



Moss is making a splash

By Frank Rajkowski • frajkowski@stcloudtimes.com • January 31, 2011

COLLEGEVILLE — Sure, Armando Moss is aiming to earn a berth in this season's Division III national meet.

But the St. John's freshman swimmer has his sight set on an even bigger goal — securing a spot in the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.

And that just might be a very obtainable goal.

Moss, a native of New Providence in the Bahamas, has already represented his country on its national team at several events, including the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore last year, where he made the semifinals in the 50-meter butterfly.

"In the Bahamas, making the national team isn't as tough as it is here," Moss said. "You usually have like two or three guys fighting for a spot, not 20 like in the U.S. So if your times are good enough, you're probably going to get a spot."

When it comes to earning a spot on the Olympic team, Moss is focusing on the 50 and 100-meter freestyle and the 100-meter butterfly. The Olympic qualifying standards set by FINA in those events for 2012 are as follows: 50 freestyle (22.11 seconds; 22.73 for Olympic invitation); 100 freestyle (48.82; 50.93 for Olympic invitation); 100 butterfly (52.36; 54.09 for Olympic invitation).

"There are a list of selected meets where you can qualify for the Olympics by swimming a certain time," Moss said. "Then each country is allowed to take two swimmers who didn't make the Olympic cut. But you still have to apply and the IOC has to accept you."

Added Moss: "I haven't hit the times I need to yet. But they are reachable goals for me."

Moss has been swimming for about a dozen years, but said it wasn't until the last four years that he got very serious about it.

"A really good friend, who is now my girlfriend, told me that I had the talent to be on our national teams and that I had a shot at being really good," Moss said. "She didn't know it at the time. But what she said made a real impact on me."

Because there is no high school swimming in the Bahamas, Moss has competed for club teams. His current club is the Seabees Swimming Club, based in the capitol city of Nassau.

However, he wanted to compete at the collegiate level in the U.S.

"I always knew I was bound for the United States," said Moss, a graduate of St. Augustine's High School and one of seven brothers and sisters.

"The schools here have good swimming programs, and our proximity to the U.S. makes it easier to adapt to the culture here. States like Florida are almost like home."

Moss was steered toward St. John's by his high school guidance counselor who has a connection with the school's international office.

Several other graduates of his high school attend St. John's as well.

"I didn't plan to apply here," Moss said. "Our guidance counselor said she was going to make me apply. She turned the application in for me. I just decided to come. There was no real reason. I'm kind of an indecisive person and I hadn't really made a decision. So I just figured I'd come up here and see what it was like."

"This was the only Division III school I applied too. The rest were Division I schools like Michigan, Notre Dame, Duquesne and Nebraska."

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“One of the executives of my swimming federation actually asked me if I was sure I wanted to go Division III. But I don’t need a fancy school or a flamboyant team. I just need a good coach and a swimming pool.”

Johnnies coach Bill Saxton is certainly glad to have Moss on board.

“He’s been really solid,” Saxton said. “He’s already on four relay teams for us, so he’s been making a pretty strong contribution. It’s not just that he’s fast. But he’s also a good guy and a good teammate. He helps motivate his teammates to get better.”

Entering competition this past weekend, he had the fastest time in the MIAC this season in the 100-yard freestyle (47.11), the second-fastest time in the conference in the 100 butterfly (52.53) and the third-fastest time in the 50 freestyle (21.59).

“He really does have the potential to be one of the top swimmers in the country at this level over the next three or four years,” Saxton said. “He’s got the talent. He has a strong drive to succeed. He comes in every day and does a lot of technique work. He works on his starts. He does all the kinds of things a sprinter needs to do to be successful. He pushes himself really hard.”

But while Moss has found it easy to succeed in the swimming pool, adjusting to life at a small school in Central Minnesota has been more challenging.

“Everything is just a lot different,” Moss said. “The people are different. The food is different. The weather is different. It’s taken a lot of getting used to.”

Moss was able to get home over the Christmas break.

“Back to paradise,” he said with a smile.

He plans to compete in a number of events this summer as he continues to pursue his Olympic ambitions. But first up is the MIAC Championships Feb. 17-19 at the University of Minnesota Aquatic Center in Minneapolis.

“My goal is to win as many events at the MIAC meet as possible,” Moss said. “Ten years ago, they had a guy here named Matt Zelen and he swam the same events as me. He won all three. My goal is do that this year myself.”



St. John's Armando Moss swims Friday at the pool at St. John's University. (Jason Wachter, jwachter@stcloudtimes.com)

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