

THE LINEUP

Sport of the month Volleyball

"This has been a great season with some great senior leadership. We are excited to begin the playoffs and see where it takes us -- hopefully back to Columbia."

■ Coach Alexis Glover

Q | A



Senior Sarah Missroon

Overall record 20-1
Region record 10-0

How do you feel about how your team has performed so far this season?

"I think our team has performed really well so far this season. We won a few tournaments and big games that I don't think many people thought we would win since we lost so many seniors and starters last year."

How has the team improved this season?

"This year we've improved a lot. The team vibe and attitude has been really good on and off the court and we all work really well together and have fun. I think that's a really big improvement that we've had this year."

How have you personally improved?

"Personally, I think I've improved. I've become a more effective and reliable hitter, which is different from years past. I'm also a captain and have had to step up and be a leader for my team as well."

Is there anything that you think the team could improve on?

"There are definitely things we can improve on which is what we work on every day in practice. We can all work on being more consistent, eliminating errors and reading what the other team is doing before it happens."

■ Nathan Russell



(Far left) The boys' relay race team placed first at the State Championship Oct 6 in Columbia. (Top right) the boys' swim team places first overall at the state meet for the second year in a row. (Bottom right) the girls' swim team wins first place at the state meet for the second consecutive year in a row. **photos // provided by Karin Slowey**

Diving into another championship

Both boys and girls take championships in repeat of last year's titles

ROSEMARY DELAMATER

Staff Writer

Immediately after the swim team completed the state meet, they were met by the local authorities. Their bus was preceded by police cars as the swim team rode somberly back to Wando High School.

Well, not exactly somberly...

"State was super fun, we got a police escort into town and so it was super cool. We pretty much crashed homecoming. We all like ran in there and we were just screaming, just hyped up off the wind and the escort and then some of the people at homecoming, they started cheering for us too," senior Shane McDavid said.

"It was a lot of fun driving up there, a lot of fun driving back; we played 'We are the Champions' like five times," senior Callie Johnson said.

"We Are the Champions" was definitely a fitting song: for the second year in a row, the swim teams -- both the girls and boys -- brought home titles at the AAAAA State Championship in Columbia.

And not only that, but they won by many more points than they anticipated. The boys earned 385 points -- 133 more than Fort Mill in second place with 252. The girls team won 511.50 points -- 194 more than Riverside, the second place finisher.

Overall, this was a better result than some expected.

"We (Wando) were projected originally to win, but it wasn't by too many points," senior Shane McDavid said.

"The boys were actually not -- they weren't ranked to be first," Durden said. "But all of our boys showed up, and they swam very fast and then they ended up winning."

This trend continued with the girls, who had already been projected to win but also got more points than they had expected.

One swimmer in particular stood out by scoring better than he had in the past -- sophomore Matthew Gush, who was the only Wando student to win an event individually at the state championships.

"He swam the 500, and he went a 4:42, which is like way faster than what he usually goes," McDavid said. "And he got first overall in that event, so he got podium, and everything."

"I just went the best I could," Gush said.

But Gush's victory was one of many for Wando throughout this competition. Cameron Mehta, CJ Hills and Davis Caldwell for the boys, and Gabi Reed, Callie Johnson and Ellis Pitts all placed in at least one event during the meet. Wando also racked up points in several relays for both teams.

But what made this possible?

For one thing, the team dedicates a lot of time to practice, though they are forced to wake up very early to do this.

"During the season, it starts at 5:30 -- and this is Monday through Friday," McDavid said. "We practice 'till 7:00. We usually do stretches, that'll be like the first part of our practice. Then we'll get in and swim -- we'll swim probably a 1,000-yard warm-up, and then we have a main set that we'll do. And it can be working on breath control, or technique, or speed... and then we'll have a like a warm-down at the end of practice."

Every day after practice, the team then climbs out of the Park West pool, exhausted and dripping wet, to clean up and drive to school.

"It's not fun to wake up at 5 a.m.," Mehta said. "But the reason we go to practices is so we can have a good time at the big meets. So it's about looking past just one practice."

Arguably just as integral to their success is the team dynamic.

At the meet, as Durden said, "it was super hype, everybody was excited, cheering for everybody, girls were cheering for the boys, boys were cheering for the girls."

The entire team supports and encourages each of its swimmers, and their energy and enthusiasm definitely contributed to their victory.

"It makes it easier to swim fast when people are cheering for you," Johnson said.

"I just think that the team's biggest success is working together as a team," Coach Allyson Brown said, "because swimming is -- can be -- such an individualized sport, especially if you're looking at year-round swimming. [Some athletes] are focused more individually on times, but for a high school swim team to take state championship, you have to work together as a team."

And the team are not only supportive of each other, but driven.

"The team ultimately has a strong sense of direction, and a strong sense of working hard to achieve a goal," Mehta said.

With the swim season already over, the team is already anticipating next season.

"Next year looks great," Durden said. "We're a young team."