

Glenbard West freshman Amber Broucek has been chasing a 37.00 all-around total for as long as she could remember.

She finally surpassed it at the York Invitational Saturday, Jan. 19, and that wasn't even the best part.

While sophomore Mackenzie O'Keefe won all-around with a 37.60 and three events, Broucek was right behind with a second-place career-high 37.00 as the Hilltoppers easily defended their team title with 144.075 points and won their fourth invite in a row.

Broucek's meet was climaxed by a personal-best 9.625 that won balance beam, the No. 2 documented all-time score in Glenbard West history behind Becky Mladucky's 9.7 from the 2010-11 season.

"Totally shocked. I was shocked. I thought I wasn't going to get that high, but I guess I did," Broucek said. "I thought I didn't really deserve (a 9.625) because I know it wasn't my best again, but I stayed on so that was good.

"(The 37.00 all-around) was another exciting thing for me. Even through (USA Gymnastics club meets), I was really trying to get to 37.00, but I never could get it. I always went to the 36s."

Glenbard West won the 11-team invite by more than six points over second-place Lake Park (137.775 points), followed by West Suburban Conference Silver Division rivals York (137.125) and Hinsdale Central (135.575) heading into the Silver Meet at 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 26 at Glenbard West.

Besides all-around, O'Keefe took first on the uneven parallel bars (9.5) and floor exercise (9.125), shared first on vault with York senior Alyna Gagliardi (9.475) and was second to Broucek on beam (9.5). Broucek also was third on floor (9.0) and tied for third on uneven bars (9.15).

The 1-2 beam finish completed the Hilltoppers' 37.025 team set, in which they counted just one fall after a 32.925 just two weeks earlier at the Naperville North Invite.

Senior Abbie Garchitorena and freshman Sarah DeStefano also tied for sixth on beam (8.95). The Hilltoppers suffered only one other fall at the invite on uneven bars.

"Looking over the banners (in our gym), those are state teams that didn't win as many invites as this team has," Glenbard West coach Carlos Fuentes said. "For a young team, comprised mostly of freshmen and sophomores, they're really getting the job done. We've had consistency issues that you have to work through for any team, especially such a young team. They continue to win and do enough to win the meet."

Garchitorena (35.05) and DeStefano (34.425) were sixth and eighth in all-around, respectively.

Broucek tied for seventh on vault (9.225). DeStefano was eighth on floor (8.775) and tied for 12th on vault (8.95), Garchitorena tied for 10th on uneven bars (8.725) and was 11th on vault (9.0) and 18th on floor (8.375), and freshman Mia Connolly tied for 19th on beam (8.075). Junior Maggie Phillips was out of town and did not compete.

Receiving scores that were the average of two judges per event, similar to the state meet, with several state-level judges working the invite only confirmed the team's progress.

"Any invite that has two judges is a big meet for us, whether we win or not," Fuentes said. "We look at those always as a good opportunity just to be evaluated, to see how good we are or not."

Accomplishments of historic proportions are becoming common for the Hilltoppers this season.

This marked a program-best fourth invite team title, following victories at Oswego, Naperville North and the District 87 Invite that also used the traditional format of four scores per event. The previous best was three invites by the 2010 state-qualifying team with one of them using a non-traditional scoring format.

"It's so exciting to go there and know we have a chance to win it and when we win it, it's just super good," O'Keefe said.

"Obviously, the job's not over. We still want to perform well and our ultimate goal is to go to the state meet, but it's still a challenge every single big invite that we go to. We're favored (to win)," Fuentes said. "In baseball and football, you look at the same thing. You still need to do just enough to win. They've managed to do that, whether it was falling behind at Naperville North (after a rough start on beam) or leading from the start. We need to learn how to win both ways."

After never previously capturing an all-around title for an invite, O'Keefe also is on a four-invite winning streak.

At the District 87 Invite, O'Keefe posted a school-record 37.90 all-around total, which was given by four judges, one per event. Considering the two judges per event at the York Invite and that the floor scores were consistently tight (only three 9s awarded), this overall performance was right there.

"I'd say District 87 was the best because I got my highest score," said O'Keefe. "(Broucek) had a great beam day and great vault day so I was really proud of her. It was so exciting because we had a really good meet. We only had two falls. Everybody was super excited."

Broucek joins Maggie Duvall as the only Hilltoppers to reach the 37.00 all-around mark as freshmen. O'Keefe, recovering from injury the first half of last season, scored as high as 36.95. Garchitorena scored 37.10 last season.

“That is a phenomenal accomplishment for any gymnast in their career. (Broucek has) definitely put herself in elite company,” Fuentes said. “It just shows her consistency. She’s a sponge in the gym when it comes to corrections and just knowing what to do.”

The invite also served as the Hilltoppers’ final Silver dual on the schedule with York. This was a compromise after the Dukes needed the meet moved from its original Dec. 19 date but the new Tuesday, Jan. 22 date was after the Hilltoppers’ final regular-season meet at the invite. The junior varsity I and II teams still competed against each other Tuesday.

In previous Silver action, the Hilltoppers won 142.40 to 138.05 at Hinsdale Central Jan. 17. As part of their tradition on the Senior Night, the Red Devils also honored the seniors of their opponents.

The four Glenbard West seniors -- Garchitorena, Sarah Gathof, Angela Vivacqua and Annie Page – also were honored at home Tuesday for their school’s Senior Night. Gathof was promoted to varsity beginning with the Oswego Invite. Vivacqua and Page compete for the JV I squad.

In the dual victory over Hinsdale Central, Broucek (36.20) and Garchitorena (35.75) were second and third as the team’s only all-arounders. O’Keefe won two events but did not compete on beam, and DeStefano sat out floor.

Garchitorena won beam (9.15), and O’Keefe won vault (9.4) and uneven bars (9.3).

Phillips (9.25) and Broucek (9.0) completed a 1-2-3 sweep of uneven bars. Broucek (9.15), O’Keefe (8.95) and Garchitorena (8.8) were second, third and tied for fourth on floor behind Hinsdale Central senior standout Erin Morgan (9.45). Broucek was second on beam (8.95), and Garchitorena (9.2) was fourth and Broucek (9.1) tied for fifth on vault.

Phillips replaced O'Keefe in the beam lineup. DeStefano (8.6), Phillips (8.2) and Connolly (8.15) finished sixth through eighth. The Hilltoppers used the minimum four gymnasts on floor – Broucek, O'Keefe, Garchitorenna and Connolly (8.1).

“You don't know what's going to happen at the end of the year, if you're going to need to put somebody else in. You hope they can step up to the pressure there, and they did (in that dual),” Fuentes said.

The overall Silver title is a 50-50 combination of regular-season and Silver Meet standings. In 2012, the Hilltoppers won their first outright overall Silver title and just third overall. This season, the Hilltoppers finished second in duals with a 4-1 record to state-title contender Lyons Township so they could earn a co-title if they can upset the Lions Saturday.

Glenbard West will remain at home two more times in hopes of returning to the eight-team state meet after a one-year absence. The Hilltoppers play host to regionals at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 29 and sectionals at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 5.

Sectional champions automatically advance to state. The Hilltoppers are their sectional's No. 1 seed based on results through Jan. 9, but St. Charles co-op owns the highest season-best score (147.45 Jan. 14) and Geneva (145.65 Jan. 14) is close to the Hilltoppers' best of 146.00 that won the District 87 Invite.

As always, the Hilltoppers are counting on hard work and consistency to pull them through.

“They're doing what they need to right now to prepare themselves for the rest of the year,” Fuentes said. “In the end, there will be no remorse no matter how far we go, whether we get to the state meet, whether we place. As long as we know we've done the hard work along the way, that's all we can really do. Gymnastics is still gymnastics. Anything can happen within an inch or two and an off day or good day.”