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Swim team competes in Championships

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All season the Mills' swim team has been training for this weekend's Liberal Arts College Championships (LAC) at Coley College in Iowa.

The LAC Championship hosts colleges nationwide, whose swim teams do not have a local conference. Typically, schools or its athletic department will join a local conference. Depending on the sport, some college teams are left without one.

"There are similar schools in your area, and you create a conference that kind of helps with scheduling and a season ending championship," Head Coach Neil Virtue said.

Because the Mills' swim team does not have a local conference, they traveled to Iowa to have their season ending meet. This year, the team competed against 12 other colleges from the East Coast.

"Most of your training and all your focus is put into this event to try to do your lifetime best," Virtue said.

In preparation for the tournament, the team partook in a "Shave and Taper" ritual. For a month long, swimmers will not shave their legs until the night before a big race. Swimmers claim that leg hair creates resistance in the water, but once it is shaved, nerve endings are exposed that will allow a swimmer to be faster and have a better feel of the water.

Dani Sherman, junior distance swimmer, has worn long pants for a month to hide her unshaven legs. She looked forward to shave with her teammates for the meet.

The second part of the Shaving and Tapering ritual is when swimmers taper down their training, two weeks before a big swim meet. By reducing their workout yardage, swimmers will feel more rested and energized, which will then help their muscles build stronger than before.

"We have had a lot of fast swims this season so since this is a shave and taper meet, I'm really excited to see what people will be able to do," Sherman said.

After training for 19 weeks, Virtue feels his team is ready for the upcoming tournament. The team has been focusing on fine-tuning the small details such as turns, starts off the blocks and relay exchanges. Their training throughout this season has come down to this last meet.

"All the work has been put in, and there is not much you can do now about any of that stuff, so just come at it with a positive attitude and not just focus on any type of regrets that you might have and just give it your best shot," Virtue said. "It's a good life lesson".

The Mills' swim team competed in the LAC Championship from Feb. 12-14.

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