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NEWS



MAC Announces Swimmer and Diver of the Week

Updated 2/1/2012

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MAC Women's Swimmer of the Week

Nikki Schropp, Toledo Junior, Plainfield, IL (Oswego East)

Schropp was one of 12 first-place finishes for the Rockets this weekend, as they defeated Eastern Michigan 188.5-107.5 in their final regular-season dual-meet. She won the three-meter dive event with a score of 286.72. The mark tops the minimum requirement of 280 points needed for a zone cut, qualifying her for the NCAA zone meet March 8-10 in Bloomington, IN.



MAC Men's Swimmer of the Week

Brendan Melling, Miami University Senior, Solon, Ohio (Solon)

Melling led Miami to a 134-107 road-win over conference-foe Ball State Saturday Jan. 28 with two individual wins. The senior from Solon, Ohio took to the pool in event five, the 400-yard IM, with the RedHawks trailing the Cardinals 42-32. When he cruised into the wall in a time of 4:09.30, more than six seconds ahead of his closest competitor, he earned 11 points to push the Red and White into the lead. In his next event, the 500-yard freestyle, Miami held a slim 85-83 lead, but Melling's first-place finish in a time of 4:46.91 extended the team's lead and propelled the RedHawks to the win.

Other Nominees:

Vitalii Baryshok, Missouri State University Freshman, Lugansk, Ukraine (Lugansk Taras Shevchenko National University)

The Missouri State men's team concluded its regular season defeating Evansville 138-97 on Friday. The Bears remain undefeated against Evansville in dual meets, improving to 15-0 all-time against the Purple Aces. Freshman Vitalii Baryshok collected three first-place finishes against conference foe Evansville including individual victories in the 50 and 100 free. He also tallied a win in the 200 free relay to wrap up the Bears' dominant performance in the pool. The Lugansk, Ukraine native clocked in at 21.29 in the 50 free and followed that up with a 45.83 in the 100 free, defeating the field by nearly two seconds. In the 200 free relay, the freshman swam the second leg, registering a split of 20.72 and recording the fastest relay split of any swimmer on the day. Baryshok continues to rank among the top sprinters in the Mid-American Conference. He currently ranks first in the 100 and 200 free and second in the 50 behind Southern Illinois' Justin Wolfe.

Brittney Kuras, Buffalo Sophomore, Canandaigua, NY

Brittney Kuras won three events to lead the Bulls on the day against the Akron Zips in a 168-130 victory. Kuras set a season-best in claiming the 100-yard breaststroke in 1:04.92. She also posted a victory in the 500-yard freestyle in 5:03.86 and finished her day with a victory in the 200-yard individual medley in 2:06.87.

Justin Wolfe, Southern Illinois Senior, Bloomington, Ill. (Bloomington)

Justin Wolfe posted three top-three times in a dual meet with Western Kentucky on Saturday. Wolfe won the 50 free (20.57), his third win in a row in the event. He placed second in the 100 fly (49.47) and third in the 100 free (47.59).

Leah Thornton, Miami University Junior, Helena, Ala. (John Carroll Catholic)

Thornton won four individual events and one relay to lead Miami to a weekend sweep of MAC opponents Eastern Michigan and Bowling Green. On Friday, Jan. 27 against the Eagles, the junior from Helena, Ala. led-off the 200-yard medley relay with a split of 27.00, the fastest in the pool during the first leg of the race, as the RedHawks took first in a time of 1:45.87. She went on to win the 100- and 200-yard backstrokes in times of 57.25 and 2:05.65, respectively, and finished fourth in the 200-yard IM (2:08.89). In the Saturday, Jan. 28 meet against the Falcons, Thornton again won both backstroke events in times of 58.15 in the 100 and 2:06.37 in the 200. She also added a second-place finish as the lead-off of the 400-yard medley relay team and, swimming exhibition, finished with the fastest time in the 200-yard IM at 2:09.30.

**Briana Emig, Eastern Michigan University
Junior, Sewickley, Pa.**

Emig captured five first-place finishes this past weekend in dual-meets against Miami and Toledo. Against the RedHawks, she was first to touch the wall in 10:24.96. She later recorded a personal best and sixth-fastest time in program history in the 200 Freestyle, completing the distance in 1:51.04. In the 500 Free, Emig placed first with her time of 5:03.51. In the Eagles meet with the Rockets, the junior took first in the 1,000 Freestyle in 10:03.37. She also collected a top-finish in the 500 Free, racing to a time of 4:56.01—the seventh-fastest time in EMU record books.

**Alexis Kain, Bowling Green
Junior, Cincinnati, Ohio (Oak Hills)**

BGSU junior Alexis Kain swept the breaststroke events and swam the second leg for the winning team in both relays on Saturday (Jan. 28) against Miami. Kain won the 100 breast in 1:04.69, then won the 200 breast by 0.19 seconds, as she finished in 2:22.42. Kain's teams won the 400 freestyle relay (3:34.01) and the 400 medley relay (3:52.01). On Friday (Jan. 27) against Youngstown State, Kain posted second-place finishes in the 50- and 100-yard freestyle with times of 25.21 and 54.50 seconds, respectively. Kain also swam the second leg of the 200 free relay for BGSU, and her team earned the best time in the event (1:40.44).

**Bridgette Ruehl, Ball State
Sophomore, Lowell, Ind. (Lowell)**

Sophomore Bridgette Ruehl led the Ball State women's swimming & diving team versus the Ohio Bobcats, Saturday afternoon at the Ohio University Aquatic Center. The Cardinals posted their first victory of the meet in the 200 breast, as Ruehl clocked in with a time of 2:22.42 and she returned in the 100 breast for a second-place time of 1:05.86.

**Rachel Stearns, Ohio University
Sophomore, Minnetonka, Minn. Hopkins**

Rachel had an incredible weekend for the Bobcats, winning all eight of the events in which she competed during Ohio's dual-meet victories over West Virginia and Ball State. Against Big East power West Virginia on Friday, Stearns was on the winning 200 medley relay team, won the 100 and 200 backstroke events and also placed first in the 200 IM. She then followed up these impressive performances the next day against MAC rival Ball State, winning the 200 medley relay, the 400 free relay and the 100 and 200 backstroke events. Both her 100 and 200 backstroke times achieved during the dual meet against West Virginia rank in the Mid-American Conference's top six this season. Her time in the 200 medley relay on that same day is currently the second-best mark achieved by a MAC team this season. Stearns has been an integral part to Ohio's very strong season, as the Bobcats are 8-1 (4-0 in the MAC) and have won 15 of their last 16 dual meets dating back to last season.



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