University School team makes a big splash as pool powerhouse

At the beginning of the season, Coach Sally Hansell came up with a motto that she hoped her University School Middle School Swimming and Diving team would rally around. "We train. We swim. We win." They liked it, Hansell said. "They were already so close as a group. We have a small team and a small school, but that helped to bring us together.

On May 11, the Suns took first place in the overall team competition at the Middle School Swimming and Diving Championships at the Nova Southeastern University Aquatic Center in Davie. The squad shone brightly among 11 schools and 187 athletes from Broward and Palm Beach counties.

The boys went undefeated for the first time in school history. "We are starting to build a tradition of qualifying swimmers who can compete on a high level," Hansell said. "IA swimming is considered the most elite group, and these kids have been swimming on the varsity team as middle schoolers. They are producing times comparable to the (IA) swimmers.

University School's success in swimming and diving capped off a strong athletic season. It won a state championship in boys' soccer and made it to the Florida finals in football.

"Our athletic department has had an explosion this past season," Hansell said. "All our sports teams have had a great amount of success, and we were able to finish it off with our swimming team.

First-place finishers for the Suns were seventh-grader Carson Knaby in the one-meter diving event, eighth-grader Matt Lyn in the 200-yard freestyle and 100-yard IM (individual medley) events, and seventh-grader John Silvera in the 50-yard breaststroke.

Champion Lyn's time in the 100 IM (1:01.80) was a school record. Knaby and Lyn won every individual event they entered this season.

Lyn, Silvera, Max Asnis and Grant Besner also won the boys' 200-yard medley relay and the 200-yard freestyle relay. "We only went with 17 athletes," Hansell said. "Some teams had up to 39 swimmers and divers. We were able to catch the top spot in enough spots with less entries. During the varsity season, we broke 22 records with many of the members that comprised this team."