



Luedke . . . only senior.

Luedke just treading water

by Andy Riggs

Before swim meets, Spencer Luedke stands in the water, attempting to encourage swim team members with a fatherly hand.

Fatherly? Luedke is the only senior on the team. The rest are sophomores and freshmen.

Why is he the only senior?

"I needed the scholarship to put me through school," Luedke said, "I definitely wouldn't have made it through without it. Especially now that I'm married. Nobody else stuck it out."

In the days when Luedke was a state champion swimmer for Lincoln High, swim meets were different.

"We had a lot of spirit and unity in high school, the cheerleaders were excited and the team was up for the meets," he said. "Being a large team helped us concentrate on our personal events more. We could look forward to the big dance later that night where we were the big jocks, the victors."

This is not the case at UNL. A large crowd is 25 people. No cheerleaders scream. Instead of a large team, he is one of nine Cornhusker swimmers. Worst of all, there is no spirit of unity on the UNL team, according to Luedke.

"Swimming isn't fun now, it is a job," he said. "All I can do is go out and try my best."

When Luedke was a high school senior, seven schools asked him to swim for them: Nebraska, Oklahoma State, Minnesota, Colorado, Montana, Missouri and Michigan. Luedke said he came to Nebraska because his friends were here.

As a high school senior, he won both the 200 and 400-yard freestyle races in the state meet. In high school his best time for the 200 was 1:51. In his freshman year at UNL, he swam it in 1:47, but has not improved.

"He has a mental problem about getting under that time. This is what separates him

from winning," Coach John Reta said. "I'm confident in him, but he has to have confidence in himself. He has to swim with authority. I'd like to see him break his time before the Big Eight meet."

During the team workouts, Luedke thinks of different things.

"When I swim the distance laps, mostly I think about my stroke and I try to hit the time assigned, but sometimes I think about what I am going to do later that night," he said.

Other times, Luedke sings to himself, trying to keep tempo with his stroke. Sometimes he practices foreign language.

"Before a meet I think of many different things," Luedke said. "The night preceding a meet, when I'm in bed, I go over how I will swim the meet in my head. I think about how my competition swims and I decide how I will offset what they do."

The attendance has surprised the team members this year. The fans that do come are parents, girlfriends and friends, but the poolside is not exactly filled.

The size of this season's team has varied from 15 to the present number of nine. Luedke said the team could have folded easily this year. He foresees a dim future for it until the new pool is completed in the new fieldhouse.

The coliseum pool is located where the public rarely finds it. The entrance is at the back of the Coliseum and down a flight of stairs.

"It's nothing. Nobody knows we exist. The majority of the guys work real hard for nothing," Luedke said. "Except for coverage in the Daily Nebraskan and once a year in the Lincoln papers, we're not noticed."

"I feel real sorry for the freshmen who come in from big high schools and expect the same thing here. They get discouraged quickly."

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