

Swimmer, 12, sets her sights and winning ways on BHS team

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On the surface, Jacie Dick appears to be a typical 12-year-old. She enjoys spending time with friends, is a good student and has many interests.

It is at the water's surface, though, that she transforms into a star. Jacie is the Illinois state champion swimmer in her division, and her record backstroke time ranks her among the top 10 in the nation. More amazing is that this talented young athlete didn't swim a stroke until age 7.

Caryn and Robert Dick were happy to register their 7-year-old daughter for South Barrington's swimming program. It was a chance for Jacie to have fun with her friends while learning how to swim.

Beyond learning the basic strokes, Jacie soon hit her aquatic stride. Caryn recalls Jacie's rapid progression.

"I remember watching her when she first competed with the South Barrington Swim Club. She was just getting across the pool, and the following year she was stroking! I thought to myself, 'She looks like a swimmer now!'"

While many of her friends dropped out of the program, Jacie was hooked. Just one year later, Jacie was ready for greater challenges. She tried out for the Barrington Swim Club and, at age 8, was accepted.

During her tenure with BSC, Jacie has developed her skills as well as gained insight into competitive swimming. The year is divided into two seasons, winter and summer. Local meets may involve 300 to 500 swimmers, grouped by age and judged by time. Times not only dictate the winners of individual events, but are also kept on record to determine who qualifies to enter the state championships.

Better known as Junior Olympics, the state championships are held as the culmination of each season. To qualify, competitors must have a time on record that meets or beats the time limit for their age group.

Jacie's exceptional ability became obvious at 10 years of age, when she began drastically improving her times. Jacie won several local events that year and earned her first trip to the Junior Olympics. She has qualified for every state championship since then.

At age 11, Jacie placed seventh in the Summer 2000 Junior Olympics' 50 Meter Backstroke. During the following winter season, Jacie set club records for the 50-yard backstroke, 50-yard freestyle and 100-yard backstroke and was the high point winner at the Palatine Winter Splash.

Jacie's outstanding performances qualified her for nine events at the Winter 2001 Junior Olympics, but time restraints limited the number of events in which she could compete to six. She placed second in the 50-yard backstroke, second in the 100-yard backstroke, third in the 50-yard freestyle and sixth in the 100- yard freestyle.

Jacie followed up that tremendous winter season with a sensational summer season. After setting a new club record for the 50-meter backstroke and being awarded high point winner at the St. Charles Pepsi Summer Classic, Jacie exceeded everyone's expectations at the Summer 2001 Junior Olympics.

Again qualifying for nine individual events, Jacie had to choose just five. She received medals in all.

She also anchored her BSC teams to fifth place in both the 400- meter medley and freestyle relay. Beyond earning the first place ranking in Illinois and establishing a new pool record, Jacie's 50- meter backstroke performance placed her in the country's top 10 swimmers in her age group.

Although she will enter a new age group this season, with tougher time standards, Jacie has already qualified for several events in this winter's championships.

Competing against older swimmers is nothing new to Jacie, though. During their off-season, Barrington High School Swim Team members practice with the Barrington Swim Team. Respected for her abilities, Jacie has been invited by these "senior" swimmers to join their relay teams, competing against swimmers ages 15 to 18.

With an impressive record like hers, it isn't surprising that Jacie's immediate response, when asked what she likes best about swimming is, "Winning!" She also treasures the friends she has made over the years, as well as the team spirit they share.

Natural talent is only a part of Jacie's success story. Her dedication and personal strength are as impressive as her physical ability. For nine months of the year, she attends a two-hour swimming practice five days per week. Caryn reports that she never has to coax her daughter to get ready for practice. Rather, she is eager to head to the pool.

Jacie takes pride in her accomplishments but is always striving to improve. These attributes are likely shared by her role models, the U.S. Olympic Swim Team members.

Not limiting her athletic aptitude to the pool, Jacie also competes on the Barrington Middle School "A" basketball team and is a pitcher on the Palatine Panthers travel softball team.

Despite her devotion to sports, Jacie doesn't neglect her academics; she is an honor roll student.

She remains focused on her goals: to continue to swim well and to swim for the BHS team.

Caption: Jacie Dick, 12, the top ranked swimmer in her division in Illinois, displays a few of her many swimming awards on her bedroom wall.

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