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MEN'S SWIMMING & DIVING

2007 EISL Champion

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Q&A: Swimming Standout Will Schaffer '09

Courtesy: Princeton Athletic Communications

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Courtesy: BKS

Will Schaffer had a trio of top-4 finishes at the 2007 EISL championships.

Junior [Will Schaffer](#) is more than just a premier swimmer in the EISL. He is a perfect representative of the two-time defending league champion Princeton men's swimming & diving team. He is fast, versatile and extremely proud to be part of the close team bond that proudly represents the historic Tiger program.

Schaffer, a graduate of Wheaton Warrenville South High School in Wheaton, Ill., was a six-time All-America honoree before arriving at Princeton. He has been a steady performer for the men's team in his first two years and placed in the top four in three EISL championship races last season: the 200 IM (second), the 400 IM (fourth) and the 200 breast (4th). He has the second-best returning time in all three events among league competitors, and he will again be a key component of several Princeton relay teams.

His first two seasons ended with a team title, and he sat down to talk with GoPrincetonTigers.com to discuss, among other things, what it will take to win the 2008 EISL championship.

1) Were you pleased with how the first part of the 2007-08 season went for the team?

Absolutely, in terms of both effort and performance, everyone has been impressive. I am extremely pleased with team unity this year as well. If this continues, we should have a good shot at winning our third Eastern title.

2) What do you think is the most important thing the team needs to work on as it goes for a third straight EISL title?

Practices. If we continue to put the effort in during training like we have been, it will show up when we need it to during the championships. If I had to point to something more specific, I would say relays are going to be very important. The meet is going to be a lot closer than last year. Last year our relays were not as strong as in past years and we didn't place very high in some of them, but our depth in the individual events countered this. We cannot allow that this year if we're going to win. Our relay performances have been much better so far this year and I think the relay

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guys are definitely up to the challenge.

3) What are your personal goals for the remainder of the season?

My first objective obviously is to do whatever it takes to get this third straight championship. In terms of my individual events I'm hoping to break the school record in the 200IM and make it to the NCAA meet with it. I also hope to be under two minutes in my 200 breast, If I reach this goal I have a pretty good chance to win it at Easterns.

4) The Princeton men have never lost a dual meet inside DeNunzio Pool. How important is that streak to you?

[Head coach] [Rob Orr](#) always says it's just a streak and that it has to end some time, but I certainly don't



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want to be the team that breaks it and I know the rest of the guys feel the same way. It's extremely motivating, that's for certain, and it's always in the back of our minds anytime we swim a home meet.

5) Why do you think the team is so strong inside DeNunzio?

There are bunch of reasons, one of them is the streak, and we defend our house. It gives a certain mental toughness, losing is simply not an option for us at DeNunzio. With that in mind we are able to perform beyond what we think we are physically capable. Also it is where we are most comfortable because we spend so much time there. We have great support from friends and alumni, especially at the big meets like H-Y-P and Easterns. It's a great mental boost to hear the noise from the crowd every time a Princeton swimmer steps up to the blocks.

6) Why did you end up choosing to attend Princeton?

Princeton was my best option both swimming-wise and academically, and I love the team. From the first day of my official visit, I pretty much knew Princeton was where I wanted to be. I knew that swimming was not what I was going to be doing for the rest of my life so I wanted to go somewhere that was going to give me the best education I could get, but still allow me to compete at the Division 1 level. I felt right at home on the men's team from day one. Princeton has one of the largest men's Division 1 swim programs, if not the largest. This size allows for a lot of personality and character to be added to the team by people who may not have as much to offer in the water but I couldn't imagine the team without. Also, while in some ways it's frustrating not having scholarships, it is a positive in other ways. Everyone on the team is here because they want to be, not because they have a contract. I saw that swimming wasn't a job on PUCSDT, it was what everyone wanted to do because they enjoyed it and I wanted to be apart of that environment.

7) What about [Rob Orr](#) do you think has allowed him to be successful for such a long period of time?

I would say it is a combination of his personality and his skill as a swim coach. He is the most genuine person you will every meet. He motivates us with this by truly caring about each of his swimmers and the team as a whole, and in return we do not want to let him down. He doesn't yell and scream or play mind games like some other coaches, all he asks from us is our best and he knows when we've done that, whether we've just had a great swim or a bad one. Rob also knows a ton about the sport. His workouts are challenging and my technique has improved tremendously under him. This isn't much more you could ask from a coach, except that he be a bit better looking.

8) Your team has won two straight team titles while only winning one individual title in that stretch. Is the overall team depth what you take the most pride in, and how important is to you to get at least one individual EISL title during your career?

I take an immense amount of pride in our depth, and I know the rest of the team feels the same. Swimming is a sport that can be individual, but is not nearly as fun or as rewarding without the team dynamic. Our reliance on depth allows us to really come together as a team; our victories are not just because of a couple of guys, but because of every person's contribution. That being said, no, it is not hugely important for me to leave with an individual title, although it is certainly a goal of mine. I would much rather have four team championships.

9) What is your favorite event, and why?

The 200IM; it is the perfect distance for me and allows me to use my versatility. I also think it is the most exciting race because every IMer has his/her own strength which allows for much more of a back and forth dynamic. It adds to the uncertainty level, making the race challenging in a way that is unique to the IM.

10) Have you been impressed by the early development of the Class of 2011?

Yes, absolutely, I couldn't be more excited. The potential of 2011 is immense. We got almost every recruit we had on our list. Just from a time standpoint they will make an immediate impact on our team in terms of competition. Also, from the time I spent with most of them I feel like they're all a bunch of solid guys and will make great teammates both in and out of the water.

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