Olympic Hopeful Emily Kopas Wins State Swim Title

Emily Kopas and her state-qualifying teammates made history last week at the 2011 FHSAA state championships. To start, all six swimmers and two divers advanced from the preliminary rounds to the finals, despite swimming against the largest group to attend the state meet in over 20 years.

By the end of a long day, both the University School girls’ and boys’ swimming & diving teams scored enough points to capture the program’s highest-ever state finishes. Thirteen-year-old Carson Knaby became the first girl to compete in the 1 meter diving finals in over 15 years. And Emily Kopas – a 2012 Olympic hopeful – swam away with the 100 breaststroke class 1A state title and became USchool's first state swim champion.

One might correctly guess that a top-performing student-athlete like Emily dedicates five-to-six hours a day to her sport in addition to school; indeed a lot of her teammates are likewise dually-dedicated to swimming and academics. It may also come as no surprise that the high school sophomore has competed since the age of four, and that both of Emily’s parents are former competitive swimmers.

But besides the record times, new title, hard work and dedication, there is something else about Emily and her USchool teammates that is equally impressive; they are humble and immensely supportive of each other.

“We are all sisters and we do everything together,” the state-qualifying girls chimed prior to boarding the bus for Orlando. According to Emily, they are also each other’s biggest fans.

“All my teammates are great. They are cheering behind my block the entire time,” said Emily, who also medaled in the 200 individual medley. “It is stressful, but it is worth it. Thank you to everyone.”

Such tremendous team spirit translated to the water and helped Emily earn a third state medal, this time as part of an ensemble. The girls 200 medley relay -- comprised of Emily, Evy Sands, Krissa Robinson and Emily’s sister Allison Kopas -- swam to a 6th place win, marking yet another highest-level performance for the school to date.

“It is so nice to see the girls’ hard work pay off,” said Mrs. Robin Kopas. But both parents agree that the camaraderie between the 7th grade Allison (Alli) Kopas and her 10th grade sibling is as special as their achievements.

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“Robin and I were most proud of the moment after Emily won,” Bill Kopas said. “Alli was the first to hug and congratulate [Emily] on the victory immediately as she climbed out of the pool. [It was a] precious moment that was incredibly meaningful to us as parents.”

Based on comments made by University School head swim coach Alex Pusseildi following the state meet, it appears that positive perspective and grateful recognition for the people who support you is a pervasive quality among all the people involved with this growing USchool sports program.

“Just to be part of the USchool state team is already an honor for all of them,” said Alex Pusseildi. “We broke 28 school records this season. [Reaching this level] is incredible, but we are still developing our group.”

Regarding Emily’s olympic trials next summer, he added, “We all dream about [the Olympics]. But I like to go step by step, and I think for 2012 Emily’s goal will be to go to finals at the olympic trials. I can see the talent, determination and potential for this to happen. And if you are in finals, anything can happen. But let’s first make the finals.”

Pusseildi went on to recognize members of “the team behind the team”.

“Thank you to University School, the Athletic Department, to my aquatics director Sally Hansell and my coaching partners Peter Sill and Gianluca Alberani,” Pusseildi said. “None of this would be possible without your hard work and support.”

Congratulations to the all the members of the 2011 swimming & diving girls’ and boys’ teams and their coaches for helping grow this program and for reaching new levels of achievement. We all extend best wishes to Emily in her upcoming national competitions and olympic trials. (We will be cheering for you from home, if not from behind your starting block!)

### 2011 State Results Recap

**Girls Team:**
- University School girls placed 9th at the state level, a first for the school.
- Girls 200 medley relay - Evy Sands, Allison Kopas, Krissa Robinson, Emily Kopas captured the highest place finish to date as 6th place medal winners.
- Girls 200 independent medley - Emily Kopas finished 6th place, setting a new school record at 2:05.33, and became came away an all-american time-medal winner.
- Girls 100 breaststroke - Emily Kopas - STATE CHAMPION with a new school record at 1:02.50 and again, an all-american time - gold medal winner
- Girls 400 free relay - Evy Sands, Allison Kopas, Kriss Robinson, Emily Kopas set a new school record at 3:42.55.
- Girls 1 meter diving - Carson Knaby became the 1st USchool girl to make it to finals in over 15 years, and went on to place 14th.

**Boys Team:**
- University School Boys placed 20th at the state level, a first for the school.
- Boys 200 Freestyle - Marco Hosfeld captured 10th place while setting a new school record at 1:44.09.
- Boys 500 Freestyle - Marco Hosfeld placed 13th and set a new school record - 4:42.27.
- Sebastian Oberndorfer placed 15th with his personal best time.
- Boys 1 meter Diving - Zach Laurence took 7th place was a medal winner.