

Glenbard West junior Maggie Phillips was extremely disappointed following gymnastics warmups for the Conant Invitational Saturday.

She injured her feet and was kept out from competing as a precaution.

Phillips was determined that wasn't going to happen for Wednesday's biggest dual meet of the season at Lyons Township with West Suburban Conference Silver Division title implications on the line.

All Phillips did was equal her career-high score of 9.35 and help the Hilltoppers score a season-high 144.80 points despite losing to the Lions' 148.75.

"I knew coming in that I could do it. I was a little nervous during warmups but when I actually did it, I knew I was ready to do it," Phillips said.

"I couldn't compete (at Conant) and I was really mad about that, but I practiced a lot (Tuesday). I knew I could do it so I was really happy that it turned out well."

Phillips, who was fourth on uneven bars, senior Abbie Garchitorena, sophomore Mackenzie O'Keefe and freshman Amber Broucek had top-five finishes for the Hilltoppers, who improved upon their 143.65 Dec. 5.

O'Keefe (37.20), Broucek (36.15), Garchitorena (35.95) and freshman Sarah DeStefano (34.35) were third through sixth in all-around. Freshman Mia Connolly also competed on three events.

LT, which scored 149.00 against York Dec. 6, owns the two highest scores in the state so far this season. Fremd (148.55 Tuesday) and Lake Forest (145.80

Monday) are the only other teams known to have scored higher so far than Glenbard West.

The Hilltoppers return to La Grange Friday to compete in the five-team LT Invitational at 6 p.m.

“I’m pleased with how the girls did. For my youngsters, it’s the first time competing against a team the caliber of Lyons Township,” Glenbard West coach Carlos Fuentes said.

“(Our athletes) knew coming in who they were going against, a school with an amazing tradition of success. For our girls to come in knowing that they’re that good, they put forth a good effort. I think they stood up to them well and put up a good fight.”

The Hilltoppers and Lions have become friendly rivals over the years. The overall Silver title is a 50-50 combination of regular-season and Silver Meet standings and last season, the Hilltoppers captured their first outright overall Silver title by beating LT in their dual en route to a 5-0 record and winning the Silver Meet.

The Lions, however, automatically qualified for the 2012 state meet by winning the Hinsdale Central although their score (144.05) actually was lower than the Hilltoppers’ co-second-place 144.875 at the Glenbard North Sectional. The Hilltoppers missed the final at-large state berth by .5 while LT went on to finish sixth out of the eight state teams with a season-high 144.475.

On Wednesday, LT sophomore Kelsy Kurfirst, the defending co-state champion on uneven parallel bars, posted an unofficial school-record 38.65 all-around and won all four events. The Lions’ additions this season include

two key juniors, Level 10 and 9 club gymnasts Michelle Cozza (37.50 all-around Wednesday) and Katie Carling, whose older sisters were all-staters for LT.

“We were really fired up. We were really pumped up (for LT),” Phillips said. “It was a fun meet and we were really energetic and really ready to compete.”

Phillips especially was anxious. Luckily for her, uneven bars was the Hilltoppers’ first event, and she breezed through her routine and landed her double back flip dismount, which led to the injury at Conant.

“I love this order. It was awesome. I love doing bars first,” Phillips said.

O’Keefe followed with a second-place, season-high 9.45 to tie for second with LT junior Michelle Cozza behind Kurfirst’s 9.7. Later, Phillips received an additional .1 to her posted score after Fuentes made an official scoring inquiry and Phillips received credit for her Higgins turn.

“She rolled both of her feet pretty badly (Saturday). We didn’t even know if she’d go today,” Fuentes said. “She said, ‘I’m going today. It’s Lyons Township. I want to compete.’ That’s a great, clutch performance by Maggie, a leader on our team. That really fired up the rest of the girls as well.”

“It fired us up a lot because her bars are amazing. We really needed her score,” Broucek said.

The uneven bars momentum carried to the other events. The Hilltoppers

posted season-high team event scores on floor (36.70) and beam (36.60), where they outscored LT by .25.

In a battle of outstanding layout Yurchenkos on vault, O'Keefe (9.5) was third to Kurfirst (9.65) and Cozza (9.6).

On floor, Broucek (9.65) and Carling tied for second to Kurfirst's 9.7. Garchitorenina (9.2) tied for fifth and O'Keefe scored 9.05.

Kurfirst won beam (9.6), but the Hilltoppers swept the next three spots with Garchitorenina (9.4) and Broucek (9.3) second and third and O'Keefe (9.20) sharing fourth with Carling.

Broucek easily exceeded her previous-best scores on floor and beam.

"I was shocked (by those scores). I was like, 'Whoa,' but we've been practicing really hard in the gym, routine after routine, and I think it pays off," Broucek said.

"I thought I did pretty well on my full 1 1/2 on floor because I've been having a little trouble with those lately. On beam, I have a stupid cartwheel I couldn't make (in practice), and today I made it."

"There are a couple of judges who have actually pulled me aside and told me what a joy it is to watch (Broucek perform). She's got great presentation," Fuentes added. "She's coming from being a Level 7 compulsory gymnast in USAG. The amount of difficulty she's added in the last six months is really unbelievable. And then to do be able to do it so well is fantastic."

DeStefano contributed one of the most important routines of the meet, a stuck season-high 8.7 on beam that preceded three higher scores. Connolly's 8.6 vault also was a season high.

"(That 8.7 by DeStefano) was a clutch routine that we needed. That sets up those other girls to do well for us," Fuentes said.

As Fuentes tries to remind his freshmen, and himself, how much they are achieving in their first year of high school gymnastics, he recalls how Garchitorena spent most of her freshman season gaining experience on the junior varsity.

Now a quiet leader, Garchitorena fell on both attempts landing her new Kazamatzu vault Wednesday. She responded with season highs on beam and floor en route to a season high in all-around. Her 8.55 on uneven bars also was her highest this season.

"Abbie shakes off one event and comes back and hits a good floor routine, a good beam routine for us," Fuentes said. "That vault's just a hair away. It's a blind landing, just one that you need to get used to landing. We're seeing glimpses of it in practice that it could be right there."

Other teams at the LT Invite are Lake Park, Naperville Central, Glenbrook North and Shepard freshman individual entry Skylor Hilger, a Level 9 club gymnast. At the initial LT Invite last year, the Lions edged the Hilltoppers 139.15 to 139.00 for the team title.