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TRINITY - Brandon Thalasinios entered his first year as the head swimming coach at Wheatmore High School under a lot of pressure. In the last nine seasons, the Warriors, under the direction of veteran coach Ashley Griffin, had captured every single Piedmont Athletic Conference championship. For a program to win a league title in every year of existence is certainly an impressive streak and Thalasinios said he didn't want to see that end in his first season at the helm.

With Thalasinios learning along the way and the ever-impressive Warriors swim team once again working diligently to improve each and every time they jumped in the water, the Warriors continued that impressive streak this year with a win at the PAC Championship Meet last week.

WHS has participated in swimming for 10 years and the Warriors have 10 PAC championships.



Wheatmore High School swimming recently celebrated their 10th Piedmont Athletic Conference Championship.

"It was great for me and we have a great group of kids," said Thalasinios, who said his only prior swimming experience was working as a lifeguard. "To be honest, I was nervous. I knew I would prepare myself for it because there was no way I was going to let these kids down. I had big shoes to fill. You always wonder in your first year how the kids would respond to a new coach. They did what I thought they would do and that is to respond. We had a lot of fun and a lot of success. We've been serious when we were training for our meets and we had our share of laughs and fun. It's been a very pleasurable experience."

Thalasinios said he owes a great deal of thanks to Griffin, who was "always just a phone call away." It was Griffin, who had a baby last year, who helped Thalasinios get his feet wet, so to speak.

"I leaned on Ashley very hard," Thalasinios said. "She has been great."

So have the Warriors. Six PAC teams - WHS, Randleman, Providence Grove, Eastern Randolph, Trinity and Jordan-Matthews - make up the conference and the WHS girls and boys teams were never defeated by a conference team.



First year head coach Brandon Thalasinios.

"Last spring, we had a meeting and I said I will teach myself as much as I can and I would ask our parents to help me out," said Thalasinios, who was named the PAC's coach of the year. "It's been a great fit. I love it, the kids love it and parents seem to be happy."

Of the 20 members on the team, 13 are headed to the NCHSAA Central Regional Meet, which will be held Saturday at the Greensboro Aquatic Center. Qualifying for the girls meet are Katie Fritz in the 50-meter freestyle and the 100-freestyle, Kyndall Fritz in the 100-backstroke and the 100-breaststroke, Erin Lambeth in the 50-freestyle and 100-freestyle and Sarah Hall in the 100-backstroke and 100-breaststroke. All four will also be competing in the 200-medley relay and the 200-freestyle relay. Isabel Cribbs, Lindsay Hazelwood, Haley Hedrick, Alyna Leonard and Elizabeth Underwood are all alternates.

Qualifying for the regional on the boys side are Spencer Hall (50-freestyle and 100-freestyle), Evan

Tucker (100-breaststroke and 200-individual medley), Chase Witcher (100-backstroke and 200-individual medley) and Jeremiah Johnson (200-freestyle).

All four will also be competing in the 200-medley relay and the 200-freestyle relay.

"These kids are workhorses," Thalasinios said of his team, which includes seven seniors, three freshmen and a total of 10 sophomores and juniors. "I have coached a lot of kids in a lot of different sports and nothing against the others, but these kids are dedicated to their craft and they take a lot of pride in being at the top of their conference. It's amazing how many hours they put into it."

After the conference meet, a number of Warriors were honored. Kyndall Fritz was named the conference female swimmer of the year, Tucker was named the male swimmer of the year and Hall and Katie Fritz were named the most valuable swimmers for the conference meets.

"It's been great," Thalasinios said. "These kids work hard."

And they have another PAC championship to show for it.