

Coaches Rhoten, Shaw are two keys to Tigers' high school, Breakers swim success

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville YMCA Breakers and now the Edwardsville High School swim program are developing a name throughout Illinois and the Midwest.

The Tigers' high school girls team recently won a fourth consecutive sectional crown under head coach Christian Rhoten and assistant coach Samantha Shaw. Bob Rettle, general manager of the Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center, is also head coach for the Edwardsville Breakers, the club team that helps develop and is a feeder for the enormous Edwardsville swim talent. Year in, year out, the Edwardsville YMCA Breakers rank near the top of the heap nationally with other YMCAs.

Several Edwardsville girls and boys have received large college swim scholarship offers. Bailey Grinter captured national championships in YMCA competition and is now swimming at the University of Tennessee. Kate May is swimming at the University of Purdue.

Coach Rettle said he knows it's about the kids, but he stressed how pleased he was of both coach Rhoten and Shaw for their efforts to develop the high school program.

"I'm really proud of coach Christian Rhoten and coach Sam Shaw and how they prepared the very young group of up-and-coming star athletes," Coach Rettle said. "The future is bright for EHS swimming. Without those two we are not successful in what we do at the Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center."

Rhoten and Shaw both were developed on their own in the Edwardsville YMCA program. Coach Rhoten said Coach Bob and the high school sides work hand in hand with one another.

“It such a good relationship,” Rhoten said. “Sometimes, there can be a lot of contention between club and high school swimming, but we are very fortunate in our area we operate under the same idea that it is about kids and doing what is best for them.

“The kids spend some time on high school side then the club side and I really think it balances out nicely. The Breakers are the feeder program. What we are about is building culture for the girls and boys even before they get into high school.”

Rhoten, a college swimmer on his own, said he and Shaw work in unison together with their coaching styles and strengths. Rhoten said he loves seeing the swimmers go on and continue in college and often says “swimming in college keeps kids grounded.”

“It’s been a lot of fun every year,” Rhoten said. “Sam and I work well with one another because she is calmer, cooler and patient. I am more excitable and try to get the kids revved up to give their best. I am the one who tries to get the girls and boys excited and ready to go physically and emotionally; Sam is he calming force. Sam teaches swimming for physical education and my specific title for the high school is swimming coordinator.”

This year, Edwardsville had 14 top-notch freshmen and 27 on the high school girls team, a record. The depth on the team was astounding.

“There is also a ton of seventh- and eighth-grade talent coming up,” Rhoten said. “Many of the girls are pretty good friends and they love going to swim practice. The state experience will help the younger swimmers and I think the future looks bright.”

