

After a nine-year drought, STA divers are jumping into the water at State.

by MAGGIE KNOX | editor-in-chief

Bobbing up out of the water, she feels happy with her performance. She had executed her dives well and had done her best to reach the qualifying score of 356. After 11 separate dives and over 10 years of preparation, she thought she had made the cut for State. And she did, but they wouldn't let her go.

This is how senior Sophia Prochnow felt after her dive meet Jan. 2 at Lee's Summit High School. When she asked her dad what her score was, he told her that she had made the cut. However, the official scores had yet to be announced.

"[I knew that] I either made it, or I was really, really close," Prochnow said.

When the judges announced the State qualifiers, Prochnow felt proud of her teammate freshman Caroline Armstrong who had made the cut off. But Prochnow's name wasn't on the list.

"They said I had 346," Prochnow said. "That sound[ed] a lot lower than I thought. I made my brother drive me home, because I didn't think I could focus enough on driving. I was trying to remember my scores, but I couldn't really because there's so many."

Prochnow then decided to relax and wait to receive her score sheet at practice the following Monday, Jan. 4. But after she checked her scores, she noticed something was missing.

"I added together everything, and I rechecked all the math," Prochnow said. "I was like, okay, they're missing 10 points here. They just carried something wrong. And they're doing a lot of math—they're doing this math for 30 divers, so it isn't extremely rare that that would happen. I immediately called my coach. [I told her that I had] just checked my math four times, and I think I made State."

With her coach Shelly King by her side, she talked to STA athletic director Mark Hough about the problem. They both told Prochnow the same thing: that they would see what they could do about it.

After some research, Hough found a rule from the National Federation of State High School Associations, or NFHS, that states 'clerical errors can

be corrected within 48 hours of the completion of the meet.'

"We turned it in Tuesday, when we had to have turned it in Monday," Prochnow said. "So, [the NFHS] was like, sorry there's nothing we'll do about it."

Even with letters to MSHSAA from the athletic director from the school that held the meet, Lee's Summit, and the official that made the math error, the organizations still said that Prochnow had not qualified.

Regardless, Hough still encouraged Prochnow to keep improving on her dives and to try to qualify for State again.

"I'm proud of Sophia because it was kind of in her hands after that," Hough said. "She knew she had it in her head that she could do it. It was just a matter of doing it on the day it counted. It's an added pressure, definitely, but she knew she could, and she had her head in the right place, and she kept working hard. Instead of folding, she went out there and did what she needed to do."

And so she did it.

Prochnow qualified for State for the second time this season at the STA swim and dive team senior night at the Red Bridge Family YMCA Jan. 26. This meet was a six-dive meet, unlike Lee's Summit's 11-dive meet; thus, she had less dives to complete, but these six dives became more important. Her score of 239.4 beat the needed qualifying score of 230.

"It was a school record too," Prochnow said. "I had last year's [record], and

it was 204, so I just shattered it."

In addition, freshman Caroline Armstrong qualified for State, but cannot attend due to a conflict with the State tournament for dance team. Both will be held Feb. 20.

"I'm kind of sad that I can't go to dive State," Armstrong said. "It'd be cool to go as a freshman. But, I committed to dance State first, so I decided that'd be best [to attend]. It's a team sport."

Regardless, Armstrong and Prochnow agree that the team has bonded well this season.

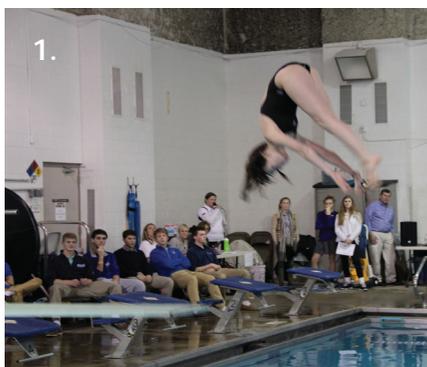
"[I feel] so much relief," Prochnow said. "It's so bittersweet because senior night is my favorite meet every year because it's just a meet with all of my best friends. But now, I'll be able to be there at State with them for our last meet."

"It's been fun to watch," Hough said. "We've had some talented girls. We've had some good coaches come through here. We've been trying to find [divers] as freshman to stick it through for four years. It's nice to see them work hard and get better and get to the point of qualifying for State."

Prochnow agrees, knowing she can focus on preparing for State.

"I was so worried that I had made it but then wouldn't be able to go because of a math error," Prochnow said. "But my hard work paid off. It's so relieving, because now, I don't have to worry about any other meets until State. I have time, and I can die happy."

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1. Freshman Caroline Armstrong performs an inward dive in the pike position.
2. Prochnow jumps on the board before her dive. Prochnow found the math error, but unfortunately it was found too late and the score couldn't be changed.

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