



Splashing Records

Girls swimming & diving team breaks school records, wins medals at high-profile meets

PHOTO STORY BY VINCENT HSIAO

ABOVE: The 2024 girls state team of Meg Willmann (11), Francesca Bochicchio (12), Avery Warwick (9), Anna Dalton (12), Lily Hsieh (12), MJ Bezzant (12), Emily Dieckhaus (12), Phoebe Chen (12), Lily Ta (11) and Mia Singer (9) stand for a portrait in the pool Feb. 14. The team had swimmers qualified in eight of the 11 swimming events at the championship. "I'm really thankful that we get to play music during practice and laugh and smile and race together," Ta said.

SEASON
RECAP

RECORDS BROKEN
5
TIMES

- 2 School records; 200 medley twice
- 2 Center of Clayton pool records

AWARDED
36
MEDALS

PLACED
6TH
/43
AT STATE

Source: MeetMobile

TOP RIGHT: The state team watches and cheers the 400-yard freestyle relay during the state championship finals at the St. Peters Rec-Plex Feb. 16. The relay swam a 3:40.46, earning third place and 32 points. "[Cheering] really helps with the team morale," Phoebe Chen (12) said. "I honestly think it's one of the best parts of swimming — the team aspect."



BOTTOM RIGHT: Swimmers gather with MJ Bezzant (12), middle right, after the 100-yard breaststroke championship final. Bezzant defended her champion title after claiming it in 2023.



FAR RIGHT: Meg Willmann (11) stands at the blocks before the 400-yard freestyle relay during state preliminaries Feb. 15. "You don't get this [experience] a lot," Willmann said. "Being on this team, having this jacket, being able to experience having a school record. It's only four times in your entire life you get to experience this and so it's just really important."



LEFT: Lily Ta (11), center, embraces Lily Hsieh (12) in celebration as MJ Bezzant (12) reacts after the 200-yard medley relay during the COMO Invitational finals at Mizzou Jan. 20. The squad of Hsieh, Bezzant, Ta and Meg Willmann (11) had just swam a 1:50.50, good for third place in the statewide mid-season meet but breaking Ladue's 2019 school record of 1:51.07. The relay ranked first in Missouri Class 1 teams from this performance. "It was like a fantasy coming true," Ta said. "My freshman year I had a picture taken next to the record board and Gentry, the old coach Hap, was like, 'Oh, you're gonna get your name on that wall one day,' and that had actually happened."



CENTER LEFT: Head coach Robert Peglar shows the 200-yard medley relay team their record-breaking time after the race during the COMO Invite. The old record was set by the 2019 state championship team that won the state title, which Ladue has only achieved twice in school history. "It was wonderful to see them set the school record," Peglar said. "What they do in the pool every day at practice, nobody sees that. They put in the work when nobody notices and that's what makes champions."



CENTER RIGHT: MJ Bezzant (12) shows her medals from state finals Feb. 16. Bezzant placed second with the 200-yard medley relay and in the 200-yard individual medley, first in the 100-yard breaststroke and third with the 400-yard freestyle relay. "I'm pretty sad that it's the end of the season," Bezzant said. "This is my last one. Ladue High School swimming has been a huge impact on my life. It's one of the reasons I'm swimming in college."



LEFT: Lily Ta (11) swims the butterfly portion of the 200-yard medley relay during state finals. The team swam a 1:49.44, beaten into second place by 0.21 seconds to Clayton but blowing out their month-old COMO school record set by over one second. "I think we all want it. We want it bad," Ta said. "I think we worked so hard on our communication with each other too. That's how we're so fluid with our time and the event."

SCAN FOR
results from the
state championship

