



SWIMMING & DIVING

Yellowjackets Claim League Title

Liberty League crown is the first for the women; the men earn third in four years.

By Ryan Whirty

AT THE 2009 Liberty League championships, the members of the Rochester men's swimming and diving team were looking to erase a bad taste from last season. The women, meanwhile, were looking for their first taste of a title.

Both teams achieved their goals in front of a hometown crowd, and it tasted sweet.

The Rochester men claimed their third title in four years while the women, motivated to claim their first-ever league title, cruised to a convincing victory this winter at the Goergen Athletic Center.

▲ **CHAMPIONS:** The Yellowjacket men's and women's swimming teams celebrated their Liberty League titles with meet victories at the Goergen Athletic Center.

"This was my last chance to win the Liberty League," says senior captain Lilly Wynn '10. "We've been getting closer every year. To finally win and do it at home is exciting."

After finishing second to Union at the league championships five years in a row, the women were fired up to take the crown, especially after narrowly falling to the Dutchwomen in a dual meet weeks earlier.

"Everyone swam so well," says junior Val Atwood '11, who won the 100-yard backstroke, placed second in the 200-yard back and helped set a new league record in the 400-yard medley relay. "The team really came together."

On the men's side, the Yellowjackets came into the 2009 league meet stinging from a third-place finish at last year's event.

This year, the men were on a mission, says senior Patrick Messmer '10.

"It was pretty important for us to be the best (this season) after being third last year," says Messmer, who contributed points in the relays and the individual

freestyle events. "We got surprised a bit last year, so we really wanted to take it to everyone this year."

The men's 2009 team title—its third in four years—helps solidify the Yellowjackets as a top program in the Liberty League and one to be reckoned with nationally.

Coach Peter Thompson says the foundations of success were built during the 2006–07 season, his first at the helm in Rochester, when a sterling senior class "really set the tone" for future Yellowjacket squads. That devotion to success has since been passed down to each edition of the team.

"A lot of pride gets communicated from the upper classes to the lower ones," says Thompson who, along with his assistants, earned league Coaching Staff of the Year honors for both the men and the women. "The seniors pass on what it takes to be successful. They had tasted victory, and they wanted to taste it again." 📍

Ryan Whirty writes about sports for Rochester Review.