

Dec. 18 Fish4Scores.com/JoJo's Tavern Athlete of the Week

Hutton takes after his brother in confidence and also takes Zack's record

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Dec. 18: Hamilton West boys swimming coach Dan Seeth only had Zack Hutton for one season before he graduated, and he has only had Griffin Hutton for two months so far.

But that was enough time for him to see an important similarity in the two.

"The one trait I can say Zack and Griffin really share is that they are confident swimmers," Seeth said. "That doesn't mean they're cocky or arrogant, but they are aware of their abilities.

"Griffin, much like Zack, is able to perform in whatever race I need to put him in. It might not be his preferred event, but he'll go in and do it to the best of his abilities, which is usually pretty impressive. That says a lot about his character not only as a swimmer but as a young man."

It says more than Seeth can say about some aquamen he has encountered.

"The biggest problem I find with this generation of swimmers is overcoming mental obstacles," he said. "But I don't think I have ever heard Griffin say

'I can't,' and as silly as it sounds, that is a big deal.

"He's also developing a reputation for not giving up. Some swimmers will give up a race halfway through because they think they've already lost. In our Hightstown meet, Griffin proved he's the opposite of that when he came from behind in the 100 fly and took first."

That victory was one of four for the Hornet freshman this past week, as he won the 100 fly against both Nottingham and Hightstown, and broke big brother Zack's 400 freestyle record against Nottingham and re-set it against Hightstown Thursday.

For his efforts, Griffin Hutton is the *Fish4Scores.com/JoJo's Tavern Athlete of the Week* for the week ending Dec. 17.

Don't bet against Hutton taking his standard even lower than the current 4:26.75 he has set, since he has the fire inside to keep going.

"It's by far the competition for me," he said of his passion for swimming. "I love the thrill of winning a race by touching someone out at the wall."

Hutton's swimming career started as a spectator, but he quickly got steered into being a competitor.

"I went to my brother's meets," Griffin recalled. "Instead of just sitting around my parents said try it and here I am still swimming."

Not just swimming, but excelling. Much of it has to do with his club swimming, which started at Hamilton Aquatics before he moved to the Princeton Piranhas.

"As a young swimmer (HAC's) Sue Welsh was a positive and motivating coach," Hutton said. "I learned a lot and had fun, which made me want to keep swimming.

"Kip, my Piranha coach, has really made me reach for goals I never thought I could get to. He trains us for each race with strength and detail. I have become very confident and much stronger since joining the Piranhas."

Some highlights for Hutton en route to high school was beating standout John Om in a 400 free long course race at age 10. In a wild race where neither swimmer could pull ahead, Hutton touched out by 4/10ths of a second. Another highlight was placing ninth in his first ocean mile.

Due to his club swimming, Hutton is unable to be a regular participant at Hornets practice but

sill makes an effort to be there, which Seeth feels is important.

“Even though, it may only be brief, it is crucial that club swimmers maintain a daily relationship with their high school team,” Seeth said. “As a coach, I like knowing where and how my athletes are training.

“For teammates, club swimmers need to be more than just ‘That kid who only comes to meets and wins.’ This tends to be a problem with other programs in the CVC, but it’s not for us. I came from a similar swimming background as Griffin, and with a good line of communication it’s easy for us to find the right balance between club and high school swimming. It might sound dumb, but to be part of a team, you need to be part of the team! And Griffin certainly is.”

Hutton is thankful that his teammates don’t hold his brief appearances against him.

“I think they understand that when they are getting out of the pool I am just getting to the gym for an hour or just getting into the pool for a two hour swim,” he said. ‘I always try to encourage them and tell them that getting fast will take time.”

Seeth had praise for the way HAC and the Piranhas both try to work within the framework of the Hornets schedule whenever possible, and enjoys the working relationship between school and club.

And while club training has made Hutton better, he has some nice natural tools to work with.

“Physically, he is a swimmer’s swimmer,” the coach said. “He probably has less than three percent body fat and has a really good frame to body mass ratio. He is also a little more developed than some of his cohorts.

“I don’t know if he’s shaving yet, but he does have the ‘more mature’ advantage over other freshmen. It may just be my memory, but I think Griffin may be a little taller than his brother, so that could be where he’s dropping those extra seconds. I wouldn’t be surprised if Griffin grew even a few more inches before he graduates.”

And set a few more records in the process.