

Glenbard West sophomore Mackenzie O'Keefe realized she had a good all-around gymnastics day at the District 87 Invitational at Glenbard North.

With the team calculator in hand, freshman Mia Connolly was ready to tabulate the score.

"She was like, 'What did you get?' I was like, 'This, this,' " O'Keefe said. "She's like, 'Maybe that's a 38.00.'

"I looked and it was a 37.90 – one tenth away."

O'Keefe's disappointment of reaching 38.00 quickly was alleviated. Her career-high total in the Hilltoppers' victory with a season-high 146.00 points just happens to be the new Glenbard West all-around school record.

"Is it really? I didn't even know that. That's so exciting," O'Keefe said. "It's really cool to see your name up there (on the record board), especially the first-place spot. I've never really kept track of it, but it's really exciting. I thought a 38 or something was the record."

The former record of 37.875 was set by Courtney Gonzales during the 2007-08 season. O'Keefe's previous all-around best of 37.65 Dec. 14 had been No. 3, just behind Maggie Duvall's 37.75 from 2004-05.

On Saturday, O'Keefe won vault (9.55) and balance beam (9.55). Her score on beam, the Hilltoppers' final event, was a season best.

O'Keefe also was second on the uneven parallel bars (9.45) to freshman teammate Amber Broucek (9.55) and third on floor exercise (9.35) behind Glenbard North's Mariah Matesi (9.55) and Erin Panhorst (9.4).

Senior Abbie Garchitorena and freshman Sarah DeStefano also had top-three finishes with DeStefano second on beam (season-high 9.4). Broucek (36.65) and DeStefano (season-high 36.50) were third and fourth in all-around.

Glenbard West swept the top four places on uneven bars and beam.

“It’s right up there, a good, strong performance from everyone throughout,” Glenbard West coach Carlos Fuentes said. “I thought it was a great meet for (O’Keefe). Not only that, it was a consistent meet.”

The Hilltoppers finished comfortably in front of Glenbard North (139.50), last year’s District 87 champ, Glenbard East (128.775) and Glenbard South (113.65).

There were four judges, one per event, with competition also on the junior varsity I and II levels. The Hilltoppers won the JV II title (101.60) and were second at JV I (116.975) to Glenbard North (125.90).

Glenbard West beat its previous high of 144.80 from Dec. 12 after a 144.10 three days earlier in beating Downers Grove North’s 124.40.

Some scores may have been suspect Saturday, but they were consistent, and there was no denying this was one of the Hilltoppers’ best meets. They posted season-high team scores on uneven bars (37.65) and beam (36.15), followed by vault (36.10) and floor (35.50).

Glenbard East and Glenbard South also posted season-high totals. Glenbard North, which just missed its high of 139.95 from Jan. 5, is the No. 5 seed in the Glenbard West Sectional, in which the Hilltoppers are the top seed.

“We still had some misses here and there so there’s some points we can still get back, but I feel that they’re really coming together, fighting for all of their tenths, to stay on the equipment, to not let falls bother them. One fall doesn’t become a two- or three-fall performance,” Fuentes said.

“Really keeping your head in the game (is important). Going forward from here, they need to hit as many routines as possible and you can’t let one miss stop you for the day.”

The Hilltoppers got off to a rough start on floor. Garchitorena, their second performer, fell while landing her double full twist on her first pass and injured her knee. She stopped her routine at that point, but she soon was fine and performed well on the other three events.

“I was just trying to tell myself to work hard and stay tight and try my best for the rest of the meet. Since I didn’t get to finish floor, I’ve got to make it up now,” Garchitorena said.

Garchitorena went right to vault and took fourth (9.05). She then was third on the uneven bars (career-high 9.35) and beam (9.0), falling just before her dismount.

“I was just mad about that (fall). I wish I could re-do it. I’m happy with the rest of my events,” Garchitorena said. “I was a bit worried for vault, to see if it would hurt with a lot of pressure on it, but I think the adrenaline and stuff helped me so I didn’t feel it that much.”

Her latest score on uneven bars passed her 8.85 that she achieved last season and Jan. 5.

“(Fuentes is) just telling me the corrections I need to improve on, like keeping my legs together on my giants and straightening out my legs,” Garchitorena said.

With just four routines on floor, O’Keefe adjusted her routine to minimize the chance for error. She took out a punch front at the end of one of her passes.

“She has enough difficulty throughout the routine that it didn’t really take anything away, a little bit in composition, but really at the most half a tenth so that’s a smart plan,” Fuentes said.

“She knows we’ve already had one miss. The team needs another solid score. She’s growing to know that as well, and to do that mid-air, she’s keeping her head in the game. She’s really learning the high-school system and how to make the best of it.”

O’Keefe gained momentum as the meet progressed. She landed her layout Yurchenko vault to win by .05 over Matesi.

“That was a beautiful vault, probably the best she’s done as a high-school athlete,” Fuentes said.

O’Keefe had a solid uneven bars routine and remained on beam with few problems. For beam, she increased the difficulty of her switch leap straddle from one-quarter to three-quarter, a move that she has had problems landing.

“I made it and I was really excited because I haven’t made it in a while. I

didn't wobble on that," O'Keefe said. "My back tuck was not that great, and my dismount was kind of bad, but otherwise, yeah, it was pretty good. My bars I don't think actually were that great, but it was definitely one of my better vault days and beam days."

Broucek won uneven bars despite some adversity. She was into her bail when she realized the setting for the bars off by a notch, about an inch and a half.

"I was a little scared because I felt like I was going to drop onto the bar because it was lower, but it was fine, I guess," Broucek said.

"Luckily, it didn't make a difference for her. She still had a nice bar routine," Fuentes said.

In fact, Broucek posted a career best by .45 to win by .1. She led the 1-2-3-4 finish on the event followed by O'Keefe, Garchitorenna and DeStefano (season-high 9.3). Senior Maggie Phillips was sixth (8.9).

"I didn't think I deserved (a 9.55) personally, just because I don't think I did the best that I absolutely could have," Broucek said. "(Overall) it was a really good meet for me. Floor was a little tough after seeing Abbie hurt herself, but we kept together and just kept on going."

DeStefano had her best all-around total with a great finish on beam, beating her previous best of 9.0 from Dec. 28. After O'Keefe, DeStefano and Garchitorenna, Broucek was fourth (8.8) and Connolly was 10th (season-high 8.25).

"My face was priceless when I saw my score, a 9.4," DeStefano said. "I was

just really happy with my bars and beam score. I never usually get up in the high 9s, like 9.3, 9.4. I was just really happy. I wanted to go on (beam) and be solid and not shaky, more confident. After all of these meets, I'm getting more confident on beam so I just want to go out there and be solid."

Broucek took fourth on floor (9.3) with DeStefano seventh (8.45) and Connolly tying for eighth (8.4).

On vault, Broucek was fifth (8.85) with DeStefano eighth (8.65) and senior Rachel Gathof tying for 11th (8.5). Broucek and DeStefano didn't land their first vaults but nailed their second.

Against Downers North, O'Keefe won all-around (37.25), vault (9.45), uneven bars (9.45) and beam (9.2), and Broucek won floor (9.5).

Broucek added a season-high 36.80 all-around for second and also was second on uneven bars (9.1) and beam (9.05) and third on vault (9.15).

O'Keefe (9.15) and DeStefano (9.0) finished 2-3 on floor. Garchitorea was second on vault (9.2) and Phillips was third on uneven bars (9.0) and DeStefano was third on beam (8.7).

"Everybody had a really nice night. Vault, I think, was the best they've had all season. Amber had a great night, went 9.5 on floor," Fuentes said. "The strength and conditioning, all of the training that we've been doing, the numbers are starting to reflect in our training."

The Hilltoppers have three more regular-season meets before the West Suburban Conference Silver Division Meet Jan. 26 at Glenbard West. The Hilltoppers visit Hinsdale Central Thursday, Jan. 17, compete at the York

Invitational Saturday, Jan. 19, and play host to York, Tuesday, Jan. 22 in a dual rescheduled from December.

“They’re definitely headed in the right direction. They’re starting to jell together, and the consistency is coming along,” Fuentes said. “They’re in position to go against some of the good teams as we get close to the end. We know what the challenge is at sectionals. No one is going to hand it to us. We’ll have to go in there and we’ll have to perform.”

There probably will be more records to come. While Glenbard West posts the top-10 all-time individual and team record list in the practice gym, there’s also the all-time top-five records for the JV I and JV II teams.

Fuentes wants gymnasts on all levels to have scores to reach. He learned that when he was a boys gymnast at Glenbard East under coach Steve Kafka. There was an all-time record list for the varsity, sophomore and freshman levels.

“I was always wanted to get up there. You had a chance freshman year and sophomore year,” Fuentes said.

“It’s not just about our varsity scores. We want them to make a name for themselves. Don’t just go through the program. Make your mark. They should have that goal to get up there.”