

Gremaud, Autumn Grinter Capture Two Events Each, Tigers Win Six Of Eight Events In Girls Swim Opener Against O'Fallon

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville girls swimming team won six of the eight events on the program, with Phoebe Gremaud and Autumn Grinter winning two events each, as the Tigers opened their 2020 season with a close 69-59 win over O'Fallon Thursday evening at the Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center.

It was the first meet held under new COVID-19 rules and restrictions put in place by the Illinois High School Association, which cut out relay races this season, mandatory mask-wearing when not competing, and a 10-minute break after every other race. And it was a very competitive meet that the Tigers were able to win in the final event.

"It was really good," said Edwardsville head coach Christian Rhoten. "It was a pretty tough meet. They came in and swam really fast. I was uncertain about who was going to win all the way through the last event. So it was definitely a battle for us, and we love having good competition that prepares us for whatever comes at the end of the season."

Rhoten believes that the Tigers will be a very good and very deep team led by a strong senior class who provide strong leadership, and also specializes in specific races and roles on the team.

"I think we really have a deep, deep team," Rhoten said. "We really have a strong group of seniors; I think we have seniors this year, and they're holding us down as far as their

leadership and putting up really fast swims. And they all kind of specialize in different things, so that makes it easy for me as a coach with having them in leadership positions that can really build a team atmosphere, and help those juniors come up and become leaders next year, and just kind of perpetuate that kind of culture. So I think we've really got a deep team, a really fast top end. And unfortunately, we can't really do relays this year, because I think our relays would be outstanding this year, but we'll just do what we can, and race the events we're allowed to race."

For many of the Edwardsville swimmers, it's their first time back in the pool since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the fact the season's going forward isn't lost on Rhoten or his team.

"Absolutely," Rhoten said. "We went into this season knowing that at any time, based on last year, anytime, it could be taken away, and that was something none of us had ever experienced, the fact that swimming could somehow taken away like that. So I really think it changed our mindset, made them a lot more grateful to be coming in and working every day. It changed it from something they had to do to something they get to do, and when you make that mental mindset change, it can really do some great things for your sport."

Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, only eight events are set for each meet. In the 200-yard freestyle, Ally Janson won with a time of 2:03.70, with Izzy Grinter fourth at 2:13.32, and Jordan Mercer fifth with a time of 2:15.95. In the 200-yard individual medley, Grenaud won with a time of 2:17.94, while Pera Onal was fourth, coming in at 2:24.77. Autumn Grinter won the 50-yard freestyle with a time of 25.86 seconds, while Jordan Schuleter came in fifth with a time of 27.36 seconds. In the 100-yard butterfly, Ava Whittaker came out on top with a time of 1:01.37, while Grace Sponeman was fourth at 1:08.39.

Tiger swimmers finished one-two in the 100-yard freestyle, with Autumn Grinter winning with a time of 56.72 seconds, and Whittaker in second at 57.46 seconds. In the 500-yard freestyle, Janson came in second with a time of 5:47.94, while Mercer came in third with a time of 6:04.59. In the 100-yard backstroke, Grenaud won the event with a time of 1:02.09, Jenna Garella came in third at 1:06.14, and Savannah Grinter was fourth with a time of 1:06.25. Finally, in the 100-yard breaststroke, Olivia Ramirez was second with a time of 1:15.49, Onal placed third at 1:16.30, and Schuleter was fourth with a time of 1:16.36.

The Tigers next meet is set for Sept. 24, a triangular meet with Belleville Althoff Catholic and Collinsville, and another dual with O'Fallon on Oct. 1. Rhoten has set a goal of doing well for a sectional meet, but a state meet is out of the question for this year.

"Well, we're not really sure what the sectional meet is going to look like; we know that there's going to be one," Rhoten said. "We put in a bid to host a sectional meet, so hopefully, we'll get one here. Now that we know there will be a sectional meet of some sort, then that's definitely our goal. There's no state meet, so we're going to be fully tapered and ready to race, and we're going to try to get some really fast swims by the end of the season. It's a short season, really almost approaching halfway done with it, to be honest. So it's a short and fast season, we're going to take every day and work as hard as we can, and then sprint to the end, hopefully go fast in our last meets."

[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)