

Swimmer meets goals at nationals

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Northern News Services

Friday, July 24, 2009

SOMBA K'E/YELLOWKNIFE - Stephen Giovanetto made his presence known at a Montreal swim meet this month.

The 16-year-old Yellowknifer was the only one from the NWT competing at the Age Group National Swimming Championships in Montreal from July 16 to 19. Giovanetto entered in three events - the 50-, 100-, and 200-metre breaststroke in the age 16 category - and managed to meet his goals of finishing in the top-20 in all of them. The best result came in the 50-metre event, in which he finished 10th overall. He said it was unlike any other meet he had attended.

"First off, it was in an outdoor pool (at Parc Jean Drapeau)," he said. "It introduces the elements of nature, such as wind, possible rain and cloud. I had never competed in an outdoor pool before. Second, there were around 1,500 swimmers from around the country. I had never been part of such a large group ever."

Racing in an event of that size brought on some understandable nerves before the racing began, Giovanetto added.

"Once I'm in the water, I'm OK, but when I'm in the starting blocks, that's when I'm the most anxious," he said. "It was also tough preparing for a race because I normally joke around with my teammates, but none of them were there."

Yk Polar Bear Swim Club head coach Ian Legaree said he could tell Giovanetto's insides were churning a little bit.

"The kids always tell you they're fine, but you notice," he said. "As soon as he came out of the pool after the 50-metre final, he said it was the most nervous he's ever been. It was an awe-inspiring experience for him and he certainly learned a lot by swimming at this level."

Giovanetto qualified for the three races based on meeting or exceeding the times in his age bracket as set by Swim Canada. Legaree said not only did he qualify for this year, but he's good for 2010 as well.



Stephen Giovanetto at the Olympic Pool in Montreal, where he was the lone NWT representative at the Age Group National Swimming Championships from July 16 to 19. - photo courtesy of Ian Legaree

"The times are based upon an 18-month cycle, so he's already qualified for next year," he said. "I'm sure when he goes next year, he'll have more confidence now that he's seen what goes on."

The event was also a good tune-up for the Canada Summer Games next month in Charlottetown. He said he got a chance to see what he'll be up against.

"Some of the swimmers will be there," he said. "I don't know who exactly, but at least I got a chance to see where my competition is at."