 19-20, but that event only gives the challengers in the section even more reason to fear the Rangers — they swept six matches to score a first-place finish.

In two-set pool play, the Rangers blew away Fillmore Central (25-23, 25-9), Rochester Mayo (25-17, 25-16) and Rochester Lourdes (25-18, 25-9) on Oct. 19.

In a final pool match the following day, the Rangers split the sets with Glencoe-Silver Lake 25-16, 23-25, but earned the win by scoring more points

overall.

The ranking rounds were played as best-of-three matches. The Rangers survived a strong test from Rochester Century 25-19, 19-25, 15-12 before knocking off St. Louis Park 25-22, 25-22 to finish as the lone unbeaten team in the tournament.

The Rangers had also won a tournament in Duluth earlier in the year, giving them two trophies for the season — so far.

The Rangers (22-6) have been hanging out in the "others receiving votes" section of the state rankings lately and will avoid ranked teams during their section run.

The 11-team tournament started Wednesday, though the Rangers got to skip the opening round. They will host a quarterfinal game Friday at 7 p.m. against either No. 8 Blaine (11-16) or No. 9 Cambridge-Isanti (3-21).

A win would get the Rangers a home match in the semifinals Oct. 30 at 7 p.m., against either

No. 4 Elk River (15-13) or No. 5 Grand Rapids (16-12). Those potential opponents were the top two seeds last year and were knocked off by then-No. 3 Forest Lake on the Rangers' run to the section title.

The championship game will be played at Andover Oct. 3 at 7 p.m. The headliners from the other side of the bracket, and the Rangers' most likely title game opponents should they get there, are No. 2 St. Francis (18-8) and No. 3 Anoka (19-9).

Huskies seeded 9th

The North Lakes Academy volleyball team placed fifth in the Twin Cities Athletic Conference tournament Oct. 13, dropping a three-set decision against Math and Science Academy before beating Twin Cities Academy and Hmong Academy in the placement rounds.

The Huskies completed their 2018 regular season by beating Academy for Science and Agriculture on Oct. 15 and losing to Spectrum on Oct. 16.

The Huskies (9-12) earned

the No. 9 seed in the 23-team Section 4A tournament, which is composed primarily of TCAC opponents and other charter and private schools around the metro area.

The section bracket utilizes a complex six-round, triple-bye setup that is probably more easily expostulated in type than it was for the organizers to draw up.

As the No. 9 seed, the Huskies received a bye past the first round and played either No. 16 Liberty Classical or No. 17 Minneapolis North at home Wednesday.

A win in that game would see them travel to No. 8 West Lutheran, which earned two byes, Friday at 7 p.m.

A win there would send the Huskies to No. 1 Nova Classical Academy, which earned three byes, Oct. 30 at 7 p.m.

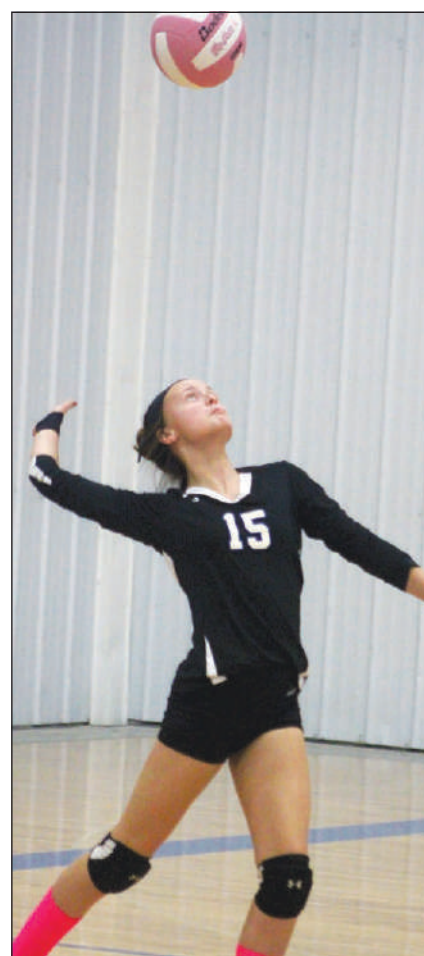


Photo by Brad O'Neil

Volleyball playoff action begins this week for local teams.