



Kelsey Morris/Collegian

Amy Modglin dives at practice Tuesday at the McCoy Natatorium. Modglin has made an impact in just her second year at Penn State.

Modglin feels she made right choice

By Dan DiBacco
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Some things just come natural to people.

For sophomore swimmer Amy Modglin, dancing is not one of those things.

Prior to swimming, Modglin was a ballet dancer but disliked it, so at the age of 5, Modglin ditched the dance shoes and began swimming.

When she was 8 years old, Modglin was swimming in the Junior Olympics.

"I hated [dancing]," Modglin said. "My mom said, 'Let's try swimming since you love the water.'"

Her freshman year of high school, Modglin began getting letters from colleges all over the country, and by her senior year she was a five-star recruit, and had her choice out of a long list of colleges.

Originally, Modglin said she "kind of" committed to Auburn, and never really considered Penn State until one of her assistant coaches, Daryl Sullivan, told her about his son, Chris, who swam at Penn State, and talked Modglin into visiting.

Hailing from Fort Myers, Fla., Modglin was skeptical of going to a school as far away from home as Penn State, but took the Sullivans' advice and made one last college visit to Penn State.

Once she stepped on the Penn State campus, she knew it was the right school, and a big win from Penn State's football team sealed the deal, even though the Lions didn't have a home game.

"I wasn't even going to look here, and then I just fell in love with it...I committed the next day," Modglin said. "I was here the weekend of Ohio State when the riot was going on [in 2008]. I was like, 'This is college!' It was really fun."

Since becoming a Nittany Lion, Modglin has been nothing short of impressive. Last season as a freshman, she was an honorable mention All-American for the 200-backstroke, and has continued her success thus far this season — grabbing her second Big Ten

Swimmer of the Week honor last week after a 187-113 win over Virginia Tech.

Despite being a freshman, Modglin came into Penn State knowing a lot of seniors had just graduated, and expected to make an immediate impact. Her main goal was to qualify for NCAAs as a freshman, and she reached that goal, as the only Nittany Lion to qualify for the NCAA championships last season.

"[Making NCAAs] was one of my biggest personal goals as a freshman, because it is so competitive," Modglin said. "It was awesome being at NCAAs. It was such a whirlwind, I felt like it would never slow down."

"Then once I was done with NCAAs, I was like 'That was pretty cool.'"

Looking ahead to the rest of the season, Modglin said the team goal is to place in the top-3 at Big Tens, while individually, she wants to continue getting faster, and qualify for more events in NCAAs.

Something her coach, John Hargis, believes she's capable of doing.

"We know that she can be a lot better than what she is now," Hargis said. "It's the process of making her believe in how good she can be. These next 2.5 to 3 years we've got with her, I think we can do some pretty special things."

Despite her huge impact in the pool, Hargis believes that her impact outside of the pool is just as important to the team.

"She's so much more than what you see on paper, as far as times," Hargis said. "She's one of our hardest workers, she does very well in the classroom, she's just an all around great kid."

Modglin is an education major, and would like to be a teacher after college.

She has not decided whether or not she will one day be a swimming coach, but for now, she knows she made the right decision choosing Penn State.

"[My time at Penn State] has been amazing, this school has so much to offer," Modglin said. "It's been awesome, the swim team, the academics, the support staff, going out and having fun, it's all been great."

Swimmers excited for season

By Sean O'Connor
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

The 2010 men's swimming team is shaping up as one of the youngest in recent memory.

Of the varsity squad, only four of the swimmers are seniors. Ten are starting collegiate competition as true freshmen, but this has not deterred the squad from high expectations entering the season.

Part of those expectations lay squarely on the shoulders of junior Brian Alden. The junior freestyle-swimmer was the only member of the squad to compete at the NCAA Championships last season.

There, Alden posted a season-best 43.79 in the 100-meter freestyle, finishing 30th in the country.

The junior said he expects to help lead a young team and have them enjoy better representation at the 2011 NCAAs.

Among the key improvements

he stressed was "attitude".

According to Alden, the team had a negative atmosphere last season, and it affected the whole squad.

This season improved team unity and mental preparation has led to a better environment for everyone.

Alden's not the only one with higher expectations for this team.

"I think we're competing better. I think we're more of a team, and when I say that I mean we've got a lot of people finally onboard, finally on the same page and heading in one direction," head coach John Hargis said.

"In the past we've had a lot of tug-of wars with too many people being selfish athletes. I think now we're finally in a place where everyone is moving forward as one unit. It's exciting to watch."

Also expected to bolster the team's record this season are several high-profile freshmen, led by Sean Grier and Matt Salig. The pair won Pennsylvania high school championships in the 100-meter and 200-meter fly, respectively, last season. Salig actually won the 200 in his second collegiate meet versus Virginia Tech on Oct. 23.

However the team is still far

from perfect, and technique has been stressed for the first few weeks of the season.

"We've lost way too many close races, we've got to focus on getting our hand on the wall before anyone else," Hargis said.

The team has been working on their starts, turns and stroke technique in attempts to improve across the board.

Assistant coach Aaron Workman spoke at length about the team's youth.

"We have really high expectations. We didn't have a slow start, we had a young start," he said. "We have nine freshmen we're really leaning on and it's a learning process for a lot of these freshmen getting used to competing at the level we compete at."

Workman went on to add that the team wants to succeed in the Big Ten, but is focused more on the NCAAs due to a lack of depth. The team will be focused on improving individual and relay times to be successful in specific events, as they don't have the depth to run a swimmer for every single event, which is required at the Big Ten championships.

The team next competes in a dual meet at Virginia on Nov. 19th.



Hargis



Tom Ruane/Collegian

Brian Alden swims during the Lions' senior meet last season. Alden has stepped up as a leader this year.

Junior Alden showing leadership

By James Nicol
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

As the lone Nittany Lion on the men's swimming team to compete at the NCAA Championships last year, Brian Alden is hoping to have some company this spring.

The junior freestyle specialist has captured four individual titles in Penn State's first two swim meets. He won the 100 and 200 freestyles at West Virginia and the 50m and 100m freestyles when Penn State played Virginia Tech.

At last year's NCAA tournament Alden placed 27th in the 200 freestyle, 37th in the 50 freestyle and posted a career-best time of 43.79 seconds to finish 30th in the 100 freestyle.

Alden raced well at the Virginia Tech meet, despite a rib injury. Head coach John Hargis said he was impressed with Alden and the level of determination he showed by battling through injury.

"Competing like he did was a foot forward for him and honestly one I didn't think he would do it," Hargis said. "He showed a level of toughness that I didn't see in two years, so I was very proud of Brian stepping up and competing for the team."

Alden was unsure of the cause of the injury, but maintained that it is no longer an issue and he is back to 100 percent.

"He showed a level of toughness that I didn't see in two years, so I was very proud of Brian stepping up and competing for the team."

John Hargis
coach

"I hurt my ribs," Alden said. "I don't know how I did it, but I'm basically fine now."

Being the fastest swimmer on the team, Alden has assumed the leadership role among his teammates. The team lost many experienced swimmers to graduation and has seen many younger swimmers take on expanded roles. Alden said he hopes to help the underclassmen adjust to the speed of collegiate swimming.

"I want to lead these young kids and help them to do the best they can," Alden said. "It's a tough transition coming out of high school and coming to college, so if I can help them at all that's great."

Changing his attitude has been just as important as working on his stroke for Alden this year.

"Last year I was a little too negative, so I've been working on that, trying to be a little more positive for everybody," Alden said.

Senior captain John Austin said that the entire team will likely mirror Alden's attitude, so it is important for him to keep the team motivated.

Alden holds the top times in

Penn State history for the 50, 100, and 200 freestyle, but setting records is nothing new for Alden. He has been setting records since high school.

In high school, at Neuqua Valley in Naperville, Ill., Alden was a six-time state champion. He won the state title in the 50 and 100 freestyle, his sophomore, junior and senior seasons.

Chad Allen was Alden's coach at Neuqua Valley and praised his leadership abilities.

"He was a great leader for our team. He just kind of did everything the right way, was always the first one in the water and always did a nice job with our drills," Allen said.

"He did everything we asked of him."

This season Alden will have plenty of opportunity to test his leadership and hopefully lead several Nittany Lions to the NCAA tournament.

"Brian Alden is a NCAA level kid, coming back he's gonna be looked upon as a leader," Hargis said. "He's done well to this point."

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