

SWIMMING

Blast holds annual Winter Invite

Olympian Miriam Sheehan competes in Cedar Falls meet

TRACI MALLARO & MELISSA WOLTZ
For The Courier

More than 190 swimmers competed in the 2022 Winter Invitational swim meet from Friday through Sunday, hosted by the Black Hawk Area Swim Team (BLAST). In addition to BLAST, club teams from Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, Decorah, Mason City, Waterloo, Ottumwa and Dubuque participated.

Miriam Sheehan, a seventeen-year-old swimming sensation who competed in the Tokyo Summer Olympics, highlighted last weekend's swim meet at Holmes Junior High in Cedar Falls. Sheehan, who

now competes for the Dubuque club team, is believed to be the first Olympic swimmer to have competed in the Holmes pool. Sheehan recently re-located from Puerto Rico to Dubuque. Her father coaches her, having previously served as the Olympic swim coach for Puerto Rico.

The Olympian was golden in her weekend swimming, giving many local swimmers the opportunity of a lifetime. Ava Mallaro, a BLAST swimmer who competed against the Olympian in four races.

"I never imagined I'd race against a Tokyo Olympian," she said.

The Winter Invite was considered a fast meet and most of the BLAST swimmers swam at least one personal best time during the weekend.

"This was an excellent op-

portunity for our swimmers to see an incredible display of talent and compete against an Olympian right here in our home pool," BLAST Head Coach & Program Director Melissa Woltz, who coordinated the meet, said. "They were able to interact with Miriam before and after races and immediately bonded with her. She was very humble and a pleasure to have at our meet!"

Plans are underway to build a new pool at the site of the new Cedar Falls High School. Fundraising for the project is ongoing. Swimming is a popular sport in the area and the new pool is expected to draw even more visitors to the Cedar Valley. See thecfpool.com for more information about the new pool and how to help make the new pool facility a reality.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TRACI MALLARO
Olympic swimmer Miriam Sheehan competed in a BLAST swimming event last weekend in Cedar Falls.