

GYMNASTICS

Season-high total vaults Stillwater to section title

BY STUART GROSKREUTZ
THE GAZETTE

WHITE BEAR LAKE — Posting the top score in all four events, the Stillwater gymnastics team left little doubt while capturing the Section 4AA championship on Saturday, Feb. 12 at White Bear Lake High School.

The Ponies posted a season-high score of 148.45 to finish nearly three points ahead of runner-up Mounds View/Irondale (145.65), which also turned in its top score of the season. White Bear Lake followed in third place with a score of 141.375.

This will be the second trip to state in a row for Stillwater, which has now qualified in five of the last six seasons. The state meet will be held on Feb. 18-19 at Roy Wilkins Auditorium in St. Paul, starting both days at 11 a.m.

Stillwater was remarkably consistent while scoring over 37 points in all four events. The Ponies have typically scored lower in bars and beam this season, but their totals at the section meet were all within two-tenths of a point.

“We just were consistent across the board and that’s all we needed to do,” Ponies co-head coach Dusty Dennis said. “Mounds View, that was their season high, so they had their best meet and they did what they had to do, too. They didn’t have the firepower and weren’t quite as deep as we were.”

Stillwater received its highest score in the floor at 37.2, but its lowest score wasn’t far behind at 37.025 in the beam.



Stillwater’s Ella Jackson launches through the air in the vault while competing for the Ponies in the Section 4AA Meet on Saturday, Feb. 12 at White Bear Lake High School. (Gazette staff photo by Stuart Groskreutz)

“We won on every event, even without being perfect,” Dennis said. “We were good, we hit on everything but we weren’t perfect on everything.”

“We didn’t fall off the beam or have any failures on bars. The girls did their job and got done what they needed to get done and it worked out well.”

The Ponies also quali-

fied five gymnasts for the individual state meet, led by Kendall Rogers who qualified in the all-around after placing second with a score of 37.575.

Rogers posted the top scores for the Ponies in the floor (9.475) and beam (9.325).

“I think that’s a good thing,” Dennis said. “We’re not dependent on

two girls to get the high scores to carry us through and be the anchor. With this group, they all have to do it and there’s nobody who’s going to suddenly make it up or have this really big routine. It depends on all of them to do their best, and to me that’s a good thing. It’s what teamwork is all about.”

Stillwater placed four

individuals among the top five in the beam, with Ashley Peterson (9.25) and Evelyn Johnson (9.25) following Rogers in a tie for third place to advance to state in that event. Erica Stanton also qualified for the individual state meet after placing fifth with a score of 9.2.

Peterson (9.625) and Stanton (9.575) also ad-

vanced to state in the uneven bars after placing second and third in the event. Rogers (9.25) finished seventh in the event while Johnson (8.675) was one spot back in eighth to complete the scoring.

Liberty Quast (9.7) and Rogers (9.525) finished 1-2 to lead the Ponies in the vault. Sofia LaBelle (9.1) placed seventh and Stanton (8.775) finished in a tie for 11th.

All five Stillwater gymnasts scored in the 9s in the floor exercise, led by Rogers in a tie for third place. Johnson (9.35) placed sixth to qualify for state in the event, followed by teammates Peterson (9.3) in seventh, Quast (9.075) in ninth and Stanton (9.025) in 11th.

“Aside from Kendall who is in all the events, they all have to do their job and we have different kids in different areas,” Dennis said. “Liberty hit her vault, Erica had a great bar routine and they all hit on floor. Ashley had a great bar routine and Evelyn Johnson had a great beam routine.”

The performance improved the team’s previous high score of 147.9 set against Park in the regular season finale on Feb. 3.

“It wasn’t really confidence, it was attitude,” Dennis said. “They were just in a good mood. The break for sections is right at semester time for our high school and all of them are coming off finals and the end of the first semester. Everybody was just burned out the last two meets and finally that

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Bailey Holmes Girls Nordic skiing

One of several key underclassmen coming through all season for the Stillwater girls Nordic ski team, Bailey Holmes helped the Ponies advance to the state meet as the Section 4 runner-up on Feb. 10 at Wirth Park Golf Course.



The sophomore joined teammate Stella Powell to place second in the sprint relay with a time of 13:17.4, finishing second behind only the duo from section champion Forest Lake.

Stillwater, which placed seventh at state a year ago, was scheduled to appear again this year on Feb. 16-17 at Giants Ridge in Biwabik.



SAHS Athletes of the Week

Ethan Stabenow Boys alpine skiing

It wasn’t set up the way he envisioned as the team’s only state qualifier, but Ethan Stabenow finished strong while representing the Stillwater boys at the alpine skiing state meet on Feb. 16.

The sophomore was the team’s top finisher in Section 4, but the Ponies were denied a state bid after placing third by just half a point. A sluggish first run pushed Stabenow back in the standings, but he responded with the ninth-fastest time on the second run to place 68th in the individual standings for the Ponies, who earlier this season claimed the team’s 17th straight SEC title.



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