



JSerra beats out Crean Lutheran for first state title

BY DAN ALBANO

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FRESNO - They burst onto Orange County's swimming scene as freshmen, instantly helping turn a school into a powerhouse. They stayed champions the next season, but after a high-profile transfer in their ranks, they persevered to stay contenders without as much of the spotlight.

And so went the story of JSerra's girls until their final meet Saturday on a day for historical firsts.

Behind three individual champions, gutsy efforts despite illness and injury and under first-year coach **Kevin Clements**, JSerra out-dueled

national record-setting Crean Lutheran for the girls team title at California's inaugural CIF State Swimming and Diving Championships.

Northgate of Walnut Creek won the boys title.

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JSerra, the CIF-SS Division 1 girls runner-up this season and in 2014, scored 201 points to outdistance runner-up Crean Lutheran at 191. The Saints blasted a national private high school record in the meet-ending 400-yard freestyle relay with a time of 3 minutes, 20.03 seconds, but Crean Lutheran coach **Craig Brown** made a point to hug JSerra's squad, nicknamed the "Super Six" on its campus.

Crean Lutheran's **Ella Eastin** also offered high-fives before Clements and JSerra's **Kaitlyn Albertoli**, **Karli Thuen**, **Brittany Kahn**, **Sonia Wang**, **Katie Glavinovich** and **Catherine Lowengrub** joined hands for a victory plunge at Clovis West High.

"They did a fantastic job of really showcasing not only to Southern California and our (Southern) Section, but all the way through the whole state of California, what we could do," Clements said.

"They showed (this season) that they could still stay strong even going through that adversity."

Albertoli, Thuen and Kahn were part of JSerra's original stellar freshmen class that included rising star **Katie McLaughlin** and hauled in Division 1 titles in 2012-13. McLaughlin then transferred to Santa Margarita, which netted the next two Division 1 crowns, but the Eagles were among the many to decline the state meet. But there was no missing JSerra's resolve.

The Stanford-bound Albertoli captured the 50 free in a lifetime-best and county-leading 22.67 seconds. The Arizona-bound Thuen claimed the 500 free in a lifetime-best 4:48.06, taking advantage of a scratch by top-seeded **Moriah Simonds** of Livermore's Granada. And the ailing Wang, a transfer from Upland, won the backstroke in Lane 1 with a lifetime-best and county-leading 52.99.

"We can do it just by ourselves and if times are tough, we can figure it out, come together, become a team even closer and make it happen," Thuen said.

Kahn, slowed by a shoulder injury, finished 14th in the 500 (5:00.79).

JSerra grabbed the lead for good after the backstroke, but Crean Lutheran charged to the finish. Eastin led off the 400 with a state meet-record and lifetime-best 49.19 to outduel her future Stanford teammate Albertoli (49.88). Crean's **Tianna Jorgenson** then split a 51.35 second leg, **Emily Eastin** followed with a 50.01 and freshman **Elise Garcia** anchored with a 49.48 as the Saints broke Carondelet's national private school record of 3:20.42 from 2013 and outdistanced runner-up JSerra (3:22.45). Wang split a 49.29 anchor.

"Is this fun stuff?" Brown said with a smile. "(I) can't complain getting second in state."

Brown said leading off Ella Eastin in the 400 was an easy decision.

"She is the toughest of the tough," he said. "Tianna is a great second swimmer. She can lengthen a lead."

Brown said of Emily Eastin, "Having a lead, she can bring it home."

And of Garcia, he said, "No one is going to beat Elise in the back (anchor)."

Ella Eastin challenged her recent national private school record in the 200 individual medley by winning in 1:54.31. She also almost became the first county girl to break a minute in the 100 breaststroke, winning in a lifetime-best 1:00.33, which lowered her county record. And she did all with a cut hand.

Crean Lutheran also captured the medley relay as the Eastin sisters and Jorgenson combined with **Katia Young** for a county-leading 1:42.23. Corona del Mar's **Tyler Lin** finished a narrow second in the breaststroke with a 55.25, three hundredths of a second behind **Hank Poppe** of San Ramon Valley.

Newport Harbor's boys 200 free relay (1:24.27) touched second to Clovis (1:23.60). JSerra's girls also had a strong showing in the individual medley thanks to runner-up Wang (1:58.43), third-place Thuen (2:00.16) and consolation winner Glavinovich (2:02.49).

Orange County's depth and effort in the state meet also surfaced with several swimmers that captured the consolation final.

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