

# Cougar swimmers look to make some waves

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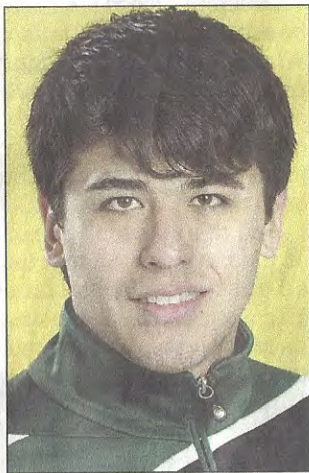
The University of Regina Cougars swimming program is a going concern — and a *growing* concern.

“The program has averaged eight or nine swimmers for five or six years; we’ve got 16 this year,” head coach Sylvain Pineau said Tuesday. “We’ve got seven commitments for next year, so we’re going to crack 20 for the first time.

“It looks like we’re building both the girls and boys teams at the same speed, so that’s good. It’s going to allow us to bring more swimmers to the Canada West and CIS championships.

“This is definitely a step in the right direction.”

The Cougars are taking eight swimmers to the Can-



Hector Fukushi

ada West championships, Friday and Saturday in Edmonton. That’s up from five last year and four the year before that.

“We have a good crew this year,” Pineau said. “The seven swimmers we’re taking (to compete in individual

events) all could do a second swim, which means at least top 16.

“Last year, we only had one top nine with Jessica Winter. This year, all seven of them could swim again at night (in A or B finals) and most of them could finish top eight. We have a much stronger team this year.”

“The team has grown so much this year,” added Hector Fukushi, who’s in his fourth season of eligibility. “The level of competition that we’re at now is higher and our practices are much harder. We’re pretty much taking it more seriously.”

The Cougars will have four men competing in Edmonton.

Craig Soutar (50- and 100-metre butterfly, 50, 100 and 200m freestyle, 50m backstroke), Chris Myers (50, 100 and 200m breaststroke, 50m

butterfly, 50m backstroke, 200m individual medley) and Carlos Quiroz (50 and 100m butterfly, 50 and 100m freestyle, 50 and 100m backstroke) are to swim in six individual events each and Fukushi (100, 200, 400 and 1,500m freestyle, 200m backstroke) is to swim in five.

On the women’s side, Winter (200, 400 and 800m freestyle, 200m butterfly, 400m I.M.) and Kim McWhirter (100 and 200m backstroke, 400 and 800m freestyle, 400m I.M.) are slated to compete in five individual events apiece and Erika Brown (50, 100 and 200m butterfly, 50m backstroke) is entered in four.

Also attending the meet is Natalya Milner, who is to join her Cougars teammates in the women’s 4x100 and 4x200m freestyle relays and the 4x100m medley relay. The four men also are to

team up in the three men’s relay races, marking the first time since 2006 that the Cougars men’s team will be entered in those events.

“In the back of our heads, our objective was to have a relay team, but we put the bar higher and hoped to have a team in both genders,” Pineau said. “It’s a stepping stone we wanted to hit in terms of building the program. Now we can set another goal for next year.”

Pineau said the four men on the relay team had qualified for the conference meet before Christmas, so they had time to prepare for the relay events as well.

Fukushi said swimming on the relay team for the first time in his Cougars career is “an honour,” but he noted his primary focus was on his other events.

“Swimming is an indi-

vidual sport, so I always think about my individual events,” Fukushi said. “I hadn’t given the relay much thought, although it was in the back of my mind.

“We definitely want to do well in the relay.”

The Cougars’ performances in the relays will add to the teams’ showings in the men’s and women’s team standings, which in turn could increase Regina’s profile when it comes to recruiting.

In other words, the U of R program could grow further.

“I’m really looking forward to this meet,” Pineau said. “We know the team stuck together for the past four months and we’ve controlled their training throughout, so we’re looking forward to this weekend.”

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