

# **Tigers break through, win sectional swim meet, Alton, Edwardsville send swimmers to state**

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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**SEE VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTIAN RHOTEN:**

**SEE VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH GARTH AKAL:**

SPRINGFIELD – Saturday was a breakout date for Edwardsville's boys swimming team.

After three straight second-place finishes, the Tigers finally won an IHSA sectional swimming championship; EHS scoring 206 points to edge out Chatham Glenwood in Saturday's Springfield Sectional meet at Eisenhower Pool; the Titans finished with 195 points, followed by O'Fallon (166), the host Senators (86), Springfield Sacred Heart-Griffin (84), Jacksonville (53) and Jacksonville Routt (18) among schools who fielded full teams.

Alton, however, is sending two relay teams and three individuals – Noah Clancy, Matt Daniel and Caden Akal – to the state swimming and diving championship next Friday and Saturday at Evanston High School. The Tigers are sending Porter LeVassuer to state in the 100 backstroke and Owen Kaufmann in the one-meter diving event.

“It's just more than three years in a row of second-place finishes (in the sectional),” said EHS coach Christian Rhoten. “It's decades of not scoring as a team; we had the swimmers to do so and it's been a lot of years and a lot of people put into Edwardsville High School swimming.

“It feels good to get the boys' championship for the first time and I know it's been on their mind for the last three years; they came out and performed way better than I thought they were going to – no complaints as far as performance goes. We knew it was in to be close with Chatham; fortunately, we were able to come through.”

Rhoten cited McLain Ortle's performances in the 200 individual medley and 100 breaststroke as keys to the Tiger win; Ortle finished third in both events for a total of 24 key points that helped EHS' cause. “He was not seeded in the top six and he got third,” Rhoten said.

“It was very exciting,” for the Redbirds' fortunes, said Alton coach Garth Akal. “We've been waiting a long time for this; I finally have two seniors and a sophomore excel today. We had a number of individual qualifications and had two relays who qualified, so we're extremely happy.

“We had only one person who missed qualifying, and that was Noah (Clancy) in the 100 breaststroke; everything else went our way. He (Clancy) only missed by a few hundredths of a second, but I'm extremely happy for all of them.”

Alton's Caden Akal advanced to state in the 50 and 100 freestyle with times of 21.61 seconds, good for the win (all event winners and others meeting state qualifying standards, similar to the state track meets, advanced to the state meet) in the 50 and 47.68 seconds in the 100, good for second place in the event, while Matt Daniel advanced in the 200 freestyle with a time of 1:43.29, good for second place, and in the 100 butterfly in 51.41 seconds, good for second in the event and Clancy won the 100 backstroke in 50.78 seconds to advance.

The Redbirds' 4x50 medley relay team of Caden Akal, Clancy, Daniels and Cole Akal won the event in 1:36.97 while the 4x50 free relay team of Daniels, Cole Akal, Clancy and Caden Akal also advanced with a win in 1:27.31. Edwardsville's LeVassuer finished fifth in the 100 backstroke with a time of 52.84 seconds, a time good enough to send him to state in the event; he was one of five swimmers in the event to move on to Evanston. Kaufmann finished third in the diving competition with a score of 335.55 points, enough to send him to the state meet.



Of other area swimmers, only Triad's Jonathan Olsen advanced to state with a qualifying time of 21.69 seconds in the 50 freestyle, which placed him third in the event. Marquette Catholic and Granite City failed to advance their participants out of the sectional.





