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LAKEWOOD RANCH HIGH SWIMMING

Torres not tired of spending all his time at pool

BY ALAN DELL CORRESPONDENT

EAST MANATEE -- Matt Torres hears the same question over and over from his classmates.

Always his answer is the same: "If this is what I have to do to get better, I am going to do it."

What most of his peers might consider drudgery or torture, Torres finds necessary, if not enjoyable, at times.

The Lakewood Ranch High junior didn't become one of the top swimmers on the team by dreaming he was good. Six days week he is in the pool working out.

On three days, he is up at 4 a.m. for a 5 a.m. workout in Sarasota. After a full day of school, he is back in the pool around 3:15 and goes for about three more hours.

Hard work? Drudgery?

Torres doesn't think in those terms. For him, the end justifies the means. He wants to be a top-notch high school swimmer and earn a scholarship to college.

"It's pretty hard sometimes, but you get used to it," Torres said. "If you want to get better this is what you have to do."

Torres started swimming competitively about three years ago as a freshman. He had taken some lessons just for fun, and his coaches told him he could be good in the sport and should try it seriously.

Torres joined a swim club. Now, he is a member of the well-known Sarasota Sharks, with whom he competes year-round.

The 5-foot-8, 145-pounder has become most proficient in the 100-yard backstroke and butterfly, and the 200 individual medley and 200 freestyle. He said the butterfly and the individual medley are his best events.

Torres put on an impressive performance last week in the prestigious Tri-County Swim Meet, where he finished second in the 200 IM, swam anchor on the 200 freestyle relay team that finished first and also swam the 200 medley relay team that placed second. In the medley, he swam the backstroke.

Torres enjoys swimming anchor on the 200 freestyle relay team because of all the commotion that goes on during the final lap.

"I like it when it's down to the wire and there is a lot of pressure. It's a lot of fun," he said. "At the tri-county meet, we were in first place most of the race in the 200 free, and when I hit the water I just went."

Torres hasn't decided which events he will swim in the postseason. Participants are only allowed to swim two individual events and two relays in the post season.

"My goal is to make it to states and get into the top 16 in one or two events," he said.

In the high school offseason, Torres swims entirely for the Sharks. He trains year round, except on Sundays and even practices on days of meets.

He might take two weeks off in the summer.
