

Two-tenths of a second decides women's title

Wildwood Crest nips Ocean City in final race at Longport Women's Invitational

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Cape May Star and Wave

LONGPORT – One point, determined by two-tenths of a second in the surf dash, determined the winner of the 2019 Longport Women's Lifeguard Invitational.

The Wildwood Crest Beach Patrol won the Wednesday, July 10, competition at the 33rd Avenue beach in Longport with 18 points.

The Ocean City Beach Patrol was second with 17 points.

Thirteen beach patrols were battling it out on a warm breezy night in a competition that came down to the final event to determine a winner.

After four events, Ocean City and Wildwood Crest were tied with 14 points each after the doubles row, swim, paddleboard and singles row. Both beach patrols had won only one event each. For the Ocean City Beach Patrol, it was the singles row, and placing third in the paddleboard and fourth in the doubles row.

For Wildwood Crest, it was a first place in the swim, a third place in the singles row and fourth place in the paddleboard. The WCBP did not have a doubles row team.

The Wildwood Beach Patrol was in the mix as well with 11 points after Bella Taylor doubled up, winning the paddleboard right after placing third in the swim.

All three of those teams scored in the final event, the surf dash, but none won. That honor went to the Sea Isle City Beach Patrol, which has dominated the event for the past few years and blew away all of the competition by almost a half-minute.

Second place went to Upper Township.

It came down to Ocean City and Wildwood Crest, fighting for third place, with both anchors in the four-lifeguard relay coming out of the water at nearly the same time.

Wildwood Crest got to the finish first by two-tenths of a second. Securing third place meant four points. Ocean City's fourth place earned the team three points, hence the 18-17 margin for the title.

OCBP Chief Mark Jamieson was philosophical about the finish. He said later that although he never likes to lose, he is happy to see parity among the beach patrols in the lifeguard races because it keeps up the competitive spirit. (The Wildwood Crest Beach Patrol also won the 2019 Cape May County Lifeguard Championship a few days earlier with a team that featured male and female guards.)

Last week's invitational started out with the doubles row.

Margate's Amanda and Kristine Auble won with a time of 10 minutes and 55 seconds. It was their fifth doubles row win.

The twin sisters started more behind than they wanted to be, according to Kristine Auble, but were able to pull ahead.

"We made it up because we've been rowing together now for eight years, seven years, and it's like second nature to kick it into gear," she said.

Amanda Auble said they were third off the start but were the first to turn the flag. (The teams row out to flags in the ocean, have to go around them, then return to shore.) She also said that her sister caught a wave as they were

coming in.

"It's not a flat ocean. It's wavy, and the biggest part when you have a wavy ocean is to row together in sync and I think we might have an advantage there, twins," Kristine Auble said. "We've been rowing together seven years but living together 24," Amanda Auble said.

This is their first win of the season.

Second to fourth places finished within two seconds of each other.

Avalon's Riley Bonner and Danielle Smith were second in 11:09, Atlantic City's Raina Roche and Julianna Granese were third in 11:10, and Ocean City's Stephanie Hauck and Jackie Pauling were fourth in 11:11.

Kate Fisher and Stacey Price were fifth for Ventnor in 11:42 and Longport's Maddie Fox and Taylor Phy were sixth in 12:07.

In the second event, Wildwood Crest's Adrienne Bilello won the quarter-mile swim in 9:06, and Longport's Lauren Kelly was second in 9:14. Bella Taylor was third for Wildwood in 9:19.

For Bilello, the "bumpy" conditions were an advantage.

"That's more my comfort zone," she said. "I like to be with the waves and I feel like that puts me at an advantage," she said.

She said she focused on seeking out waves and she caught one coming in.

Her finish was strong, according to Bilello, and she said she felt good.

"There isn't much of a sandbar here, so it's like swimming and then you're up and running and then you're right there," she said.

The win was a "confidence boost" for Bilello, who said she is coming off of a shoulder injury from last spring.

"I was just cleared, so this is me coming back," she said.

Wildwood's Taylor went right from the swim to the paddle and won in 3:55, with Upper Township's Lindsey Robbins close behind in second in 3:57.

Taylor was behind by a few body lengths towards the end of the race, but caught a wave that propelled her into the lead.

"Catching that wave got me even (with Robbins) and then that sprint at the end and everything really got my adrenaline going," she said.

Conditions were windy and the current was strong, according to Taylor.

Taylor is a competitive swimmer from Florida who is spending her first summer on the Wildwood Beach Patrol.

Her father also worked for the beach patrol when he was younger and she said she has come to the area every summer.

"I'm loving it," Taylor said about her first few competitions. "It's really fun when all the crowds come out to support. It's something that obviously with lifeguarding races doesn't really happen a lot, especially in Florida. We don't usually get that much of a crowd, so to see everyone supporting each other, cheering each other on and it's more competitive up here, it's really fun."

Erin Murphy was third for Ocean City in 4:04, and Wildwood Crest's Bilello was fourth in 4:06.

Longport's Carolyn Nagle was fifth in 4:24 and Atlantic City's Madelyn Bauer was sixth in 4:34.

In the fourth event, Ocean City's Stephanie Hauck clinched the singles



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Wildwood Crest lifeguards hold the championship trophy at the 2019 Longport Women's Lifeguard Invitational July 10. They are, from left, in front, Paige Dunham, Adrienne Bilello and Christina Caroulis; and, in back, Bridget Tarnowski and Christina Adams. The Crest beat a dozen other women's teams to win the title.

row with a 15-second lead, in 4:44. Margate's Amanda Auble was second in 5:01, Wildwood Crest's Bridget Tarnowski was third in 5:05, and Atlantic City's Julianna Granese was fourth in 5:08.

Taylor Phy was fifth for Longport in 5:13 and Kate Fisher was sixth for Ventnor in 5:16.

Hauck felt she started strong and said she has been practicing her starts and keeping a good course.

"If I wanted any two things to go right, it was

my start and my course," she said.

Hauck, who also rowed the doubles race to start the competition, said she knew what to expect from the conditions going into the singles.

"The current wasn't that bad. It was more about getting your full blade in the water for every single stroke and making every single stroke count and worth it," she said.

Coming in to shore, Hauck nearly came to a halt when a wave turned

her boat sideways.

"I was overcorrecting my bow south, so when the swell hit me it bumped my stern north and I ended up going sideways," she said.

Hauck wasn't able to correct her boat in time to prevent it from turning, but as soon as she was able to, she started "pulling right to correct myself because I was 15 feet from the finish line."

Auble rode a wave to catch up with Hauck, but also got turned before the finish as Hauck was

straightening her boat out.

In the final race of the evening, a nearly 30-second lead separated Sea Isle City, the team that won the surf dash, from their competitors.

Sea Isle City has had multiple successful surf dash seasons over the last few years.

This year, however, two new lifeguards joined the dash's lineup, but that didn't hamper the team.

This season's team included Kristi Rohrer, Kaitlyn Hnatowsky, Jenna Messica, and Mandy Bantant.

They won in 4:58. Upper Township's team of Grace Steele, Eve Chiarello, Casey McLees, and Meredith Steele was second in 5:25. Third and fourth places were determined by two-tenths of a second.

Wildwood Crest, whose team included Christina Caroulis, Paige Dunham, Bridget Tarnowski, and Christina Adams, was third in 5:40.3 and Ocean City was fourth in 5:40.5. Competing for Ocean City were Jackie Pauling, Kat Soanes, Stephanie Hauck and Erin Murphy.

Wildwood's Tess McVan, Bella Taylor, Ruby Redmond, and Catherine Kelly were fifth in 5:46 and Longport's team of Taylor Phy, Lauren Kelly, Carolyn Nagle, and Madelyn Fox were sixth in 5:55.

Wildwood Crest won with 18 points. Ocean City was second with 17 points and Wildwood was third with 13 points. Margate City finished with 12 points, Longport was next with 11 points and Upper Township was sixth with 10 points. Atlantic City and Sea Isle City had 8 points apiece.

Staff writer David Nahan contributed to this story.



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At top, Steph Hauck of the Ocean City Beach Patrol at the start of the singles row at the Longport Women's Lifeguard Invitational July 10. Hauck won the race. Above, Wildwood Crest's Bridget Tarnowski in the singles row. At right, Wildwood Crest's Adrienne Bilello comes back to the beach at the finish of the swim event. Bilello won the race. At left, Longport lifeguard Lauren Kelly and other South Jersey lifeguards race into the surf at the start of the swim. Kelly finished second in the swim. Wildwood Crest won the team title by one point over the Ocean City Beach Patrol in the final event of the evening, the surf dash.

