

Aherne delivers perfection

BY JOE BELL
Staff Reporter

As she came into the last 25 yards of the 100-yard freestyle, junior Kate Aherne looked up to see that between her and a first-place finish was Drury University swimmer Jing Hua, a yard ahead.

After coming off the wall for the final 25 yards, Aherne said she realized she might be able to catch up to Hua, a former national champion in the event, and snatch another first-place victory for her team. As the two swimmers powered down the last length of the pool, Aherne gave it all she had left.

"[Hua] had me at that third 25, so we had that one length left," Aherne said. "I was like, 'I'm going to go for it!' I saw her push off the wall, and I just thought, 'I think I can get her, I think I can get her!'"

At the finish line, Aherne was proven right. She had come from behind in that last length to tie Hua at the wall for a first-place tie in the 100-yard freestyle, in 52.73 seconds.

And as big as that race was for Aherne, she also accomplished another amazing feat in Saturday's women's meet against Drury: She won the 50- and 200-yard freestyles in back-to-back races.

"I asked [Kate] to do something I have never asked an individual to do in my entire coaching career," head coach Mark Gole said. "And that is, try to win back-to-back events, which she stepped up and did."

Aherne's three individual first-place finishes were the most by any swimmer at Saturday's meet.



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Junior Kate Aherne swims in the 100-yard freestyle last Saturday. She made a comeback in the last 25 yards in the event for a tie against Jing Hua of Drury. She also won the 50- and 100-yard freestyles.

In the 200-yard freestyle, Aherne beat her closest competition by 3.63 seconds. Just a few minutes later, Aherne was back in the pool to race the 50-yard freestyle. Aherne swam against Eunata Garro, who received second place in the event at the 2008 nationals. Aherne beat Garro by 0.15 of a second. It was several events later when Aherne grabbed a first-place tie in the 100-yard freestyle.

Gole said he had Aherne race back-to-back races because of the meet's importance. Aherne's victories were crucial to the Bulldogs, as only one other Bull-

dog took an individual first at the meet. Largely because of Aherne's three first-place finishes, Truman lost to Drury by just 18 points, 110.5-92.5.

Aherne said she was glad she got a chance to see what she could do against strong competition.

"You definitely have to be really mentally prepared, too and ready to swim against [Drury] because they are such good competition," Aherne said. "You never know exactly what they're going to throw at you. They have a lot of different people that they can put into

different events. You just have to bring your A game, and hopefully that will be good enough."

Gole said he had confidence placing Aherne in any event that he needed her to swim.

"The funny thing is, she's strong wherever we put her," Gole said. "She has an individual A cut in the 50 free, 100 free, 200 free, 100 back, 200 back, 200 IM and 400 IM. She swam a 100 butterfly and just missed the B cut. ... There really isn't anything she can't do."

Athlete of the Week

Kate Aherne
Sport: Swimming
Year: Junior
Position: FS/IM/BK
Hometown: Cary, Ill.

Aherne won all three of her events in a dual meet against Drury on Saturday. In the 100-yard freestyle, she came from behind in the last 25-yards to garner a tie with a time of 52.73. She also won back-to-back races in the 50- and 200-yard freestyle events. This year, she has seven individual A cuts and the fastest time in Div. II in the 200-yard freestyle and 200-yard IM.

13 Bulldogs finish in top 10 at Iowa Open

BY JOCELYN NEBEL
Staff Reporter

After two days at the Iowa State Open this weekend, the men's and women's indoor track teams returned with top-10 placements, personal bests and a little more experience.

The women's team had 10 athletes finish in the top-10, and the men had three top-10 performers.

"There were people we thought did really well," head coach John Cochrane said. "We had some really decent performances."

The Bulldogs competed against Div. I teams including the University of Iowa as well as teams such as Northwest Missouri State University and Southwest Baptist University that will compete against the Bulldogs in

the MIAA conference meet.

Cochrane said this meet was beneficial for the Bulldogs because it provided them with the opportunity to compete against athletes who were at the same competitive level.

"You have a really good chance to run against people that are your ability," Cochrane said. "You have a good chance to run good times and things like that."

Junior hurdler Shaina Dochterman said the teams were more competitive this week than at the Jan. 17 Iowa Hawkeye Open. She said this helped her gain more focus for her own events.

"You just had a more competitive mindset," Dochterman said. "You knew you were going to be going against some really good schools, and you had to step up."

Cochrane said many of the

athletes achieved personal bests in the meet. He said sophomore distance runner Josh Mantooh and freshman distance runner Ken Szakacsi did very well in their respective races.

The men's field events also had a couple of top performers. Freshman jumper Coedy Walker placed eighth in the triple jump with a jump of 13.60 meters. Sophomore thrower Derek Atwood was another top performer. He finished sixth in the shotput in a field of 67 athletes with a throw of 15.20 meters. This finish also was a personal record for Atwood.

"I had a good week of practice, a good week of preparation and got some good coaching tips," Atwood said.

Atwood said some of the advice for this weekend came from assistant coach Leslie Hardesty.

"[Hardesty] thought I was holding back some energy, so she told me that when I got to the front to just explode and just get after it," Atwood said.

For the women, junior jumper Katrina Biermann and senior distance runner Danna Kelly made NCAA provisional marks. Biermann led the women with a second- and third-place finish in the triple jump and pole vault respectively. Kelly ran personal bests in the mile and 5,000-meter races. Her time in the 5,000-meter run was more than a minute faster than in that event at the Iowa State meet last year.

Dochterman also had strong finishes in her events. She placed third in the 600-yard run with a time of 1:25.91. Dochterman also finished seventh in the 60-meter hurdles with a personal-best time of 9.25. This is the first year

Dochterman competed in the event. Dochterman said the race was more like a warm-up because she is accustomed to running longer races.

"You have to be able to get your center of gravity up higher, and the shorter distance doesn't hurt as bad," Dochterman said.

Dochterman said focusing on her form, especially getting her lead leg down, was crucial for competing in her events.

The women throwers also had some top performers at the meet. Junior Tessa Letuli and senior Ashley Bernard finished fifth and seventh in the weight throw. Bernard also finished sixth in the shotput.

The Bulldogs will compete at the University of Northern Iowa Invitational in Cedar Falls, Iowa, on Saturday. The Bulldogs will compete against Div. I teams

such as University of Northern Iowa, Drake University and Western Illinois University. The Bulldogs competed against Western Illinois this past weekend and at the Hawkeye Open.

"[This meet] will give them another opportunity to compete with really good people and be competitive with these people," Cochrane said. "We have some people in our conference that are really nasty and we've got to get so that we can compete with them."

Cochrane said that focus and mentality are two of the biggest factors in his athletes' performances this weekend.

"We still have a long way to go," Cochrane said. "We had some other people that we thought could do better. We have to keep improving as we go through [the season]."

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