

Dolgov hopes to live up to legacy

By Lorrie Cecil/ThisWeek

Vladimir Dolgov (left), who won the bronze medal in the 100-meter backstroke for the USSR in the 1980 Summer Olympics, has been a big influence on his son, Dmitry, who is excelling in the pool as a senior at Liberty.

As a freshman competing for the Olentangy Liberty High School boys swimming and diving team, Dmitry Dolgov described himself as "a small, chubby kid who wasn't even fast enough to swim on the A relays." He wondered if he would ever follow in the footsteps of his father, Vladimir, his mother, Svetlana, and his brother, Alex, by developing into an elite swimmer.

Vladimir Dolgov was a seven-time Soviet Union national champion in both the 100- and 200-meter backstroke who went on to win a bronze medal in the 100 backstroke at the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow.

Svetlana Dolgov was a member of the USSR women's national team for three years.

Alex Dolgov, as a senior at Bexley, won a 2002 district title in the 200-yard individual medley in a team-record 1 minute, 53.15 seconds. He earned a scholarship to Wright State, where he was a six-time Horizon League champion, a three-time team MVP and a national qualifier in the 200 IM.

"I come from a family of swimmers and I've always looked up to them and wanted to make them proud, so it was hard (as a freshman), because it seemed like everybody was developing (physically) faster than me," said Dmitry Dolgov, who is now a senior at Liberty. "Some friends of mine who were freshmen made it to state that year, and it was hard to see everyone around me excelling while I stayed the same and stayed in the shadow of everyone else."

But Dolgov has grown 10 inches since the beginning of his freshman season and he's gradually improved his technique in each event under the guidance of his father, who is the head coach of the Dynamo Swim Team.

Thus, Dolgov developed into one of the Patriots' top performers by his sophomore season, and he experienced a breakthrough as a junior, when he placed ninth in the 200 IM (1:57.01) and 10th in the 100 breast (59.49) in the Division I state meet.

"I've matured physically, which has helped, but I've also worked a lot harder in practice and listened to my dad's advice," Dolgov said.

Dolgov now stands close to 6-foot-4, with large hands and a 6-9 wing span. However, he weighs only 168 pounds and is thin; his father doesn't allow him to lift weights.

"Dmitry's a very late bloomer and he doesn't have as much power as a lot of other kids his age," Alex Dolgov said. "My dad makes sure he doesn't over-train his body with weights because his body hasn't fully matured yet and he doesn't want Dmitry to stunt his growth or burn out on the sport. Some people get really fast early on and then they over-train and disappear."

Dolgov is training 14 to 15 hours per week in the water and is aiming for a top-eight finish in the state meet in two events, including the 200 IM.

During Liberty's 109-71 loss to Thomas Worthington on Jan. 5, Dolgov won both the 200 free (1:47.29) and 100 back (55.85).

"My goals are to swim as fast as possible and do well at district and state," Dolgov said. "I'd like to beat my brother's time (1:53.15 in the 200 IM) and finish my career on the state podium."

Dolgov has chosen to join the Ohio State men's team as a preferred walk-on with hopes of earning a scholarship.

Vladimir Dolgov said his younger son will begin lifting weights in college.

"Our goal is to have our athletes get their best times in college instead of high school, and Dmitry should definitely improve on his times in college once he starts lifting and adds muscle," Vladimir Dolgov said. "It will take a couple more years for his body to mature, but I think he will have a better chance to stay in the sport longer because of the way he's developing."

Dmitry Dolgov will pursue a set of lofty goals at Ohio State.

"Ohio State's a great team and training with those coaches and athletes should help make me faster," Dolgov said. "I'll still be close to home, so my parents can continue to monitor how I swim, and I'll be working with a great coaching staff. I want to do well in college, but my dream has always been to swim in the Olympics, like my father did years ago. That's something I've dreamed of since I was a little kid."

AT A GLANCE

Below are the recent results and coming schedules for the Liberty, Olentangy and Orange boys and girls swimming and diving teams:

LIBERTY

Dec. 11 - Boys: Finished 39th (13) of 46 teams that scored in Ned Reeb Invitational behind champion Upper Arlington (407); Girls: Finished 18th (67) of 40 teams that scored in Ned Reeb Invitational behind champion Upper Arlington (471)

Dec. 17 - Boys: Defeated DeSales 108-58; Girls: Def. DeSales 107-62

Dec. 21 - Boys: Finished first (450) in six-team Delaware County Classic ahead of runner-up Westerville Central (427); Girls: Finished first (506) in seven-team Delaware County Classic ahead of runner-up Westerville Central (445)

Jan. 5 - Boys: Lost to Thomas Worthington 109-71; Girls: Def. Thomas Worthington 96-89

Last Friday - Boys: Def. Westerville North 111-58; Girls Def. Westerville North 116-53

Last Saturday - Boys: Def. Westerville Central 98-82, def. Dublin Scioto 90-76, lost to Dublin Jerome 91-81; Girls: Lost to Central 98.5-86.5, def. Scioto 112-60, lost to Jerome 90-85

Saturday - Northeast Classic at C.T. Branin Natatorium in Canton

OLENTANGY

Dec. 11 - Boys: Finished 20th (49) in Ned Reeb Invitational; Girls: Finished 28th (36) in Ned Reeb Invitational

Dec. 21 - Boys: Finished fourth (307) in Delaware County Classic; Girls: Finished fourth (291) in Delaware County Classic

Saturday - Hilliard Davidson at Hilliard YMCA

ORANGE

Dec. 21 - Boys: Finished fifth (139) in Delaware County Classic; Girls: Finished fifth (219) in Delaware County Classic

Last Saturday - Boys: Lost to Marysville 121-40; Girls: Lost to Marysville 96-74

Friday - Westerville South at Liberty Township/Powell YMCA

Saturday - At Thomas Worthington