
EAST MANATEE SPORTS

Lakewood Ranch's swimming Czupryna twins different yet the same

It happens every season. But Renee Piper still hasn't learned.

It just doesn't make sense to her.

The Lakewood Ranch High swimming coach will ask Patrick Czupryna what grade he's in for an entry list. Then she'll ask Michael Czupryna and he'll laugh.

"Coach, we're still twins," they say.

"It's just hard to believe," Piper said. "I have to see some kind of birth certificate."

Patrick has light blond hair and is tan. Michael is shorter with dark brown hair.

Patrick is quiet and laid back. Michael is louder and more competitive and aggressive.

"He's more crazy, I'm more down to earth," Patrick said.

And next year, after 17 years together, the seniors don't even plan to go to the same college.

They are plenty different. But the pool is one of the places where they have a connection.

Because although they mainly swim in different individual races, when they swim together in relays they have a connection.

So when they swim together in the 400 freestyle relay, Piper always puts them back-to-back in the racing order.

"They just have a good read like that," Piper said. "They are used to each other in the water."

That connection also helps out of the water.

"We just motivate each other," Patrick said. "We don't let each other think negative. If he's not doing that well, I'll tell him to step it up and he'll do the same for me."

In the past, the Czuprynas have made it all the way to the regional meet, something they will try to accomplish again with a strong showing at the district meet at Sarasota's Selby Aquatic Center on Saturday.

But they've never made it to the state meet.

They decided to dedicate themselves to the sport by joining the Sarasota Sharks one year ago and they hope the effort they've put in will show this off-season.

"I think this year I'm pretty sure I can make it to states," Patrick said. "The training is a lot different. The type of intensity, the workouts and the program is just a lot stronger."

Those workouts have meant early mornings at the pool along with plenty of work outside of it.

That includes cardio-training by running, some weightlifting and plenty of other dry-land training.

"We train nine times a week, three times before school," Patrick said. "To be in the group I'm in you have to dedicate yourself to

the sport. Swimming takes up a lot of time, but it's worth it. I really like it."

Patrick won the 500 freestyle and 100 breaststroke while Michael won the 200 Individual Medley at the Manatee County Meet.

Patrick said his best shot is in the 500 free, where he hopes to cut his personal best from 4:53 to 4:45. Michael's best shot is the 200 IM because of an improved butterfly.

Piper can see the difference all the extra training has made, not only in their physique but also in their swimming strokes.

The Czuprynas must show what they can with a district title on the line Saturday. Because Piper already has room reservations for the state meet, and the twins want to be going along with her.