Flu bug, officials sink swimwomen's hopes

Despite exceptional regular season, Lady Lions finish seventh at the Big Ten championships in Minnesota.

By STEVE FEINBERG Collegian Sports Writer

Illness and questionable judging was not supposed to interfere with their hopes.

"Unfortunately, lady luck wasn't on our side," said coach Bob Krimmel, whose 10-1-1 Lady Lion swim team finished a disappointing seventh in the Big Ten Championships in Minnesota this past weekend.

Illnesses to Liz Rossi and Kim Kephart, two of the leading scorers all season, kept them out of action for half the events they were scheduled for.

Rossi began having throat and breathing problems last Wednesday night, the eve of the meet's first day. Thursday morning it

Upon a visit to the Minnesota team doc-

tor, she was diagnosed with tonsillitis, fever and dehydration, keeping her out of her first two events and putting her straight in the hospital where Krimmel left the team to accompany her.

However, late in the Saturday meet, she went against the doctor's advice to sit and swam in the 1,650-yd freestyle. She placed in the top eight, scoring important points for the team. Krimmel called it a "miracle" she was able to swim so well for someone in such condition.

Kephart, meanwhile, came out like gangbusters Thursday night as she set the Penn State record in the 500-yd freestyle. Her 4:50.29 was good for fourth place. But then the same fever which hit Rossi came down on Kephart.

Also going against the doctor's wishes, she courageously came back on Friday, placing sixth in the finals of the 200-yd freestyle with a 1:50.72. Saturday, though, Kephart's condition got worse and she was scratched from her scheduled 200-yd

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With all the illnesses, was there a good break waiting to occur?

On the meet's very first event Thursday morning, the Lady Lions were disqualified for a false start in the 200-yd free-relay despite what Krimmel called conclusive videotape evidence that showed otherwise.

"The frustrating thing is we didn't appear to do it," Krimmel said.

The violation, which occurred between the third and fourth relay swimmers, happened in the outside lane closest to the judges table.

Krimmel was upset as the judges even said afterward that such calls are only made when they are certain of seeing the

The disqualification cost the Lady Lions 30 points and placed them in an 11th place basement at the outset. Two days later the team managed to

move up to seventh, a feat the coach was very proud of. "If adversity builds character, this team

has got it," Krimmel said.

"If adversity builds character, this team has got it."

— Bob Krimmel

Lady Lion swim coach

The coach was also happy with some personal best, individual performances.

Team co-captain Lisa Pastrana, who has led the team all year, reached the Big Ten finals for the first time in her career with top eight finishes in the 100 and 200-yd backstrokes

Karna Lorhammer also made her Big Ten final debut in the 200-yd breaststroke

Fellow breaststroker Kristi Swix had what the coach called "a phenomenal meet," scoring and establishing personal records in both breaststroke events.

And diver Erika Georgs became the first ever Penn State woman diver to reach the Big Ten finals of a diving event.

For the team, this is it for a season which began Labor Day. While most of the team can now rest, some are still looking for that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity at qualifying for the Olympics.

Carmen Kondra and Lesley Spada probably have the best chance as they continue to practice for the Canadian Olympic trials next month.

Pastrana, Lorhammer, Rossi and depending on her health, Kephart will all go to the Michigan Invitational this week-

The group looks to help improve their standing with possible at-large invitations to the NCAA Women's Swimming Championships. The championship bid will be given handed out to the nation's best on

Olympic trial qualifying times will depend on designated times. Also, divers Georgs and Melissa Breen will continue to prepare for the NCAA pre-qualifying meet in Indianapolis.

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