

ALL-AREA GYMNASTICS

GYMNAST OF THE YEAR

Harabedian refused to play it safe for Red Devils

By RYAN DUNLEAVY
STAFF WRITER

Kristen Harabedian could have stuck with the comfortable routines she performed most of the season and finished among the top 10 or so gymnasts at the NJSIAA Championships.

Nice work if you can get it, but not enough to satisfy Harabedian, who added difficult skills to her already elegant beam and floor routines in the days leading up to the final meet of the season.

Her souped-up presentation included a double backflip on the floor and was worthy of the fifth best all-around individual score. More importantly, it was a big reason that Hunterdon Central High School finished fourth in the team competition.

"She wanted to get better; she wasn't satisfied," first-year coach Bethany Wagner said. "High school is an easier season for them (gymnasts who compete year round). They don't want to beat themselves up, but she always wanted to add to her routine because she thinks it will make her score higher for the team."

Harabedian burst onto the scene as a freshman in 2006 and grew into her role as a sophomore. She sprouted about three inches during the offseason and adjusted to the responsibility of being her team's primary point-scorer, earning Courier News Gymnast of the Year honors for the second consecutive season.

"I wanted to become more consistent under the pressure by practicing a lot in the gym and being focused all the time," Harabedian said. "Last year, I didn't really get high school gymnastics. There were so many girls, and I was like, 'What's going on?'"

Bolstered by her strength on the uneven bars, Harabedian took first in the all-around at the Skyland Conference Championships and tied for first at the Central 2 sectionals. She won the bars at both events.

At states, a steady third-place bars routine figured heavily into her fifth-

place finish.

"Some of the other gymnasts, their skill levels are comparable, but it's the way she performs the skill," Wagner said. "Whether it's the height of her jump or a nicer line with a straight leg, it really does make a difference. We get judged not just on that you're performing skills, but how well you're doing them. She performs at the highest level each time."

That sounds like a lot of pressure, and it is.

No longer naive to that fact, Harabedian embraced the constant need to be at her best.

"Last year coming in as a freshman, I didn't know what to expect," she said. "This year, I knew all the other people. I knew I had more pressure to defend my titles and to help out the team, so we could do good in the big meets and get the big score."

When Wagner took over the program before the season, she made a conscientious effort to treat all members of the team equally, no matter how heralded. That philosophy allowed every gymnast on a team with no seniors to find their particular place.

Harabedian's niche often involved going with the flow at some goofy practices or joining her teammates in making up silly dances to the music being played.

Once the big lights started shining, however, nonsense gave way to competitive instinct.

"To be a sophomore and to win sectionals and conferences when you're competing against girls that are 16 and 17 shows that she can compete with the big girls," Wagner said. "She's not scratching to be at the top. She's kind of setting the bar for herself and everybody else."



QUOTABLE

"She wanted to get better; she wasn't satisfied," first-year coach Bethany Wagner said. "High school is an easier season for them (gymnasts who compete year round). They don't want to beat themselves up, but she always wanted to add to her routine because she thinks it will make her score higher for the team."

Bethany

Hunterdon Central High School
on Kristen Harabedian

QUOTABLE

"Last year, I didn't know what to expect," she said. "This year, I knew all the other people. I knew I had more pressure to defend my titles and to help out the team, so we could do good in the big meets and get the big score."

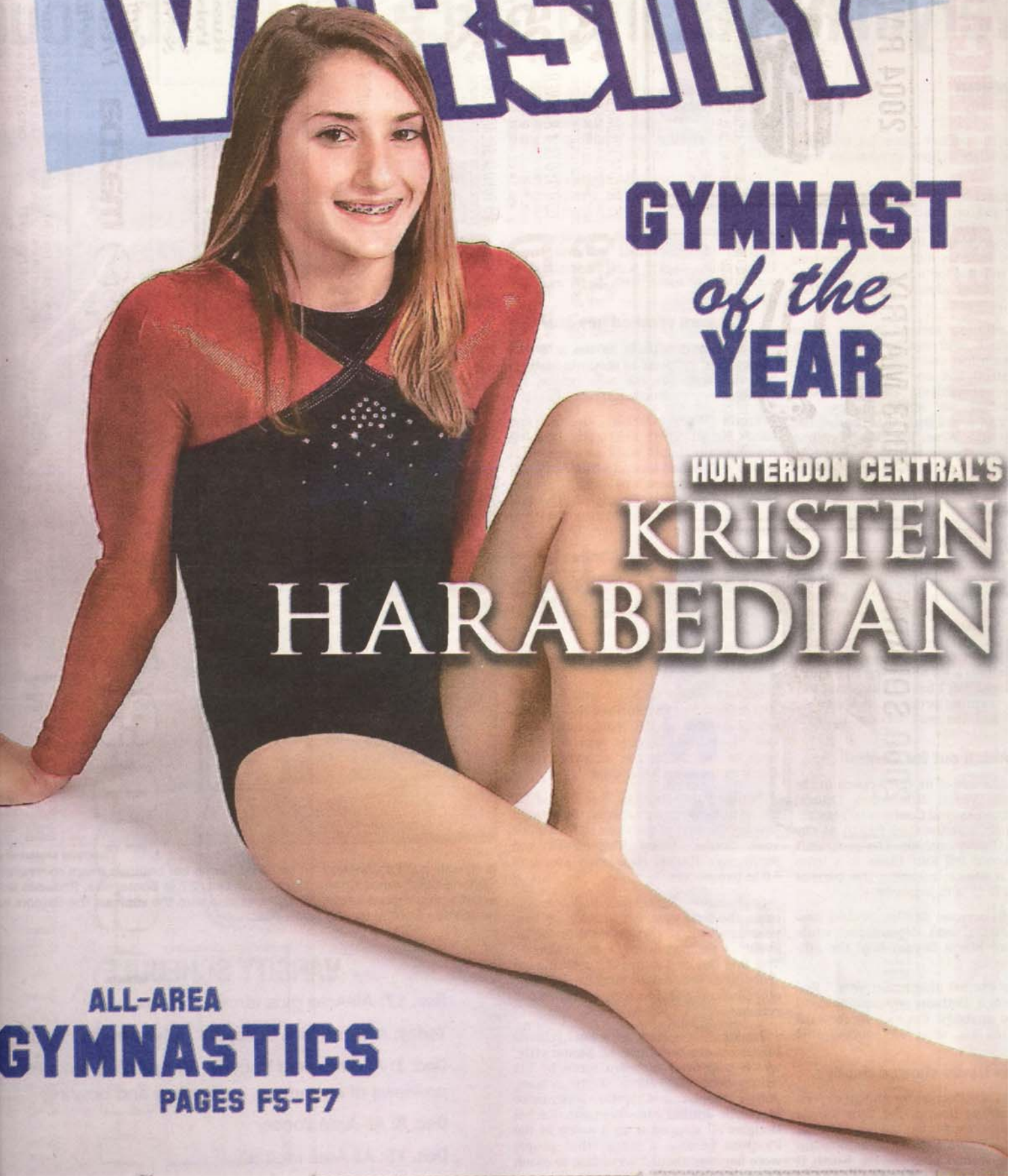
Kristen

Hunterdon Central High School

COURIER NEWS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2007

VARSETY



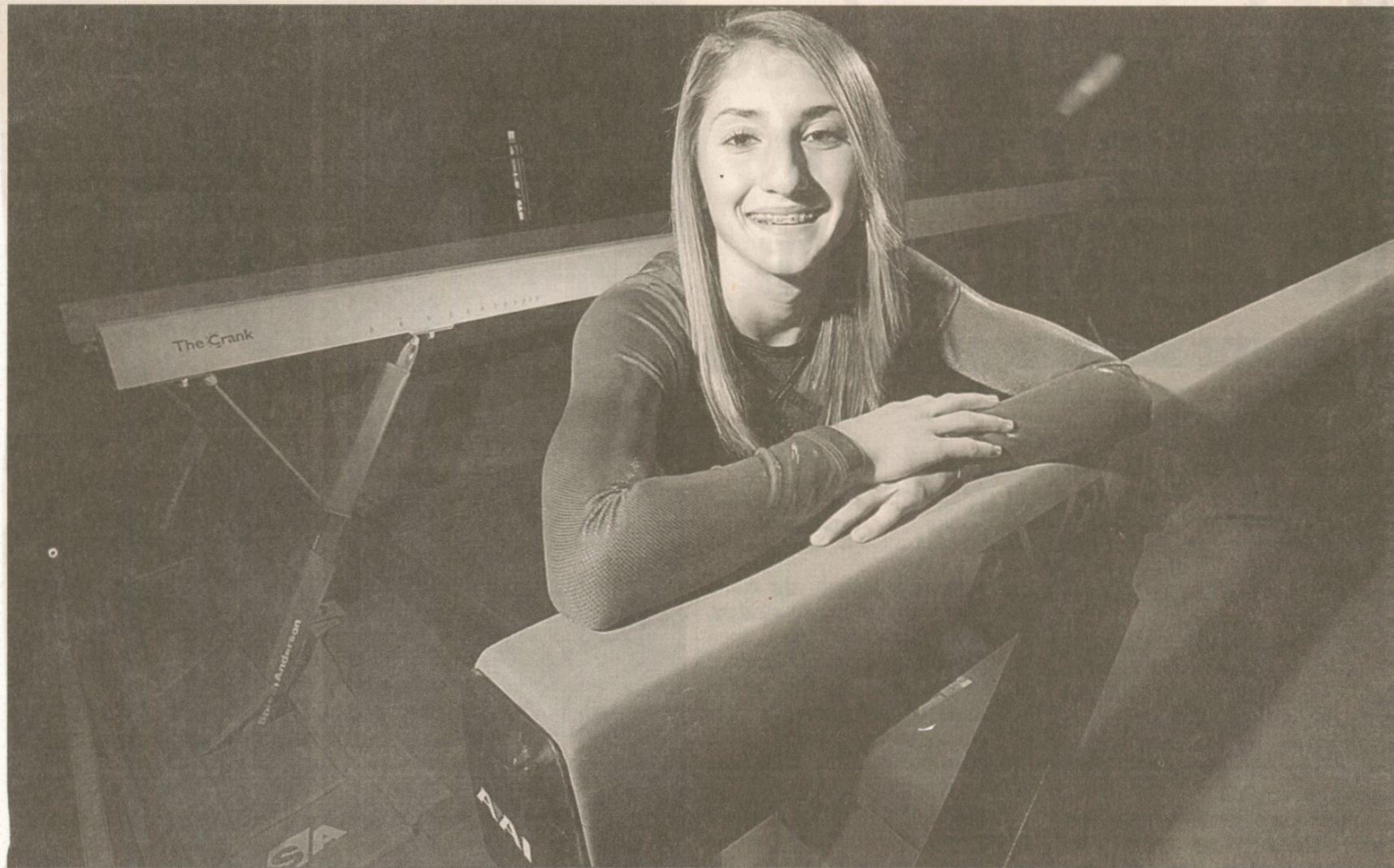
GYMNAST
of the
YEAR

HUNTERDON CENTRAL'S

**KRISTEN
HARABEDIAN**

**ALL-AREA
GYMNASTICS**
PAGES F5-F7

THE STAR-LEDGER 2007 FALL HONORS: GYMNASTICS



MATT RAINEY/THE STAR-LEDGER

Hunterdon Central's Kristen Harabedian is The Star-Ledger Gymnast of the Year in Central Jersey, Section 2.

Harabedian vaulted past all obstacles this season

CENTRAL, SECTION 2

BY KATE SMITH
FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

Gymnast of the year: Kristen Harabedian did not have luck on her side this fall, but the Hunterdon Central sophomore had enough talent to overcome her obstacles.

Because Harabedian was named First Team All-State as a freshman in 2006, expectations were sky high for her in 2007. When she injured her head warming up at Hunterdon Central's first meet, her season was delayed.

Any questions about the effects of her injury were answered in her first meet at full strength. Harabedian broke 38 points in her all-around debut and continued to break that mark at every meet until the Skyland Conference Championships, which she won with a 37.925.

On the eve of the NJSIAA Central Jersey, Section 2 meet, Harabedian ripped a nail from her toe while practicing on the uneven bars. Still, she competed through the pain and tied Hillsborough's Chrissy Weber for first place with a 38.175.

A week later, Harabedian tied Howell's Austyn Fobes for fifth place (37.875) at the state final.

"I wanted to do well at the three meets at end of season, and I did," she said. "The highlights for me were winning Skyland (for a second straight year) and tying for first at sectionals, because I

didn't win sectionals last year. I got second place."

Her performances helped Hunterdon Central finish second at the Skyland and Central Jersey, Section 2 meets and fourth at the state final.

"It was a really good season, especially for the team," she said. "We did better than last year and we don't lose anyone, so we're going to be really strong next season."

Coach of the year: Mindy Verderami stepped into the head spot at South Brunswick this season to replace pregnant coach Erika Casey. And she made sure the transition was seamless for the rising Middlesex County program.

Under Verderami's direction, South Brunswick finished second (111.4) to NJSIAA champion Bishop Ahr (112.3) at the Greater Middlesex Conference Championships and placed third with 110.475 points at the Central Jersey, Section 2 meet, earning an at-large berth to the state final for the second straight year.

Though South Brunswick entered the state final as the eighth seed, it finished fifth with 110.625 points. It distinguished itself at the championship by being the only team to score higher than it had at sectionals. All nine other teams saw their scores drop.

Team of the year: Hillsborough's victory over gymnastics juggernaut Bishop Ahr in the season-opening Pioneer Classic

was a tip-off. It had been a Top 10 squad for years, but showed it was going to be a serious player this fall.

Though the often-injured squad took a couple of losses in the regular season, it stepped up for the most meaningful meets and established itself as the frontrunner for the NJSIAA title. Not only did Hillsborough win the Somerset County and Skyland Conference championships, but it also blew away every other team in the state with a 114.375 at the sectional meet. Though no official records exist, it is believed to be the highest score in state history.

In one of the most tightly contested state championships ever, Hillsborough finished third (111.85) by just three-hundredths of a point behind Bishop Ahr (112.15) and Bergen County's Pascack Regional (112.125).

Coach Beth Murrin's squad was led by Chrissy Weber, Christina Rhoades, Mary-Kate Lynch and Brittney Marcsisin.

Sky high: In the hyper-competitive Skyland Conference, great scores didn't necessarily translate to great records. Somerville averaged more than 107 points in dual meets, yet barely managed a winning record at 7-5. North Hunterdon went 6-5 despite averaging just under 106 points per meet.

Somerville was led by Jillian Hart, who shared the Somerset County all-around title with Hillsborough's Brittany Marcsisin, while North Hunterdon was led by Jenny DiNizio.

Walk-ons: While its opponents had rosters full of club gymnasts, Ridge had a roster of virtual rookies. The school is building its program from scratch, taking girls with little or no previous experience and teaching them the sport.

"It's about representing the school," coach Tim Marotti said. "We didn't expect to win any meets. The majority are walk-off-the-street athletes who want to try gymnastics."

Although the team went 0-12 and sophomore Katherine Badcock was the only gymnast to qualify for the postseason, Ridge achieved its goals.

"We went out there to do the best we could, and that's what we did throughout the season," Marotti said. "My sincere goal was to get all nine of our girls to compete in a meet on one of the four events."

To make that happen, junior co-captain Jess Jarick took on the responsibility of choreographing balance beam routines for her teammates.

"All the schools in our conference were so encouraging," Marotti said. "The camaraderie was incredible."

In the Swick of time: Just when it looked like Christina Rhoades of Hillsborough had wrapped up the sectional balance beam title with a 9.75, Mikee Swick stole the show in the final rotation. The independent from Phillipsburg swept in and scored a 9.825.

Harabedian refused to play it safe for Red Devils

By RYAN DUNLEAVY
STAFF WRITER

Kristen Harabedian could have stuck with the comfortable routines she performed most of the season and finished among the top 10 or so gymnasts at the NJSIAA Championships.

Nice work if you can get it, but not enough to satisfy Harabedian, who added difficult skills to her already elegant beam and floor routines in the days leading up to the final meet of the season.

Her souped-up presentation included a double backflip on the floor and was worthy of the fifth best all-around individual score. More importantly, it was a big reason that Hunterdon Central High School finished fourth in the team competition.

"She wanted to get better; she wasn't satisfied," first-year coach Bethany Wagner said. "High school is an easier season for them (gymnasts who compete year round). They don't want to beat themselves up, but she always wanted to add to her routine because she thinks it will make her score higher for the team."

Harabedian burst onto the scene as a freshman in 2006 and grew into her role as a sophomore. She sprouted about three inches during the offseason and adjusted to the responsibility of being her team's primary point-scorer, [earning Courier News Gymnast of the Year honors for the second consecutive season.](#)

"I wanted to become more consistent under the pressure by practicing a lot in the gym and being focused all the time," Harabedian said. "Last year, I didn't really get high school gymnastics. There were so many girls, and I was like, 'What's going on?'"

Bolstered by her strength on the uneven bars, Harabedian took first in the all-around at the Skyland Conference Championships and tied for first at the Central 2 sectionals. She won the bars at both events.

At states, a steady third-place bars routine figured heavily into her fifth-place finish.

"Some of the other gymnasts, their skill levels are comparable, but it's the way she performs the skill," Wagner said. "Whether it's the height of her jump or a nicer line with a straight leg, it really does make a difference. We get judged not just on that you're performing skills, but how well you're doing them. She performs at the highest level each time."

That sounds like a lot of pressure, and it is.

No longer naive to that fact, Harabedian embraced the constant need to be at her best.

"Last year coming in as a freshman, I didn't know what to expect," she said. "This year, I knew all the other people. I knew I had more pressure to defend my titles and to help out the team, so we could do good in the big meets and get the big score."

When Wagner took over the program before the season, she made a conscientious effort to treat all members of the team equally, no matter how heralded. That philosophy allowed every gymnast on a team with no seniors to find their particular place.

Harabedian's niche often involved going with the flow at some goofy practices or joining her teammates in making up silly dances to the music being played.

Once the big lights started shining, however, nonsense gave way to competitive instinct.

"To be a sophomore and to [win](#) sectionals and conferences when you're competing against girls that are 16 and 17 shows that she can compete with the big girls," Wagner said. "She's not scratching to be at the top. She's kind of setting the bar for herself and everybody else."

In one of the most tightly contested state championships ever, Hillsborough finished third (111.85) by just three-hundredths of a point behind Bishop Ahr (112.15) and Bergen County's Pascack Regional (112.125).

Coach Beth Murrin's squad was led by Chrissy Weber, Christina Rhoades, Mary-Kate Lynch and Brittney Marcsisin.

Sky high: In the hyper-competitive Skyland Conference, great scores didn't necessarily translate to great records. Somerville averaged more than 107 points in dual meets, yet barely managed a winning record at 7-5. North Hunterdon went 6-5 despite averaging just under 106 points per meet.

Somerville was led by Jillian Hart, who shared the Somerset County all-around title with Hillsborough's Brittany Marcsisin, while North Hunterdon was led by Jenny DiNizio.

Walk-ons: While its opponents had rosters full of club gymnasts, Ridge had a roster of virtual rookies. The school is building its program from scratch, taking girls with little or no previous experience and teaching them the sport.

"It's about representing the school," coach Tim Marotti said. "We didn't expect to win any meets. The majority are walk-off-the-street athletes who want to try gymnastics."

Although the team went 0-12 and sophomore Katherine Badcock was the only gymnast to qualify for the postseason, Ridge achieved its goals.

"We went out there to do the best we could, and that's what we did throughout the season," Marotti said. "My sincere goal was to get all nine of our girls to compete in a meet on one of the four events."

To make that happen, junior co-captain Jess Jarick took on the responsibility of choreographing balance beam routines for her teammates.

"All the schools in our conference were so encouraging," Marotti said. "The camaraderie was incredible."

In the Swick of time: Just when it looked like Christina Rhoades of Hillsborough had wrapped up the sectional balance beam title with a 9.75, Mikee Swick stole the show in the final rotation. The independent from Phillipsburg swept in and scored a 9.825.

© 2007 The Star Ledger

© 2007 NJ.com All Rights Reserved.

HOME NEWS TRIBUNE

Rhoades leads Hillsborough; Harabedian takes all-around

Home News Tribune Online 10/28/07

By RICH KIMSEY
CORRESPONDENT

SOMERVILLE — The Hillsborough High School gymnastics team needed someone to step up Saturday at the Skyland Conference Championships.

With junior Chrissy Weber, an integral part of the team, performing at less than 100 percent with an ankle injury that she suffered a few weeks ago, the Raiders looked to junior Christina Rhoades to pick up the slack.

Rhoades did that and more, setting a record for the balance beam with a first-place score of 9.825 as she propelled Hillsborough to a victory with a team score of 111.850.

"There's a lot of pressure just because it's a big competition and we're trying to win the Skyland Conference," Rhoades said. "Our team needed to score, so I went out and tried my hardest."

The result of Rhoades' effort was a great win for the program, but Hillsborough coach Beth Murrin sees more for the team in the coming weeks as the Raiders will begin to prepare for the state sectionals they will hosted next Saturday.

"We're looking at this win as a stepping stone for sectionals, so we'll go home and fix things up for next week," Murrin said.

"Coming into this, we weren't really focused on the end result this meet, we were more worried about individual performances," said Murrin. "Some things went really well, but we also have to go back and work on some things. Obviously, though, we're happy to come home with a trophy and leave as meet champions because that's always exciting."

The Raiders' championship also included beating rival Hunterdon Central, which finished a close second with 111.400 points.

"With these two great teams it's always going to be a rivalry, it's always back and forth," Murrin said. "It feels good to come out on top this time, but we'll do it all again in a week."

The Red Devils boasted the all-around champion in sophomore Kristen Harabedian, who posted an overall score of 37.925 for her second straight Skyland Conference championship.

"It feels good to win two times in a row, but we still have a few more meets coming up," Harabedian said.

Harabedian had a strong showing in all her events, scoring a 9.55 on the uneven bars, which was good for first; a second-place finish in the floor exercise with a 9.675; and a 9.55 in vault, finishing third.

"I think I did well," Harabedian said. "I did fall on beam, which wasn't good, but I changed my floor routine, I tried a new vault, and overall I think I did well."

Harabedian was the top finisher on the uneven bars, while Rhoades took first in vault, with a score of 9.65, as

well as her first-place finish on the beam. Montgomery's Erin Simon finished first in the floor exercise, scoring a 9.7.

"It's such a big accomplishment for us to win the Skyland Conference championship," Rhoades said. "We wanted to get a high score and build our confidence up, and I think we did that."

TEAM SCORES: 1. Hillsborough 111.850; 2. Hunterdon Central 111.400; 3. Montgomery 109.45; 4. North Hunterdon 109.175; 5. Somerville 107.750; 6. Bridgewater-Raritan 105.125; 7. Watchung Hills 99.025; 8. Ridge 82.025
ALL-AROUND: 1. Kristen Harabedian (Hunterdon Central) 37.925; 2. Christina Rhoades (Hillsborough) 37.525; 3. Jillian Hart (Somerville) 37.500; 4. Erin Simon (Montgomery) 37.350; 5. Corrine Stiffler (Hunterdon Central) 37.225; 6. Amanda Stopinski (Delaware Valley) 36.995
VAULT: 1. Christina Rhoades (Hillsborough) 9.65; 2. Jillian Hart (Somerville) 9.60; 3. Kristen Harabedian (Hunterdon Central) 9.55; 4. Robyn Roundtree (Hillsborough) 9.50; 5. Jackie Violette (Montgomery) 9.35; 5. Erin Simon (Montgomery) 9.35; 5. Amanda Stopinski (Delaware Valley) 9.35
BALANCE BEAM: 1. Christina Rhoades (Hillsborough) 9.825; 2. Jenny Dinizio (North Hunterdon) 9.55; 3. Jillian Hart (Somerville) 9.50; 4. Brittany Marcsisin (Hillsborough) 9.375; 5. Anna Jentsch (North Hunterdon) 9.35; 6. Corrine Stiffler (Hunterdon Central) 9.325
UNEVEN BARS: 1. Kristin Harabedian (Hunterdon Central) 9.55; 2. Chrissy Weber (Hillsborough) 9.45; 3. Erin Simon (Montgomery) 9.3; 4. Amanda Stopinski (Delaware Valley) 9.2; 5. Jackie Baker (North Hunterdon) 9.15; 6. Mayin Bryant (Hunterdon Central) 8.975
FLOOR EXERCISES: 1. Erin Simon (Montgomery) 9.7; 2. Kristin Harabedian (Hunterdon Central) 9.675; 3. Corrine Stiffler (Hunterdon Central) 9.65; 4. Mary Kate Lynch (Hillsborough) 9.625; 5. Jillian Hart (Somerville) 9.575; 6. Jackie Violette (Montgomery) 9.525



The Star-Ledger

GYMNASTICS ALL-STATE SELECTIONS

Tuesday, December 04, 2007

FIRST TEAM

Danielle D'Elia, Colts Neck, 5-0, Senior: Took second at Shore Conference (37.575) and Central Jersey, 1 sectionals (38.075) but saved the best for last with a respectable 38.1 to place third overall in the state.

Austyn Fobes, Howell, 5-1, Junior: Captured the state uneven bars title with a 9.775 en route to finishing fifth at states with 37.875 points; Won Central Jersey, Section 1 (38.65) and Shore Conference (38.45) tournaments.

Chelsea Goldschrafe, Ramapo, 5-7, Junior: Star-Ledger Gymnast of the Year earned titles on beam (9.7) and floor (9.75) to win the state all-around with 38.625 points; Took North Jersey, 1 crown (38.575).

Kristen Harabedian, Hunterdon Central, 5-1, Soph.: Won Skyland Conference (37.925), tied for first at Central Jersey, 2 (38.175) before finishing in a fifth-place tie at states (37.875).

Sammi Jones, Washington, 5-2, Senior: Exited with a state finals-leading 38.425 only to be overtaken in afternoon, settling for the state runner-up by .2 point; Won South Jersey sectional (38.275).

Nicole Schwartz, Bishop Ahr, 5-0, Senior: Tremendous team leader won North Jersey, 2 (38.025) before placing fourth (38.075) at states and leading her team to a fifth straight title.

Chrissy Weber, Hillsborough, 5-2, Junior: Tied for first at Central Jersey, 2 (38.175) before earning seventh-place tie at the state finals with 37.75 points.

CENTRAL JERSEY, SECTION 2

ALL-AROUND

[Kristen Harabedian, Hunterdon Central](#)

Marisa Liptak, South Brunswick

Erin Simon, Montgomery

Corrine Stiffler, Hunterdon Central

Chrissy Weber, Hillsborough

VAULT

Jillian Hart, Somerville

[Kristen Harabedian, Hunterdon Central](#)

Christina Rhoades, Hillsborough

Erin Simon, Montgomery

Chrissy Weber, Hillsborough

BARS

[Kristen Harabedian, Hunterdon Central](#)

Jillian Hart, Somerville

Marisa Liptak, South Brunswick

Brittany Marcisin, Hillsborough

Chrissy Weber, Hillsborough

BEAM

[Kristen Harabedian, Hunterdon Central](#)

Mary-Kate Lynch, Hillsborough

Christina Rhoades, Hillsborough

Corrine Stiffler, Hunterdon Central

Mikee Swick, Phillipsburg

FLOOR

[Kristen Harabedian, Hunterdon Central](#)