

## High school swimming: Riverton squad inspired by teammate with brain tumor

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RIVERTON — Six months ago, Ian Hatch was diagnosed with a brain tumor.

The 16-year-old swimmer from Riverton High School spent a week in the ICU, where he received steroid treatments to reduce the swelling of his brain so doctors could biopsy the 13-centimeter-long growth sitting on his brain stem and find out what it was.

During that time, Ian's teammates surrounded him.

"The swim team was really supportive," said Geoff Hatch, Ian's father. "They came to visit him, they brought him a big bear with a swim T-shirt on that everybody had signed."

Every team member also added an emblem with Ian's name to his or her bag, which was to serve as a reminder of their teammate throughout the season.

Coming together as a group to support each individual team member is something the Silverwolves' swim squad has gotten good at during the last year. After a disappointing finish to the season last February, the returning members decided to commit more time and effort as a group in order to create a brighter future for Riverton swimming.

"There were about 35 of the kids last year who made the cognizant effort to say, 'We don't want to just start swimming in September.' They wanted to do something year round," said Danny O'Very, the father of Riverton swimmer Parker O'Very. "So they went to their parents and we banded together and formed an off-season program. That core group, they stood together and they've been training four to six hours a day."

All of the extra work paid off for the Silverwolves, who broke 12 school records over the course of the season, including 11 at the Region 3 swim meet. On the boys' side of the record board, senior Brock Ekins surpassed the 50- and 100-yard freestyle records, while Parker O'Very and Kaleb Gerth set new marks in the 200 individual medley and 100 breaststroke, respectively. Ekins, Gerth, O'Very and anchor Phillip Noel snatched the 200 medley relay record, and Ekins, Noel, Taylor Olney and O'Very set new highs in the 200 free and 400 free relays, smashing the latter by almost six seconds.

In the girls' events, Kylie Steadman, Taryn Gaddis, Erin Cavendar and Kaylene Finch matched the boys' effort in the 400 freestyle relay, setting a new mark over seven seconds better than the previous record. Those four girls also set a new school-best in the 200 medley relay. Finch earned the new 200 free record, replacing a time from 2001, the oldest on the record books. She then set a new mark in the 100 free, only to be outdone by teammate Steadman later in the meet.

"I tried to break (the 100 free) last year but it didn't happen," Steadman said. "So I worked really hard all summer. ... I was consistent in my summer practice and I worked with coaches after practice to perfect my stroke. I finally was able to break that, and the others have just kind of fallen into place."

In addition to the individual records, the boys finished third and the girls finished fourth at the region meet, both school-bests.

"It's not just about the individuals up on the (record) board," said Danny O'Very. "Even in an individual sport like swimming, and we all know swimming is very individualistic, it comes down to what really pushed them (the record-breakers) over the top was their team."

The team is also what pushed Ian over the top.

A month after being put on the steroid treatments and surrounded by his team, Ian went in for an MRI and the tumor was gone.

"When they went in to do the biopsy, there was nothing to biopsy," Geoff Hatch said.

Since that time, Ian has had two more MRIs and any scar tissue in the brain stem has gotten smaller.

"They (Ian's doctors) don't know what it was, they weren't ever able to diagnose it, and we don't know what happened that it just went away," Geoff said. Ian's mother, Marla, interjected, saying, "It was all these young people pulling together for him. That's what happened."

Ian spent the swim season in the pool, alongside his teammates, where he lettered in the 100-yard butterfly. And for the first time in school history, the Riverton swim team competed at the state meet as a team, rather than as a few individual swimmers. The boys finished 16th overall and the girls were 14th overall.

"It takes individual commitment to a dream, and these young people just rose to the occasion," O'Very said. "They decided, 'You know what, this is something I believe in, something I'm going to do.' They've never had this much excitement at Riverton swimming. This is a very exciting time."

6 photos



Geoff Hatch

Riverton High School swim team member Ian Hatch was diagnosed with a brain tumor six months ago.

GALLERY (6 PHOTOS)