

UNBEATABLE

Volpenhein victorious; state champion in 50 and 100 freestyle

Erin Brush | Managing Editor

For sophomore Ashley Volpenhein, gold medals run in the family.

Last month, she secured two individual state titles in the 50 and 100 yard freestyle at the state swim meet, in addition to her 50 free title from her freshman year. According to Volpenhein, her motivation for athletic success began watching her older brother Bryan compete at the Olympic games for rowing.

“My oldest brother Bryan won a gold medal in the Olympics,” Volpenhein said. “I’ve been in swimming my whole life, so seeing someone that close to me in the Olympics, that’s been in the back of my mind. Having that athletic figure has made me want to achieve great things because he did.”

Volpenhein’s older sister, Julia, a senior, is also a swimmer, but has committed to row next year at the University of Virginia.

“Julia and I started swimming at the same time,” Volpenhein said. “Seeing her go to the state meet and districts all before me, since she’s two years ahead of me, made me admire her. I’ve always been following in her footsteps and it made me want to work hard so I could be where she is.”

Volpenhein has had no shortage of experience at the state level, and said that this year her focus remained on dropping time and getting back to the state meet.

“I had my main focus on dropping time,” Volpenhein said. “I was definitely thinking about defending my title in the 50 free. I knew it was a reachable goal to get the 100 (free). There were three girls that beat me last year (in the 100 free) that graduated so I knew I had a shot.”

Volpenhein cruised to back to back district titles, swimming a 22.35 in the 50 free and a 49.34 in the 100 free, both district records. Once at the state meet, Volpenhein said her only strategy was to go all out.

“There’s nothing you can really do in the 50 strategy-wise and the 100 is the same,” Volpenhein said. “When it comes to sprint events, especially in that high of a meet, you just need to give it everything.”

According to Volpenhein, she felt confident mid-race that she had an edge over her competitors.

“It’s kind of hard to tell (who won) because you can’t see the other lanes but you can see the other girls out of the corner of your eye and I could tell I had a little bit of an edge on them,” Volpenhein said. “(In the 100) my biggest opponent was in the lane next to me and I could tell that I had an edge on her the whole time.”

A 22.84 in the 50 free and a 49.73 in the 100 free were enough for the gold medals. Volpenhein said she will next be focusing on beginning her college search with visits during her junior and senior year.

“I want to go to a team that’s really competitive in their conference,” Volpenhein said. “I don’t want to be the slowest, but I have the times where I can be in the middle of some of the top schools. I think I’m in a pretty good position right now.”

