

BERGEN COUNTY SWIMMING

Seniors close with big splash

IHA's Fazio, Tenafly's Lim lead squads to county crowns

By MIKE ESPOSITO

SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

WEST NYACK, N.Y. — For Immaculate Heart's Casey Fazio and Tenafly's Leo Lim, victory at the Bergen County swimming championships Sunday at Felix Festa Middle School in West Nyack was almost inevitable. No weather condition, whether it was a blizzard, hurricane or tornado, could deny their team a championship. Tenafly boys and IHA girls, the two top-ranked teams in North Jersey, won county titles at a meet that was pushed back a day due to Saturday's snowstorm. The Tigers scored 298 points on their way to a second straight county title. The Blue Eagles scored 517 points, winning by a 199-point margin.

Having never lost a county title or so much as a relay, Blue Eagles swimmers Kayla McAvoy, Sara Nestrowitz, Michelle Kim and Fazio started off the day by breaking a record in the 200 medley relay with a 1:49.40 and broke another record in the 400 freestyle relay.

"I came in here ready to swim fast and do the best that I could," said Fazio. "We all had an awesome meet. I couldn't ask for a better way to end my senior year." Senior Kayla McAvoy has won the 100 breast stroke three out of her four years. This time she broke her own meet record in the event with a 1:08.68.

Fazio broke a 5-year-old record in the 200 IM, smashing the previous record by more than three seconds. Sophomore Sara Nestrowitz followed Fazio's lead and broke a meet record in the 100 freestyle by swimming a 52.98.

"It's easier to swim fast when you're swimming against fast people. When you're winning by tenths of a second, it pushes you. It was exciting and we had a lot of really good swims," said IHA coach Jason Schlereth, who also coached Bergen Catholic to a second-place boys finish.

For Tenafly, this victory was the product of a building process that started taking place four years ago when Lim and teammate Alex Liulakis were freshmen. Now seniors, they've seen the team grow from nothing into a county powerhouse that will remain a top team even after they graduate.

A two-time Swimmer of the Year, Lim hasn't lost a race in a dual or county meet. He continued his success by setting meet records in the 100 butterfly (49.99) and 100 backstroke (51.21) with Tenafly athletic director William Jaeger watching in the stands.

"I want to go out with a bang and I wanted to make it special. I wanted to leave something behind for Tenafly," Lim said. "Me and Alex both wanted to."

Not only did Lim break two individual records, he along with Liulakis, Jin Roh and Kevin Guo broke the 200 freestyle relay record (1:29.52) and Tenafly broke the 400 freestyle record (3:15.20) as well with Lim, Roh, Liulakis and Greg Spiropoulos.

Paramus Catholic's John Nunez also broke a meet record in the 200 freestyle with a 1:43.47 and Danielle Bach of Northern Highlands turned in a 24.68 in the 50 freestyle, another meet record. Ramapo sophomore Brendan Woo "broadened his horizons," and swam in two races he doesn't normally participate in and broke a meet records in the 50 freestyle (21.88) 100 freestyle (47.23). Teammate Katie Murphy finished second in the 100 butterfly at last year's county meet, but this year she came in and won the race with a record breaking time of 58.29. The Bergen Catholic combination of Josh Sembrano, Sebastian Lopez, John Om and Liam Kelly's time (1:39.01) in the 200 medley relay broke another meet record.