

**After not competing for exactly one month, Glenbard West sophomore Amber Broucek quickly found her gymnastics comfort zone Saturday, Jan. 11.**

**The Hilltoppers' first event at the 12-team Naperville North Invitational was on balance beam, where Broucek finished 10th at state last year as the program's first state event finalist as a freshman on any event.**

**"I kind of liked it, just to get beam over with," Broucek said. "It feels good (to compete). I kind of missed it a little bit. It feels weird because it felt like my first meet of the season because I've been off for a while but it felt good. It was a good meet, too."**

**Broucek and the Hilltoppers enjoyed many highlights as they scored a season-high 133.50 points to finish fourth, just .1 behind third-place Naperville Central and .1 ahead of fifth-place Naperville North. Prospect (141.975 points) easily won the meet with Barrington (139.20) second.**

**Broucek had four top-five finishes by taking second on floor exercise (season-high 9.225), fourth on beam (8.825) and fifth on the uneven parallel bars (8.925) en route to third in the all-around (36.00).**

**Senior Maggie Phillips, sophomore Mia Connolly and freshman Kylie Lach also had top-20 finishes with Phillips and Lach achieving two season-high event scores each.**

**The Hilltoppers easily passed their previous high of 130.20 from Dec. 11 and had season-high event scores on vault (34.275) and floor (33.675). This was their first meet since scoring xxx at the Oswego Invite Dec. 28.**

**"It was a great meet. Nineteen (stuck routines) out of 20, you can't coach it better than that. You can't perform it better than that. A great job by all of the girls," Glenbard West coach Carlos Fuentes said.**

**"We just put in a lot of hard work (during winter break), trying to refine all our skills just working up to this point. We always say you turn the page on the new year. The second half of the season you've got to come**

**out with your best gymnastics so that's what they're showing."**

**Broucek had missed the Hilltoppers' last three meets, all invites, since competing Dec. 11 against Hinsdale Central. Still, she barely missed her season-high all-around total of 36.10 Dec. 4 and only was beaten by Barrington sophomore (37.15) and Prospect junior Maddie Larock (36.975).**

**"It was nice to see her (back). She had a good meet, solid and consistent, everything that we've seen from her in the past," Fuentes said. "It's just reflective of what her gymnastics has always been, clean and consistent. That's all we ask for."**

**Broucek only finished second on floor to Glenbrook North junior Carli Betman (9.325) by .1. On beam, Broucek was fourth to Hasanov (9.375), Larock (9.225) and Downers Grove North freshman Ellia Leger (8.95) and nearly finished top-two there as well.**

**Fuentes said Broucek missed one connection during her beam routine, which probably cost .4 from her score.**

**"I was really surprised because usually my highest scoring is on beam. Today, it was like my lowest. It was so weird," Broucek said. "Just sticking beam made me feel good for the rest of the meet."**

**"I was really proud of all of us. We just stepped our game up and we got good results. Once I got going I got going and it was all good. I just need to work on the little things that I've been getting tenths off for. Otherwise, I think it's going good."**

**The Hilltoppers had plenty of stuck routines. Phillips tied for 20th on uneven bars (8.1) tied for 23rd on vault (season-high 8.625) and had a season-high 7.725 on beam despite a fall.**

**Connolly tied for 15th in all-around (33.025). Connolly and Lach tied for 19th on beam (8.275), and Connolly tied for 21st on floor (8.475) and was 23rd on uneven bars (7.95).**

Freshman Cailey Cranny (30.525) competed as an all-arounder and sophomore Amanda Rosch competed on vault and floor, just missing season highs on both.

"Everyone was real happy. I think these last two practices we've been working really hard to get this score and we just want to keep getting higher," Connolly said. "I definitely think we've gotten a lot stronger (during winter break) and we've been hitting a lot more routines, making them more consistent. I think that floor and beam were really good (as a team)."

The Hilltoppers were the first team to compete on beam but their 33.125 shared the third-highest team score and just missed their 33.20 season high. Besides Broucek and Connolly, Lach (8.275) and Phillips (7.725) provided season highs.

Lach, whose previous best was 7.85 Dec. 14, only had previously scored in the 8s for the varsity on vault. She followed that with a season-best 7.875 on floor.

"(The 8.275) was like, 'Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. I'm going to tell everyone,'" Lach said.

"I liked this meet. It was a lot of fun. It made me think that I could do anything so I kind of just put it out there. Beam was the highlight (for me) definitely. I didn't shake a lot. I didn't have that many balance checks as I would usually and my straddle was a lot bigger."

The Hilltoppers' 33.675 on floor beat their previous best by more than a point (32.65 Dec. 4). Broucek, Connolly, Rosch (8.1) and Lach had the four counting scores.

On vault, the Hilltoppers' 34.275 topped their 33.50 from Dec. 11. Broucek and Phillips were followed by Connolly (8.325) and Rosch (8.3).

Because of her back injury and stress fracture in her foot, Phillips only competed on uneven bars until the Oswego Invite, when she added vault

and beam. She improved upon those respective scores of 8.45 and 7.55 Saturday.

"I worked on them between these meets. I've been taking breaks with my back and my foot during practices, like icing, so that's helped, too," Phillips said.

About the only disappointment after the meet was seeing how close the Hilltoppers came to a top-three team trophy. Glenbard West won last year's invite (141.70) with Broucek, Phillips and Connolly part of that lineup and in 2012 (140.45) with Phillips.

"Now we know what we're capable of doing," Phillips said. "We're calculating everything, like if we did a little here, if we did a little better there, then we could keep pushing the score up. We're really excited and we're going to work hard to keep pushing it up."

-- by Bill Stone