

## SWIMMING

# Hard work paying off at the pool

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Imagine waking up in the morning, going to school and then at the end of the day going to the pool and swimming nonstop for more than two hours and almost 2 miles. The Cloquet-Esko-Carlton girls swim team doesn't have to imagine that scenario because they have lived it nearly every day this fall.

"There is a huge difference between recreational swimming and competitive swimming," said CEC head coach Rachel Peterson. "The girls swim for two-and-a-half hours every day while typically putting in well over 3,000 yards of intense exercise, or around 1.75 miles per day of full body engagement of multiple muscle groups. It is not easy, and it gets repetitious."

Last Saturday, the Lumberjacks participated in the Soderlind Invitational where they finished second in the nine-team event. CEC swam in Superior Tuesday in their eighth dual meet of the season and came away with a 109-

76 win over the Spartans. The win improved the 'Jacks' dual record to 6-2 this season.

This year's squad is a team to contend with.

"The majority of the girls are working hard and seeing the payoffs in their race times and endurance," Peterson said. "The girls who put in the effort are seeing success and will continue to improve. It makes the rest of our season look very exciting."

In 2020, the team had to struggle with Covid and facility issues, but that isn't the case this year.

"Last year was a modified Covid season and then early in the year we had a ventilation system issue at our pool so we had to travel to Duluth Denfeld at night to practice," said assistant coach Jeff Kalm.

"The great thing this year is that so many of our girls are already putting up times that are nearly equal to, or equal to, their sectional times last year. It's nice when you come into a season and the kids have come in with great attitudes and conditioning."

Among those swimming

well so far this season has been Megan Chopskie, who is on track to have a magnificent season, if early results are any indicator.

"Megan Chopskie has been an absolute standout already this year in the 50 free, 100 fly and 100 back," Peterson said. "She took first overall in the 50 free this weekend and has been consistently dropping time."

The 'Jacks have 35 swimmers and five divers out for this year's squad. Chopskie is not the only swimmer who has been impressive in the early going.

"We have so many girls doing super-well with personal records and time drops," Peterson said. "We have a couple of amazing new swimmers at the 7th/8th-grade level that are doing incredibly well for first-year swimmers. We have a brand-new diver as well, Rilee Duvorec, who is an amazing addition to our dive squad. The divers overall are doing phenomenally well and are consistently improving."

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Cloquet junior Megan Chopskie competes in the 100-yard butterfly during Thursday's swim meet against Two Harbors. Photos by Dan Saletel/Pine Knot Sports



Cloquet's Jessica Pagelkopf performs a forward tuck dive during the Lumberjacks swim meet Sept. 23 against Two Harbors.

## LACROSSE

## Older players find games

Pine Knot News

Teenage lacrosse players in Carlton County are getting a chance to play this fall after the Covid-19 pandemic shut down not only the burgeoning youth league but also any headway in the game taking hold at area high schools.

County athletes have been able to play lacrosse in youth leagues since 2013, ultimately in the local Northern Siege league that began in 2018. As the number of players ages 5 to 14 increased, organizers began asking school districts to consider a lacrosse option at high schools. Players needed a league to play in after reaching the cutoff age for the youth league, said Jen Saletel, vice president of

the Northern Siege group.

"Long-time boys players and girls players approached a pivotal point," she said. Unless Carlton County schools joined others in the region — Duluth, Hermantown, Proctor, Grand Rapids, Superior — "they would have nowhere to continue to play the sport they love."

The problem remains after districts said "no" to the idea of adding lacrosse. After a frustrating effort in 2019, Saletel said, the mantra was "we will be back next year." Then the pandemic hit, shutting down the youth league and further stalling the effort for high school options.

Saletel said she found a light at the end of a dark tunnel in Homegrown La-

crosse, a fall league for high school players. It agreed to take on a Northern Siege team if enough "aged out" players signed up. Saletel was happy to see 19 do so, meaning the county could field a team to play Sundays at Twin Cities area venues this fall.

A coach was hired — Ryan Pamperin, a University of Minnesota Duluth player — and practices began in late summer. The team had its first set of games on Sept. 12. The short season will be capped on Oct. 16-17 with the Great Pumpkin Shootout in Farmington.

Saletel said it's been a big commitment for players and their families to travel every weekend. Players have also juggled work



Northern Siege player Sam Ojibway, a sophomore at Carlton High School, cuts between two St. Cloud defenders as he takes the ball to the net during a Sunday double-header in Maple Grove last month. Dan Saletel/Pine Knot Sports

and other sports into their routines. It shows how dedicated the players are, she said.

The Northern Siege league was able to continue this past spring and plans

to do so again. Saletel said there are also plans to offer ninth- and 10th-grade boys games through the Homegrown league this spring.

"It's a short-term fix to a long-term problem," Sa-

letel said. "Carlton County needs high school lacrosse."

For more on the Northern Siege Youth Lacrosse group, visit its Facebook page or tshq.bluesombrero.com/northernsiege