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Wibowo aims for state title

by Jeff Byrd

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When he was 9, Wally Wibowo struggled just to stay afloat.

Five years later, Wibowo, 14, is one of the fastest swimmers in central Mississippi.

Last week in Jackson, Wibowo set a new city record in the 50-meter

freestyle at the Jackson City Championships, clocking a time of 23.61 seconds.

That shattered the previous record from 1995, held by his coach, Mathew Mixon.

Wibowo, a student at St. Aloysius, will look to improve on the time at the Mississippi Long Course State Meet that begins Thursday at Delta State University.

“I started swimming five years ago, but I failed the level 3 test about three straight times and my mom got tired of it. She hired one of the lifeguards to give me private lessons and I just took to it,” Wibowo said.

The son of Christine and Dr. Johannes Wibowo, Wally soon began competing locally for the Vicksburg Swim Association team.

Two years ago, he progressed enough to qualify for a zone meet.

With a good showing at Delta State, he is looking at a second zone meet and the possibility of reaching some sectional and national qualifying times.

“Our goal is to go to sectionals. It’s like making the all-star team for Mississippi,” said Mixon, a former collegiate swimmer at Delta State and the Vicksburg Swim Association coach.

“Wally set the Jackson City record last week, breaking a record from 1995. That gives us good momentum going into the state long course meet at Delta State.

The time he swam in Jackson met an AAA standard and he’s not far from a quad A standard. In order to go zone, you have to have AAA times,” Mixon said.

“I’m just a half-second from making a quad- A time in the 50 free,” Wibowo said.

The 50 free will be one of seven events Wibowo will swim in at the state meet.

“He should be the top seed in the 50 free and he will have a good chance to make the top three in the 100 free, 100 breaststroke and the 200 free,” Mixon said.

Wibowo said he expects to see some tough competition in the 13-14 boys class.

“There should be about 30 swimmers in it,” he said.

Unlike when he started, swimming has become fun for him.

“It’s fun. I like going to zone and meeting new people. I just try to do my best,” Wibowo said.

Last week at Jackson, Wibowo delivered his best.

“I got lucky. I had my good racing suit on. But in the 50 free, so many things can go wrong. You can take a wrong back turn and everything is gone. In that race, everything went great.” he said.

With Delta State being a college pool, Wibowo said he expects a better time this week.

“It’s a fast pool. The best times tend to be made there,” Wibowo said.

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