

Hayley Wolfgruber
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Wilton Y Wahoos – CT

I started the week with a few last firsts (my last first night of the meet, my last swim in finals, etc.) and now I am finishing my role as journalist with a conclusion full of lasts. I'm here, on my last night of finals at spring YMCA Nationals, anticipating an amazing night of fast swimming, but simultaneously dreading the end of one of the most amazing experiences of my life. I know I will miss being here for years to come; I can already feel that hole in the pit of my stomach that I know will surface in the month of April during my first year at college. As has often been said to me, no meet will ever compare to this.

I can say there still is an enormous amount of excitement in the night to come. Our men's team is in a tight battle for second place, giving the team a very good chance of coming in third combined. This is the highest we have been in the rankings over the three years I have been here in Ft. Lauderdale. I can only hope for the best...I know I haven't experienced any time on any other teams but I feel justified in saying that the Wahoos are some of the hardest working, most dedicated swimmers here. I am proud to say I am a part of this team, not only because of our reputation but also because of the actual experiences and lessons I have faced with them.

I think this feeling is also so strong because of the make-up of the team this year. We brought 9 seniors to this meet this year, seven girls and two boys. These teammates of mine are some of my closest friends; they've always supported me and listened to me when I was feeling down. Unlike some past senior years, we are not catty with one another; we rarely (if ever) fight in a serious tone and are more frequently seen goofing off with each other. I can't fulfill my duty as journalist without thanking them...without them, I may not have been here today as the person I am. They've taught me so much, so to them I am eternally grateful.

In conclusion, I thought I'd quote a song that was recently re-recorded by the group Counting Crows. In the song *Big Yellow Taxi*, the chorus begins, "Don't it always seem to go you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone." As I close my years on the Wahoos and here in Florida, I hear these words ring truer than ever. When I was younger, running underneath the bubble at the Wilton Y, I never realized how lucky I was my much older brother decided to participate in this sport and, thus, convince me to become a part of a team that can only be described as "magical." I know as a sophomore rookie, I couldn't understand how it would ever feel to be the seniors who had to say good-bye to such an amazing opportunity. But now, as I sit here closing my last journal of the year, I do understand and would like to pass a few words of wisdom on to all who have many more years to come as YMCA swimmers: Cherish what you are so lucky to still be a part of, for the day will come to you too when you'll have to say good-bye and wipe away those tears that always come when you leave somewhere you truly loved. Hopefully, when that day comes, you will have millions of memories to suffice the years to come. I know I will.

~Thank you YMCA Swimming and the Wilton Y Wahoos for those memories.~