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Bucci to receive honor at state meet

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A year ago, Fremont Ross athletic director Art Bucci was inducted into the Ohio High School Swimming Coaches Association Hall of Fame at the state swim meet in Canton.

This year, Bucci gets to make another trip to Canton to receive the association's Carl Wirthwein service award.

"Swimming's been a big part of my life," said Bucci, who coached the Ross swim team for 12 years before becoming assistant athletic director, coached again and then athletic director. "It's made a big impact on me, my family and the community. I'm just thrilled to be a part of that."

The award is given out to an individual who has made significant contributions to Ohio high school swimming and diving. Previous winners include the late Dan Lease, a former school board member who was also a swimmer and official for the sport.

Moran, the association's awards chairman, said typically, the board gets several nominations and votes. The top vote getter gets the award, while the next four highest nominations are carried over.

Bucci was nominated and won the award in the same year -- due in no small part to his exposure last year, when he was inducted into the association's hall of fame.

"It's probably got a lot to do with the exposure we got the last couple years," Moran said.

And that exposure came from the new pool at Fremont Ross, the culmination of more than 35 years of work for Bucci. The new pool opened in 2006, and instantly became a state-of-the-art facility. Moran said people from other schools still thank him for the new Ross facility.

"I actually think there are teams in Northwest Ohio getting faster because of our pool," he said.

Moran also said that many of the voters knew Bucci from his time as president of the group.

Bucci also pointed to his reorganization -- with Toledo-area swim coach Butch Graves -- of district meets. They went from one-day to two-day affairs, and then three-day affairs when the girls season coincided with the boys season.

"He loves swimming," Moran said. "We want to reward people like that."

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