



Testing the waters

FRESHMAN PHENOM ISABEL FLENARD'S RISE TO SUCCESS

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Her hands are gripping the white block, head down and feet ready to jump off into the water. As the buzzer rings, she pushes her weight off the block and plunges in, with hopes of swimming fast enough to make it to the state level.

"She had a state time the first time she swam the 500," said Anna Cowden, senior. "You could barely see her legs, she was moving so fast. It was insane." Isabel Flenard accomplished what many freshmen swimmers only dream of, which is qualifying for every single state event except for two. She made finals, or top 20, in three of these events.

When she began swimming in high school, Flenard's talent was immediately recognized by her coaches. "Isabel is an extremely hard worker. She pushes herself in every set," said Gabi Liedy, assistant coach. "Isabel focuses on her technique as well as speed during practice, so when it is time for meets, she is mentally and physically prepared."

Despite extensive preparation, Flenard still deals with the fear of not performing at her highest level and nerves occasionally get the best of her. "I sometimes have more bad meets than good meets," said Flenard. "I don't al-

ways improve as much as I would've wanted and that can be frustrating." However, she does not allow these setbacks to drag her down.

Along with swimming for HR, Flenard is involved in club swimming six days a week for two hours each day, which often leaves little room for other activities. Flenard said, "I often don't have time for much else because of how much I have put into swimming."

Her teammates, such as Ellery Gooden, sophomore, also recognize her effort. "We all know that she's super fast but she also has worked really hard to get here," said Gooden.

Because of her hard work, Flenard is currently second in the 50-yard freestyle in her club, Highlands Ranch Aquatics (HRA), and 40th in the entire state, according to Swimming Rank. She also is highly ranked in the 200-yard breaststroke at 9th in her club.

Flenard is individually successful but also realizes the importance of support from her team. "My team supports me and pushes me further every day," said Flenard. "They cheer me on, they push me at practice, encourage me to do better, and much more." She considers those on her swim team to be some of her best friends.

Although Flenard's swimming career is already soaring, her future seems to offer even more success. Liedy said, "Isabel has a very bright future. I see her placing in the top three at league and state meets, if not winning events. I can also see her breaking a few school records."



Isabel Flenard dives in to swim in the 400 meter freestyle relay. HR was projected to get 16th overall at State, but ended up placing 12th with a total of 118 points.

Photo by Madeline Klayer