

La Salle makes it 20 in row; Wood captures girls' crown

The Explorers won 9 of the 11 events to win the title easily; The Vikings won four events, but team depth carried them.

By John Kopp
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

La Salle High enters each swimming season expecting to compete for the Catholic League boys' title.

The Archbishop Wood girls' swimming team may not have the tradition of La Salle, but it began the season with high hopes, too.

Both teams fulfilled their dreams yesterday at La Salle University's Kirk Pool, winning Catholic League championships. It was the Explorers' 20th straight league crown. The Vikings claimed their second title in school history.

La Salle scored 965 points to easily defeat St. Joseph's Prep (625.5) and third-place Archbishop Ryan (294.5).

"It's such an accomplishment," said Ted Walker, who helped the Explorers win four events. "I can't even believe it's been 20 years in a row. That's before I was even alive. It feels great to be a part of that, because we're just carrying something on for so long."

The Explorers won nine of the 11 events and were led by Walker, who won the 100- and 200-yard freestyle. He was also a part of the winning 200 and 400 freestyle relay teams.

La Salle's James Mahoney won the 50 freestyle, Phil Letcavage took the 100 butterfly, and Blase Szyszko captured the 100 breaststroke. Each contributed to winning relay teams.

Michael McGee won the 500 freestyle and took second in the 200 freestyle for the Explorers.

"Our coaches told us before the season that we're not just representing ourselves," McGee said. "[They said], 'You're representing every team that's won before you.' That's the kind of feel-



Archbishop Wood's Christina Rios (left) is embraced by teammate Emily Smith after the two finished one-two, respectively, in the 100 freestyle.

ing we have."

Wood's girls claimed their first title since 1991. With 694 points, the Vikings snapped a five-year championship run by Archbishop Ryan. Cardinal O'Hara (571) finished second and Ryan (563) was third.

Taylor Kane paced the Vikings, winning the 200 and 500 freestyle and swimming the third leg for the victorious 400 freestyle relay team.

"I knew I was swimming against seniors who really wanted to win, so I was a little nervous about that," the freshman said.

Christina Rios was the only other Viking to capture an individual event, topping the field in the 100 freestyle, but coach Charlie Stillwell pointed to the Vikings' depth: They claimed the top

five spots in the 200 freestyle and five of the top six in the 500 freestyle.

"To be honest with you, I've never had a team like this," Stillwell said.

"From the first meet that we had, they've just stepped up and shown that they really wanted to win."

Swimmer of the Week

Christina Rios of Archbishop Wood helped the Vikings to a 107-63 win over Archbishop Ryan. The senior won the 100-yard freestyle and 100 backstroke and was on the winning 200 medley and 400 freestyle relays.

Karen Sangillo can be reached at karensangillo@aol.com.