

youth sports

Young divers make big splash

By Al Daniel
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Zoe Mongan, a seventh-grader who won the 1- and 3-meter events at the USA Diving Region 6 Championships from March 6-8 in Arvada, says she wants to ride her diving skills all the way to Florida State or Stanford. (Kristen Perkins, Special to The Denver Post)

Diving.

For Zoe Mongan, it's about the adrenaline rush.

For Kyle Goodwin, it's probably more about overcoming the fear.

But for the two 12-year-olds at the USA Diving Region 6 Championships in Arvada from March 6-8, it was about winning.

Mongan and Goodwin swept their 1- and 3-meter

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events to lead 14 members of the Mile High Dive Club qualifying for the USA Diving Spring Junior West Championships beginning Friday in Houston and earning The Denver Post Youth Excellence in Sports award for March.

YES!

"She dominated her event for the most part," Mile High Dive Club coach Courtney McClow said of Mongan. "She kind of took over the whole competition and set the bar really high for everybody else in that meet."

Jenn Hess, the club's director as well as a coach, added her take on Goodwin: "He's got incredible flexibility, great hands and can rip a lot of entries. He's definitely going to do great things in the sport."

Mongan, a seventh-grader at Campus Middle School who plans to add a new dive — a back 1 1/2 somersault with 1 1/2 twists — to her program for Houston, said diving is "extremely scary but at the same time amazing because of the adrenaline. It feels like you're flying."

"It's kind of become my life. I've been doing it since I was 5, and I don't think I could live without it."

Something Mongan — and Goodwin — could live without are the missed dives that end up turning into agonizing belly flops or back breakers.

"I've smacked my stomach and back a lot," Mongan said. "It's a painful way to learn."

Goodwin admits he has had his share of miscues off the board but has found it's about getting into the right mind-set going into the dive.

"It's just mental," said the sixth-grader at Challenge School in Denver. "There is a lot of physical stuff but mainly it's just mental — like you have to get over it before you do the dive."

And there might be times when not thinking at all is best.

"When I'm in the air, I try not to think very much or else the thinking just gets to my head and I usually do something wrong," Goodwin said.

Dive bombers

Mile High Dive Club members headed to nationals:

McKensi Austin: 3-meter and 1-meter*, 11-under

Alexa Beckwith: 3-meter and 1-meter, 14-15

Anthony Belitz: 3-meter and 1-meter, 11-under

Jaycie Brown: 3-meter, 12-13

Mandy Brown: 3-meter and 1-meter, 11-under

John Fox: 3-meter* and 1-meter, 16-18

Kyle Goodwin: 3-meter* and 1-meter*, 12-13

Chris Hartman: 3-meter and 1-meter, 14-15

Averly Hobbs: 1-meter, 12-13

Mady Ingmire: 3-meter and 1-meter, 14-15

Matt Jagiello: 3 meter and 1 meter, 14-15

Alan LeBlang: 1-meter, 12-13

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Zoe Mongan: 3-meter* and 1-meter*, 12-13

Sadie Wells: 3-meter, 16-18

* regional champion

Honorable mentions

Colorado Select

The girls hockey organization recorded a sweep at the Rocky Mountain District tournaments, with its 12AAA, 14AAA and 16AAA teams advancing to the national championships this week in Rochester, N.Y. With no other contender in the seven-state district in its division, Select's 19AAA team also moved on to the national tournament. All four of the teams, coached by Rich Smith, Bob Taggart, Jeff Jentz and Marnie Hill, respectively, begin their quests for a national title Wednesday against tournament host Rochester Edge.

Colorado Thunderbirds

It won't be just the girls competing to bring a national championship back to Colorado. The 16AAA Thunderbirds, coached by former University of Denver forward Angelo Ricci, travel to Chesterfield, Mo., for an opening game at nationals against the St. Louis Blues. Coach Kris Kostolansky takes his 14AAA Thunderbirds south for their nationals opener against the Dallas Stars in Plano, Texas. Both teams begin play Wednesday.

Arapahoe Warriors

Garrett Prochazka scored in double overtime to lift the 16AA Warriors to a 5-4 victory over Dallas at districts and into the Tier II national championships in Chesterfield, Mo. Coached by Gerry Hogue, the Warriors open the tournament Wednesday against the Affton (Mo.) Americans.

Aspen Valley Ski and Snowboard Club

Danielle Brownell-Patty, 13, won super-G and giant slalom titles en route to winning the overall crown and leading her club to victory at the USSA Rocky/Central J4 Junior Olympics from March 19-21 at Winter Park.

Know a top athlete?

Youth Excellence in Sports honors those 17 or younger who have excelled in any athletic endeavor unaffiliated with the Colorado High School Activities Association. To submit your choice for the top individual or team for April, visit denverpost.com/youthsports for an online form or fax a brief description of the achievement to 303-866-9004 (Attention: "YES!").

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