ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

JUST KEEP SWIMMING - WESLEY HYDE, '16

Wesley Hyde, Cornerstone Class of '16, was rcently named Ocala's Top Boy Swimmer by the Ocala Star-Banner. We talked with him about how he started swimming, his win at the state championships, and his plans after high school.

How did you get started in swimming?

Both of my parents swam, and that is how they met, so they automatically put me in swim lessons. However, they let me try out many other sports when I was little, like soccer and basketball, but I eventually just decided to stick with swimming because I loved the thrill of racing other swimmers.

What does swimming mean to you?

Swimming is a huge part of my life, as I have been swimming for basically all of it. I have learned many lessons from swimming. It has shaped me into the person I am and continues to shape me every day.

What's the best thing about being a swimmer? The worst?

The best thing would have to be the rush that you get when you touch the wall and you look up at the scoreboard and see that you beat the person you were racing or you achieved a certain goal that you set for yourself. You work year after year, season after season, trying to improve and grow as a swimmer, and when you are able to, it is the most satisfying thing in the world, especially if it is accompanied by a win. The worst thing is that to really be good at the sport, you must fully commit yourself. You lose so much free time because so much time has to be dedicated to training. However, it is all worth it in the end.

What motivates you most to excel?

What motivates me the most is seeing the next level of swimming, and once I achieve it, then I want to go another step up. This could mean qualifying for a certain meet or making certain time standards. Also, just the simple satisfaction of getting better, and wanting to be the best I can be, drives me every day in practice.

Did your time at The Cornerstone School influence your swimming?

I think that it did. Cornerstone taught me many things about being a leader, and this helped me to be a leader in the pool and encourage my teammates to be the best that they can be. Going through Cornerstone, I had a small class, and most of the teachers I had knew that I swam, especially because I had to miss school sometimes to go to swim meets. They would always ask me how I did. They cared about my swimming and that made me more motivated in the class and in the pool.

When you started at West Port, was there anyone on the team that you looked up to or anyone who helped you out?

My brother Jacob helped me a lot. When I was a freshman, he was a senior. He walked me to first class on my first day of high school, helped me through my first high school swim season and state series. He helped me with any homework questions I had.

What were your immediate thoughts when you hit the wall after the 500 Freestyle at the State Championship and checked the scoreboard?

It was the best feeling I ever had. I had always thought that it would be cool to win states, and this year I knew I had a chance. I was so thrilled and relieved that I was able to get it done. My immediate thought was satisfaction. I hit the wall and looked up and just thought "yes!"

When did you find out and where were you when you heard you were the Top Boy in Marion County? How did you celebrate?

I found out about a month or so after states that I was the Top Boy swimmer in Marion County. I didn't really celebrate; I was just happy and thankful that I was chosen.

Do you have a favorite swimmer?

Currently, my favorite swimmer is Caeleb Dressel because he is from Florida, he went to UF, he seems to be a really nice guy, and it is so exciting to see him race.

What do you like to do away from sports and school?

Besides sports, I play on my Xbox with my friends and watch YouTube.

What do you plan to do next?

Next, I plan to swim for UF next year as a walk-on as well as attend the University. I have already talked with the coach, and he has told me that I have a spot on the team, which I am thrilled about!