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Newman shines for Wolverines at Big Ten meet

Freshman swimmer earns Second Team All-Big Ten honors

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Dow High alum Claire Newman made her presence felt for the University of Michigan's women's swimming team at the Big Ten Championships in Minneapolis, Minn., this past weekend.



Claire Newman

Newman, a 2020 Dow graduate and freshman sprinter for the Wolverines, was named Second Team All-Big Ten following the meet, during which she was part of the 200-yard freestyle relay team which placed second at the event. Newman's split time was 22.50 seconds for the relay team, which qualified to advance to the NCAA Championships in Greensboro, N.C., later this month.

Also at the Big Ten meet, Newman turned in a personal-best time of 49.90 in the 100 freestyle, which was good for 23rd overall and seventh in the C Final; she



University of Michigan freshman and Dow High alum Claire Newman poses with the medal she earned at last weekend's Big Ten Championships, alongside Wolverines' coach Mike Bottom. (photo provided)

was 27th out of 90 competitors in the 50 freestyle with a time of 23.27; and she finished 50th out of 80 swimmers in the 200 freestyle with a time of 1:52.00.

As a team, Michigan finished second out of 13 teams, behind only meet champion Ohio State.

"After a long season of unex-

pected challenges and changes, the Big Ten championship meet was a beacon of hope," Newman said. "Getting the opportunity to race alongside true champions of the sport has been such an honor, and I'm excited for many more wonderful meets with these people."

Kelly: Tanner Smith deserves a medal

You've got to appreciate the heck out of Tanner Smith.

Taking over a Meridian girls' basketball program a couple of years ago which had no tradition of success and no real reason to believe that



Fred Kelly

that would change in the near future, Smith seemingly was stepping into a no-win

situation. (And that scenario was literally true last season, as the Mustangs went 0-21!)

But to Smith's unmitigated credit, he stuck with it, kept working with the girls, didn't get discouraged, and now, as of this writing, he has the Mustangs playing above-.500 basketball. Of course, being a humble soul, Smith recently gave a lot of the credit to his players, and rightfully so, for turning things around. At the same time, though, he deserves his share of credit for maintaining an unflinchingly positive attitude -- not an easy thing to do when you work, work, work and see no evident payoff.

In fact, I think the most impressive thing about Smith, even more so than helping the Mustangs get on a winning track this year, was his conscientiousness and integrity last season, while experiencing loss after loss after loss. Never once did he fail to contact the Daily News with his nightly game results, and that alone is worthy of big-time kudos. I've dealt with dozens and dozens of coaches over the past 21 years, and I dare say that precious few would have continued contacting us loyally as their record reached 0-10, 0-15, 0-20, etc.

But Smith did so promptly every game night. And what's more,



Meridian coach Tanner Smith addresses his team during a timeout in a Dec. 3, 2019 game against Bullock Creek. (Daily News file photo)

he never, ever sounded deflated or discouraged. Somehow, some way, he always seemed to find a tiny silver lining in the dark cloud of the 2019-20 season and found some positive to draw out of every loss when he would give us his postgame comments. I'm quite sure that, placed in the same situation, I could not have done the same.

I got the chance to see Smith in action last week in a game against heavily-favored Farwell, a game in which Meridian pushed the Eagles to overtime before finally succumbing and slipping to 3-2 on the season. And I really liked what I saw.

With the limited fan attendance, it was easy to hear Smith communicating with his players -- and communicate he did ... a lot!

Smith coached the girls up literally from tipoff to final buzzer, yelling out instructions and encouragement and advice in loud by constructive fashion. When the Mustangs messed up, he encouraged them to regroup and maintain their energy level. And when they made a nice play, he celebrated

demonstratively. He seemed to embody the very energy that he was continually imploring his players to generate.

My favorite moment came around the third quarter when senior guard Jenna Holzinger did something good (I honestly can't remember exactly what it was; taking a charge, perhaps). As she exited the game to take a break on the bench, Smith enthusiastically embraced Holzinger and offered a hearty word of encouragement. I think I've been around long enough to tell the difference between genuine excitement and manufactured enthusiasm, and it's my opinion that Smith was truly pumped up -- as he was every time his Mustangs made a bucket or got a defensive stop or made a hustle play.

As an aspiring college and high school official who will be working some NCAA Division I softball games this spring, Smith surely has enough on his plate and probably doesn't need to coach high school girls' basketball in order to feel complete. But he took a job which presumably

few other people wanted at a school where softball is king in girls' sports; he has poured his heart into it; he seems to really appreciate his players; he is thrilled when his team shows improvement, win or lose; and, ultimately, he is getting results.

Smith's girls play hard, if not always crisply, and he seems to have them believing that they can compete with anyone on their schedule. Following an 0-21 season, that is nothing short of remarkable.

Smith told me after last week's game that his team's goal for this season is to win a district championship. In order to do so, the Mustangs presumably will have to get by a solid Beaverton team led by high-scoring Molly Gerow at some point in the district tournament. That will be a tall task, but, even if the Mustangs are unable to pull off such an upset, it likely won't be for lack of effort or energy.

Not if their coach has anything to say about it.

Fred Kelly is a sports-writer for the Daily News.



Dow High's Collin Lemanski makes a save during a March 4, 2020 regional final against Flint Powers. (Daily News file photo)

Prep Profile: Dow High's Collin Lemanski

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Name: Collin Lemanski, Dow High junior
Sports played: Hockey, golf, baseball, soccer, basketball, swimming

Favorite sport: Hockey

Best moment while playing sports:

"Winning against Grand Rapids Catholic Central 3-2 in three overtimes to move on to the Frozen Four (state semifinals) in hockey my sophomore year."



Collin Lemanski

Game-day routine/tradition/superstition:

"Putting on my equipment the same exact way, listening to the same music in the same order for each song, taking a nap three to four hours before the game, eating nothing for four hours up until game time, and brushing my teeth before leaving home for games."

Favorite athlete: Jonathan Quick (Los Angeles Kings' goaltender)

Extracurricular activities: Working out, playing Xbox with friends

Favorite school subject: Engineering

Favorite teacher ever: "Mr. McGee. He was always fun and fair to play sports and activities with and around in middle school PE."

Favorite meal: BLT burger with fries

Favorite hobby: "Watching and learning about the stock market."

Future goals: "To play Junior hockey, to play Division I college hockey, and to get a degree in architectural engineering."

Surprising/amusing fact most people don't know: "I started playing hockey when I was four."

Whoa, Nelly! Korda makes it 2 straight wins for her family

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Nelly Korda seized control with three early birdies and finished with 12 straight pars for a 3-under 69 to win the Gainbridge LPGA on Sunday, giving the Korda family two victories to start the season.

Her older sister, Jessica, won the season-opening Tournament of Champions last month in Orlando.

Korda won for the first time on American soil — her other three LPGA wins were in Australia and twice in Taiwan — and the first time with her parents watching. Her father, Petr Korda, is a former Australian Open tennis champion.

On the other side of the course, Annika Sorenstam wrapped up her return after more than 12 years of retirement with a par on the ninth hole for a 76, finishing last among the 74 players who made the cut. The 50-year-old Swede was making this one-time appearance because Lake Nona has been her home course for two decades.

"I'm just thankful being here, playing here and being able to make the cut," Sorenstam said. "I think I never gave up, even though it was not really going my way and I wasn't hitting as well as I should be to be out here. The purpose was to get some tournament rounds, and I did that."

She has said she plans to play the U.S. Senior Women's Open this summer and she'll need to get sharp, though Sorenstam said preparing for that would not include another LPGA event.

Sorenstam finished 29 shots behind Korda, who won by three over Lexi Thompson and Lydia Ko.

Korda, who finished at 16-under 272, began the final round with a one-shot lead over rookie Patty Tavatanakit, the former UCLA star who fell back quickly and wound up with 74 to tie for fifth.