

# Aquinas fencing has solid season

Crusaders have two bouts left as they prepare for postseason

BY KEVIN LOHMAN

After winning four of its first five matches, the Aquinas Academy fencing team faced one of its most difficult challenges of the season when it opposed Peters Township and Central Catholic on Friday night.

The Crusaders dropped their opening match against Peters Township, 6-3, losing three bouts by one point. But coach John Carroll's team rallied to beat the Vikings in another closely fought match, 6-3.

"It was a fun evening," Carroll said. "Peters is a very strong team, but we had very close bouts with them. Those three bouts with the one-point margins, those three could have flipped the other way, and we would have won 6-3.

"I think that's what makes me most proud of them. Despite losing a heart-breaker, they had the will and determination to refocus, keep a winning attitude and take on Central Catholic. When you come back and beat a strong team like Central, I think that says something about their intestinal fortitude."

Team captain Harry Hardman has helped to lead the Crusaders, going 21-0 in individual bouts. Carroll said juniors Louie D'Angelo and Anthony Buck and sophomore Nate Jernigan also are having strong seasons.

The crucial victory over Central Catholic moved the Crusaders' record to 5-2 as teams continue to jostle for a spot in the playoffs with the regular season winding down.

The Crusaders have matches against Pine-Richland and Allerdice before playoffs start March 2. Carroll said he expects those to be two of the toughest matches of the season.

"I am confident that we're going to get into the playoffs," he said. "But I don't want to be overconfident because I know the last two teams we're playing, and they are both coached extremely well.

"They have kids that can fence, but so do we, so I know that there's going to be some tough and exciting matches coming up ahead of us."

Aquinas Academy will host Pine-Richland on Feb. 23 at Rhodora Gymnasium.

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Pitt's Schonbachler shows rapid improvement in distance swimming events

BY KEVIN LOHMAN

The Pitt swimming and diving team wrapped up its regular season and will shift its focus to the ACC championships scheduled for later this month.

Freshman Ryan Schonbachler is hoping to be one of 20 athletes who will be selected to represent the program at the conference championships. Considering his progress and success this season, the former Pine-Richland standout and 2017 WPIAL 500 freestyle champ might get that chance.

Schonbachler has competed in the 1,000 free and the 500 free in nearly every dual meet. He set personal bests for the 1,650 free (15 minutes, 28.38 seconds) and 1,000 free (9:24.91) at the Ohio State Invite in November and has maintained close times in those events all season.

"I would say my performance at the Ohio State Invite was probably my highlight so far," Schonbachler said. "That was where I dropped a lot of time on the mile and a few other events.

"I dropped a significant amount of time on the (1,650 free), almost 30 seconds, and then I was able to go back up and swim around that same exact time two weeks later. It was a relief to know I could hold that time."

Pitt coach John Hargis has taken notice. While Hargis said he believes Schonbachler's improvement in the 500 free will come as the freshman gets older and

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