

## ARCHIVES

### Northfield girls swimming and diving wins state title in 1998

By **BOB BRADFORD**  
Northfield News Archives

*Note: This story originally ran in a November, 1998, edition of the Northfield News and has been edited for clarity and length.*

The Northfield High School girls swimming team won the Class A state championship Nov. 25 at the University of Minnesota Aquatic Center in Minneapolis.

The Gators scored 230 points, well ahead of the 160 runner-up total of Hutchinson, last year's state champion.

The state title is the first for an NHS girls program affiliated with the Minnesota State High School League.

The Gators capped the meet in style when their 400 freestyle relay of Sarah Perrott, Sonia Karimi, Sawra Karimi and Kristin Ophaug won the event with a time of 3:40.03. The time was a season-best by more than a second and was a tenth of a second shy of a school record.

Fridley was a distant runner-up in the event with 3:42.09.

The Gator 400 relay got off to a good start in the first leg when Perrott swam a personal-best 100-yard split of 54.89.

"We really wanted to win the relay," Perrott said, "because we haven't lost all year, and we've always been together. I really wanted to get my best time so we could break the school record, even though we didn't. I wasn't nervous because I knew we would do good."

In the second and third legs, Sonia and Sawra Karimi followed with season-best splits of 55.89 and 55.7, respectively, which gave the Gators a body length heading into the last leg.

That's when Ophaug saved her best for last with a personal-best split of 53.5.

"I was kind of nervous because I was going up against the 100 freestyle champion (Emily Mondloh of Fridley)," Ophaug said, "so I just wanted to keep the lead. The finish was definitely a relief."

"It was kind of disappointing that we missed a school record by a tenth of a second, but I was happy that it was over and that we won because it has been a long-time goal for us."

The Gators got off to a good start in the first event, the 200 medley relay, when Ophaug, Megan Daymont, Sawra Karimi and Betsy Lueck finished in fourth place with a season-best time of 1:53.42.

In the next event, the 200 freestyle, Sonia Karimi placed eighth in 2:01.82 to score 11 place for the Gators.

Then, when Ophaug and Sawra Karimi finished third and fourth, respectively, in the 200 individual medley, the Gators took the lead for good.

In the 200 IM, Ophaug swam a personal-best of 2:13.53 (a four-second improvement) and Sawra Karimi stroked a season-best 2:13.85.

In the ninth event, the 200 freestyle relay, the Gators all but wrapped up the title after Daymont, Lueck, Leah Hilde and Perrott swam a runner-up 1:40.20, a season best by two and a half seconds.

With three events remaining, the Gators knew the state title would be theirs. The only drama was the margin of victory.

"We had it pretty much sewed up after the 200 freestyle relay," Northfield coach Doug Davis said. "We were in a good situation. What we

wanted to do then was finish strong, go for some pride with some more good swims."

In the 10th event, the 100 backstroke, Ophaug posted a school-record time of 59.10, which tacked on 17 points to the Gators' total. Then in the 100 breaststroke, Daymont swam a 14th-place 1:12.82.

When the Gators ended the meet with the win in the 400 relay, it was frosting on the cake.

Twelve of Northfield's 13 performances were either personal or season bests.

"It's fantastic," Davis said. "I'm very proud of the girls. They achieved everything that they pretty much set from the beginning of the season. We knew we had a shot, and we knew it would be an uphill battle. It took a lot of work to accomplish this. When these kids look back and reflect on this moment, it will be something that they'll cherish for a lifetime."

"And the four seniors (Karimi twins, Hilde and Daymont) who worked with Skip (Boyum), it's a great shot in the arm for the team. They've won conference and section championships and have done well at state in the past, and now they have a state title to go along with it. I know we were in the smaller class, but there was some good competition up there, with good times. When nine of the 11 events have at least one All-American consideration time, you know it was a tough meet. It was a good meet all the way across the board."

"It was really exciting," said Sawra Karimi, who contributed 29 points in the individual events. "Everybody was really pumped, even though we knew we had a good chance. We were surprised when we were winning it and beating Hutchinson and everything."



Sarah Perrott exhorts with teammate Kristin Ophaug after Northfield's 400 freestyle relay won the state title.

### GREAT GATORS



### Gators race to 2nd state title in 2012 one year after runner-up finish

By **JORDAN OSTERMAN**  
Northfield News Archives

*Note: This story originally ran in a November, 2012, edition of the Northfield News and has been edited for length and clarity.*

With a soundtrack provided by Queen, the Northfield Gators lingered on the medal podium Saturday at the state swimming and diving meet and drank in the kind of applause reserved for only one thing: state champions.

Smiles and tears of joy took over the Gators' faces as they reveled in the moment, knowing they had proven themselves to be the best Class A team in the state just one year after finishing second.

"It's like Christmas and your birthday all times 10," sophomore Grete Baker said. "You just can't stop smiling."

Northfield had no reason to stop smiling all day as it got out to an early lead and ran away with a 48-point victory over last year's champs Sartell-St. Stephen. The Gators flipped the script from 2011 with fantastic performances from seven swimmers and sophomore Bailey DuPay, who repeated as diving champion.

"I can't even describe how amazing it feels to be on this tea," senior Emily Anderson said. "Everyone worked hard and we're all so excited to be here right now. It's amazing."

Anderson helped Northfield to its second state champion performance of the day in the 200-yard freestyle relay, which gave the Gators a 184-120.5 lead it never even came close to surrendering.

"We just took (the lead) and ran with it," senior Allie Clark said. "There was no stopping us once we got going."

Northfield's 200-yard freestyle relay and its third place 400 freestyle relay both qualified as All-American consideration times, highlighting an afternoon the Gators dominated from start to finish.

"It's just unbelievable," junior Emily Lundstrom said. "Everything we've been training for came true. It's hard to put into words how excited we all are."

The three seniors of Clark, Walters and Anderson agreed there was no better way to end their Northfield careers than what happened Saturday.

"This is so cool," Clark said. "I can't even express my feelings in words right now. It's such a good way to go out."

A now-annual tradition of going to Chili's to eat after the state meet had the promise of an extra element of fulfillment; it's not every day you get to eat dinner after winning a state championship.

"There are going to be a lot of desserts ordered tonight, let me tell you," Lundstrom said.

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### 200 freestyle relay title adds to enjoyment of 2012 team crown

By **JORDAN OSTERMAN**  
Northfield News Archives

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By the time senior Emily Anderson hit the water for the final leg, Northfield's 200 freestyle relay team had a sizable lead over Mankato West.

But Mankato West junior Danielle Nack was hunting. That's the same Danielle Nack who four events earlier had won the 50-yard freestyle in 22.82 seconds, breaking her own state record from the year before and beating seventh-place Anderson by a full 1.84 seconds.

By the time Anderson hit the turn after 25 yards her lead had diminished considerably, and with 10 yards to go Nack continued bearing down. Then, somehow, Anderson found another gear, negating Nack's charge and out-touching her to the wall by .42 seconds, which gave Northfield its second individual state championship of the day in 1 minutes, 37.06 seconds.

"Emily Anderson can just haul butt home," said senior Claire Walters, who helped deliver that final-leg lead with a blistering 24.22-second 50 yards to open the race.

Walter's opening leg to get the Gators a lead, sophomore Grete Baker's maintaining of it (24.28), junior Emily Lundstrom's delivering of it (24.28) and

Anderson's closing the race out (24.09) all added up to a championship-worthy time that was long overdue.

"I've been on the sprint relay the last couple of years, and for the last two years we've gotten second," Anderson said. "So for my senior year to finally win that one race means a lot."

The fast-flying foursome came together Saturday for an aligning-of-the-stars type performance; to that point the relay had featured freshman Bailey Domish, not Baker. On Friday in the preliminary round, it was Domish that helped put Northfield into the finals as the third seed behind The Blake School and Mankato West.

With a four-event limit per meet, coaches and athletes have to be strategic in where they choose to compete, and coach Deb Seitz's choice to leave Baker off both the 200- and 400-yard freestyle relays Friday left her open for the possibility of a move Saturday. After sophomore Bailey DuPay held on for the diving championship, Seitz decided to roll the dice and shoot for the top in the 200-yard freestyle relay, swapping Domish out for Baker and moving senior Allie Clark to the 400-yard freestyle relay instead of Baker.

It's safe to say at this point the move worked out.

"Deb's the coach for a reason; she know what she's doing," Baker said. "I just gave it my all and put my heart into the race."

Baker and her teammates were



Grete Baker, Emily Lundstrom and Claire Walters celebrate their state champion time Saturday in the 200-yard freestyle relay. (Jordan Osterman/Northfield News)

rewarded with a trip to the top of the award podium, doing their best to maintain their balance while crunched together on the small stand.

"It's just unbelievable," Lundstrom said. "Everything we've been training for came true. It's hard to put into words how excited we all are."

For Walters, who moved to Min-

nesota from Texas with just her senior year ahead of her, the individual and team championships are the culmination of an extremely pleasant surprise.

"I thought this was going to be the crappiest year of my life moving her my senior year, and everyone made it so wonderful," she said. "It's just a great way to top it off."

### DuPay closes out 2nd diving title to help Gators to team title

By **MICHAEL HUGHES**  
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*Note: This story was originally published in a November, 1998, edition of the Northfield News and has been edited for length and clarity.*

To get to the mound, future Hall of Famer closer Mariano Rivera of the New York Yankees has to cross the outfield grass, and his jog through those couple hundred feet brings with it all the feeling of inevitability. Confidence radiates from Rivera as he warms up, signaling to opposing batters there's a certain level of futility to their attempts to beat him. A huge part of that confidence is Rivera's wielding of the cutter, a nearly un-hittable pitch that puts him in a league of his own.

Well, Rivera can keep his cutter; sophomore Bailey DuPay has the inward 1 1/2.

With one dive to go and a 22.55-point lead in the Class A state diving meet, DuPay needed a final knockout blow to close things out for good. Strolling down the diving board knowing she had something up her sleeve the competition simply couldn't match, DuPay placed her feet on the end of the board and faced backward toward the wall. Seconds later, she propelled herself backward, grabbed her ankles and tucked her legs close to her body as she flipped fully around and cleanly entered the water facing away from the wall.

By the time her head emerged the judges were well on their way to awarding her a 46.2, her best score of the competition and enough to give her what would eventually be a 34.25-point margin of victory for her second straight diving title.

"It's the cherry on top of the season," DuPay said. "I came into it hoping it would come out as



Bailey DuPay's competition watches Saturday as she completes her 10th dive on the way to a second straight state championship. (Jordan Osterman/Northfield News)

a win, but thought, 'whatever happens, happens.'"

DuPay guaranteed it came out as a win with a wire-to-wire lead that all led up to her exclamation point of a final dive. Diving coach Dan DuPay said many athletes use their best dive in the preliminary round to make sure they have enough points to make it into the final, but Bailey is confident her other dives will carry her through that she saves her best for last.

"Knowing she has that dive at the end is awesome," Dan said. "She has it there because she knows it's a great dive."

That dive didn't disappoint Saturday, with Bailey delivering it in the same steely-nerved fashion that won her a state title as a freshman.

"I just knew that I had to do the dive the best I could," Bailey said of the final attempt, "(The diving title) means more this time, just because it could happen again next year."

Saturday's final dive came very close to never happening at all for DuPay. Warming up between her dives on Thursday in the preliminary round she slipped on the deck, landed hard on her elbow and tailbone, cutting her foot in the process just three divers before her turn in the rotation.

"After it happened I just told myself I didn't want to be out," she said. "I had to suck it up and pull through it, so that's what I did."

Bailey said adrenaline helped her perform despite the pain, and when it mattered most a pair of deep bruises only added another level of impressiveness to her performance. In fact, Dan was glad for the bruises on the elbow; it meant she had broken her fall with that instead of her head.

"If she would have hit her head they probably wouldn't have let her dive," he said. "The officials probably would have just said, 'You're out.'"

When the final tally was finished, Bailey's 394.25 was "a little disappointing" because it's the first time all season she hasn't topped 400 points. In other words, she didn't have anywhere near her best performance, got injured mid-meet and still had enough to win by almost 35 points.

Oh, and she's working on an even better dive to finish with for next season.

"She's been doing a pike, which is really cool," Dan said. "Hopefully next year she'll be doing that."

The Minnesota diving community might want to get used to seeing Bailey walk down the board with the chance to finish out another meet; this closer isn't going anywhere.