

WHS Swimmers Produce Two State Qualifiers

Written by Mike Kelly

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The Watauga High swimming team produced a pair of state qualifiers Saturday at the Class 4A Western Regional in Huntersville, NC.

Darby Middlebrook, who won the Class 4A state title in cross country last fall---setting a state record at the meet as well, continued her successful ways by finishing sixth in the 100 breast stroke and qualified for the state meet next Friday in Cary. She completed the course in 1:10.47. WHS also qualified its 400-free style relay team.

That group finished ninth, thanks to Providence being disqualified for getting an early jump in the race. With the DQ, WHS moved up a spot to eighth place and qualified for state. That relay team is made up Darby Middlebrook, Hailey Middlebrook, Doria Kosmala and Ingrid Forsyth.

"Our kids went up against a very strong regional field," WHS coach David Gragg said. "But we came out of it with a pair of state qualifiers. We've didn't have any state qualifiers the last two years, so getting Darby and one of our relay teams through in a field this strong is a huge achievement for our program."

The Pioneers had not produced a state qualifier since 2008. And, ironically, Darby Middlebrook will be pulling double duty next weekend. She'll compete at the state swimming meet on Friday, and she will compete at the state indoor track meet Saturday in Fayetteville.

"Darby is just a great athlete," Gragg said. "I feel very confident in her chances on Friday. She has a chance to at least make the consolation round and finish in the top 16. But with her drive, you never know."

The state swimming meet will be held Friday at the Triangle Aquatic Center in Cary, NC.

Preliminaries begin at 9 am; the finals begin at 4 pm. The Providence men and women made it a clean sweep by winning both regional titles.