

TEAM SOPRIS FINISHES SHORT COURSE SEASON
ON SEVERAL HIGH NOTES

(Glenwood Springs, CO) – Team Sopris, the local club swim team for kids ages 5 and up, finished the 2012-2013 Short Course season with four championship meets and the team had its best performances to date at all four.

The team sent swimmers to the following end-of-season championship meets:

Silver State Championships, March 1-3 at Denver University's Coors Fitness Center
Senior State Championships, March 1-3 at Denver University's Coors Fitness Center
Colorado Swimming State Age Group Championships, March 8-10 at Epic Center, Fort Collins
USA Swimming/Speedo Champions Series Western Region Short Course Section Championship, March 13-17 at Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center, Federal Way, WA

Silver States

The Silver State meet saw 11 of the team's 14 & under swimmers competing in a variety of events. Many of the swimmers were looking for State Championship qualifying times at this meet, while others were looking to perform well in the larger format, competitive Front Range meet. Nearly all swimmers had best times and as a whole the team swam exceptionally well.

"I would say this was our best Silver State showing since I've been coaching here," said Team Sopris head coach Damon Garrison. "Silver State is pretty intense and was a first-time championship meet for quite a few of our swimmers. They handled themselves very well and competed well against the larger Front Range teams. We had 2 first place finishes – David Hecksel won the 10 & under boys 50 breaststroke with a state qualifying time and Lauren Murphy won the 11-12 girls 50 freestyle, also qualifying for states."

Other standout swims were recorded by Kaitlyn Vanderhoof, Kendall Knott, Will Berkheimer, Shea Newton and Zoe Lyon.

"Kendall Vanderhoof swam a really nice 500 freestyle and just missed qualifying for states. Kendall Knott also swam the 500 free and saw a big time drop. She was all smiles and came away from this meet very motivated for the summer long course season. We're looking forward to big things from her this summer," Garrison continued.

Senior States

Team Sopris sent 5 of its 15 and over swimmers to compete at the Senior State Championships, held at DU the same weekend as Silver States. For Sebastian Joly, Luke

Herron and Hannah Stinson, it was their first State Championship meet. Zachary Baker and Jack Cassidy also competed.

“Zachary Baker had a phenomenal meet,” Garrison noted. “He had huge time drops with best times in every event and competed very well. Sebastian (Joly) looked very strong, especially in his backstroke events. Luke (Herron) also looked good in his backstroke swims. They are both swimming well heading into high school season. Hannah (Stinson) was coming off the girls’ high school season and swam a nice 500 freestyle. For Jack (Cassidy), we treated this as a practice meet and a warm-up for Sectionals later in the month.”

Colorado Age Group State Championships

Seven 14 & under athletes swam at the highly competitive Colorado Age Group State Championship meet in Fort Collins.

“This was one of the fastest state meets I’ve seen since coming to Colorado,” Garrison said. “Several Colorado records were broken, especially in the 11-12 and 13-14 boys age groups. We had some great swims and impressive finishes.”

“Ten-year-old David Hecksel swam in his first ever state meet which was very exciting,” Garrison said. “Lauren Murphy and Zoe Lyon were competitive in the 11-12 age group as well.”

Jessica Tuttle scored highly for the team, taking 2nd place in the 200 butterfly, 4th place in the mile and 5th place in the 500 free. LJ Fetzko also swam well with solid finals swims and high finishes. Zeb Thorsen had an exceptional 200 backstroke and broke the team record, and also swam a best time by over a minute in the mile.

“Zeb finished in the top 16 in the 200 backstroke in a very competitive field. His time a year ago probably would’ve been in the top 8,” noted Garrison.

Western Sectionals

Garrison was impressed with how Jessica Tuttle and Jack Cassidy performed in the team’s first trip to Sectionals since Garrison started coaching five years ago.

“Western Sectionals is a huge, super fast meet,” Garrison explained. “Some of the top swimmers compete at this meet, including Olympic gold medalist Missy Franklin. Jessica and Jack were poised and held it together, while still being impressed with the level of swimming they were watching and competing against. It was without a doubt a lightening fast meet and for both of them, the biggest meet of their lives so far.

“Jessica got some very valuable experience in her first Sectionals meet and will only get better from here,” Garrison noted. “She swam a great mile on the last day, going 17:39

and finishing 39th. Her 200 butterfly was a really solid swim at 2:13 and her 200 freestyle was also nice. I was very pleased with her swims, especially coming off such a great state meet. She put together two solid weekends in a row, with traveling in between, and should be very proud of her accomplishments this season.”

“Jack’s meet was off the charts,” said Garrison. “All of his distance freestyle events saw huge time drops and he met or exceeded his goal times in every one of them. His 1000 freestyle on Wednesday – a travel day – saw him dropping about 40 seconds, finishing in 9:54. He swam the 500 free as a bonus event and dominated his heat from the start. His time of 4:48 was 10 seconds faster than his best time. Then to pull off a mile swim of 16:29, dropping 48 seconds in one season and finishing 37th, was the icing on the cake. That mile swim was close to perfect. I would say it was at least 10 seconds better than expected. Overall, Jack exceeded my expectations all weekend.”

Garrison continued, “Jessica and Jack have realized what it takes to swim at this level. They understand they have to consistently train hard to be able to swim this hard and now really see why we train the way we do and put the effort in that we do.

“I’m proud of all of our swimmers who swam at a championship meet this season,” Garrison concluded. “Our team responded very well to the increased competition and we are looking very strong heading into the summer long course season.”

The team has this spring break week off before getting back in the water April 1. Garrison is enjoying a few days off after being home only 3 days out of 18 in the month of March.

“It was an exhausting championship season but really fulfilling,” said Garrison. “I’m excited to spend a few days at home with my dogs, watching basketball and gearing up for long course season. It’s a really good feeling. ”

Information about Team Sopris, including practice schedules, meet schedules, tryout times and more can be found on the team’s website at www.teamsopris.org.