

# **Girls swimming: Record-setter Patla helps Fremd win third straight MSL championship**

By Bill McLean



Former state swimming champions Jim Patla and Lindsey Farella are friends.

Patla's daughter Ellie, a Fremd junior and Wisconsin commit, shared that tidbit at Saturday's Mid-Suburban League girls swimming and diving meet at Prospect.

Jim Patla swam on Fremd's state-title 400-yard freestyle relay in 1995; Elk Grove grad Farella won four individual state events in the

mid-1990s.

They'll certainly have something to talk about after what Ellie Patla clocked in the 100 free on Saturday.

Jim's dandy daughter zipped to a 51.1 in the event, supplanting the former MSL meet-record (51.57) set 32 years ago by ... Farella.

"Ellie loves every part of swimming," said Vikings coach Andrew Kittrell, whose crew tallied 341 points to capture the program's third straight MSL championship, ahead of runner-up Hersey (319) and third-place Rolling Meadows (307). "She's incredibly diligent and she swims with joy; that megawatt smile of hers, it's always there. But she's also hyper-focused like all great athletes are.

"I leave Ellie alone at practice, because she's in her happy place when she's swimming all those laps."

Other meet records and pool marks fell at quite a clip Saturday, nearly matching the rate of leaves descending off trees outside the Knights' natatorium. Rolling Meadows senior and North Carolina State-bound Vera Conic — 19th in the 200-meter backstroke at last summer's U.S. Olympic Trials in Indianapolis — went 4-for-4 Saturday, touching first in the 100 backstroke in a meet- and pool-record 54.41, winning the 200 IM in 2:04.49, and helping the Mustangs' 200 medley (1:45.04) and 400 free (3:32.31) relays set meet and pool records.

"That was a testament to my teammates' hard work, winning those relays in the times we did," said the team-centric Conic, referring to classmates Elise North, Emily Sang and Ella Poortinga, as well as freshman Naomi Poortinga, who raced for the 400-free unit.

**"When you're having fun, like we all did today, it's easy to swim fast."**

**Patla also left Saturday's meet as the meet- and pool-record holder in the 200 free (1:50.58).**

**"The energetic environment here helped all swimmers, along with going against such great competition," said Patla, who churned to an impressive time of 4:59 in the 500 free — an off-event — at a dual meet last month to "mix up my training," she said.**

**Other event champions Saturday: Fremd junior and now two-time MSL diving champ Mihika Tillu (453.7); RM's North, also a stage/singing standout (50 free, 24.08); RM's Sang (100 butterfly, 58.2); Buffalo Grove senior and SMU recruit Ella Houston (500 free, 5:00.83); Fremd's 200 free relay (Patla, Sophia Pentchev, Anna Hinshaw and Caterina Gaido; pool-record 1:38.17); and Prospect sophomore Emme Jones (100 breaststroke, 1:05.8).**

**Finishing runner-up to Jones was Prospect senior Karla Baird (1:06.28).**

**"They train together, side by side, and they have the same goals," said Knights coach Alfonso Lopez. "They push each other and they're the best of friends."**

**Jones, Baird (anchor), Gracie Zimmer and Diana Gruszczyk combined for a runner-up time of 1:48.37 in the 200-medley relay.**

**Barrington — behind a pair of third-place showings (Ella Yang, diving, 413.6) and Ingrid Coonrad (500 free, 5:13.92) — finished fourth (231), followed by Prospect (199), BG and Hoffman Estates**

(163 points each), Schaumburg (160), Elk Grove (158), Conant (107), Palatine (64) and Wheeling (43).

Hersey bronzed in two relays (200 free, 400 free). Morgen Oswald, Paulina Kuczek, Emily Steinberg and Anna Anderson collaborated for a 1:41.87 in the 200 free; Anderson, Steinberg, Claudia Glinko and Abigail Stonequist went 3:39.18 in the meet's last event.

"Swim fast, get ready for taper," Huskies coach Dick Mortensen said, looking ahead to next weekend's sectional at Barrington. "You want your swimmers at the conference meet to be around their best times. They'll go for the big prizes (state berths) next.

"As a coach, the week leading up to the sectional is a pivotal one."

Saturday's MSL gathering ended fittingly, with the meet's top two stars racing in the final leg of the 400-free relay.

RM's Conic hit the wall ahead of Fremd's Patla. The Mustangs' quartet beat the Vikings' foursome by 1.78 seconds.

**Splishes and splashes:** Palatine JV girls swimming coach Ian Richardson is the son of former Palatine swimming coach Ed Richardson and current Palatine volleyball coach Joyce Richardson. ... Fremd diver Tulli, on her new plunge, a reverse with a 1.5 twist: "You have to stay calm and not rush it. You also have to have a positive attitude as you compete it." ... Tulli, on the sport of diving: "It's easy to get better at it, as long as you listen to your coach (Donna O'Brien) and make corrections. What people don't realize about diving is how painful it can be sometimes. Smacks at the end of practice dives hurt." ... RM coach Monika Chiappetta, on Saturday's 50-free champion, North. "I've heard her perform (as a

singer on stage); she's phenomenal. She's also a member of the band. Added teammate Conic, "Elise can do it all." ... BG coach Mike McPartlin, on Houston, the reigning state runner-up in the 500 free: "Ella has an amazing reach on her strokes. She's so good at driving her hips to add power, to extend her reach." ... Hersey coach Mortensen, on Saturday's fast meet: "Part of it is the pool, and part of it is the competition. Great swimmers push each other." ... BG's Allison Houston finished runner-up in diving (438.7) Saturday. ... Hoffman Estates' Lena Banaszewski touched fourth in the each of the 200 IM (2:14.15) and 100 fly (59.67) events and led off the Hawks' second-place 200 free relay team (1:40.54, with Raegan Kline, Charlena Villaro and Emily Latasiewicz).