

When Hinsdale Central junior Maddie Sesemann hyper extended her knee vaulting against Oak Park-River Forest Jan. 22, she simply continued the gymnastics meet and competed on the other three events.

"I'm one of those people that'll get up and do anything no matter what," Sesemann said.

"(Stopping) never crossed my mind. I was kind of like, 'Well, it hurts now. It might hurt later, but it's worth it to me.' To me, it's more worth it doing a routine, then hurting later."

Sesemann can finally relax now, but not until she enjoyed the best postseason of her three varsity seasons. She joined senior Alex Yager and sophomore Lindsey Riker as the Red Devils' three individual qualifiers for the Hinsdale Central Sectional Feb. 12.

In their qualifying events, Sesemann tied for 20th on floor (8.65) and was 21st on uneven bars (7.7) and 22nd in all-around (31.775), Yager tied for 19th on vault (8.75) and was 28th in all-around (30.65) and Riker was 29th on uneven bars (6.85) and 31st on balance beam (7.325).

The three advanced based on their performances at the Lyons Township Regional Feb. 7.

"I think the girls did really well. Coming in it was all for them this time," Hinsdale Central coach Kim Estoque said. "(Sesemann is) just pretty tough. She's one of those kids where it doesn't matter. (She thinks), 'I don't care. I'm going to keep going.' It's good for her to get some rest (now)."

This was the third time Sesemann competed at sectionals and the second for Riker but last year they competed for the Red Devils' qualifying sectional team and not as individual qualifiers.

Before this season, Yager had only competed once for the varsity and never competed in the postseason.

"I'm really excited I got to compete because I've watched other people do it for the last three years so now it's my turn," Yager said. "I think I improved my routines a lot (this season) and had fun being a bigger part of the varsity team this year. I got to go to regionals and sectionals so I had a good time."

The Red Devils relied on what little returning varsity experience it had for this season. They graduated 2012 all-stater Erin Morgan, Hannah Kapelinski and Annie Zircher and Cayley Brenk, an individual state qualifier, and Emma Christoph opted not return for their senior seasons.

Sesemann delivered a great season. She competed at sectionals last year for the team on uneven bars after being a sectional qualifier in all-around, vault and uneven bars for the Red Devils' sectional team as a freshman.

"(Sectionals) wasn't my best meet, but it was our last meet so it was just to have fun," Sesemann said. "I think it was just have fun, go for whatever skill you haven't gone for, just try your best."

Like many Red Devils, Sesemann rose to the occasion at the end of the season. Even with her injury, she achieved her first 9 for the Red Devils for any event, and on floor for that matter, with a 9.025 at the regional that shared fifth place.

In another gritty performance at home Dec. 18, Sesemann was battling an upset stomach and threw up in the middle of the meet but after sitting out beam, she regained her composure and finished the competition on floor.

"It makes me happy that I got better and I'm really happy with how I've progressed through the season and how I've done better after my knee hurt and stuff, which makes me really happy," Sesemann said.

"Before my hip surgery, I lived with torn hips for years upon years. I've missed one meet in my whole life. (Sitting out) never crossed my mind. It just was like, 'You've got to get up, you've got to suck it up for this routine and keep going.'"

Riker also had her best meets of the season at the end after battling illness and missing practice time during winter break. She had a season-best 33.275 all-around total at the West Suburban Conference Silver Division Meet Feb. 1 with a season-high 8.55 on floor. Riker tied her season high on uneven bars at regionals with an 8.4.

Last year, Riker competed for the Red Devils at sectionals on uneven bars and floor.

"This was a rough season. I'm glad it's over," Riker said. "Conference and regionals were the only somewhat good meets that were fun, satisfying. Everything. (I want to improve) everything."

When Yager was a freshman and sophomore, she nearly stopped competing in gymnastics because she also was playing soccer. A knee injury contributed to her choosing to quit soccer.

Through the years, she's moved her way up from the junior varsity II level to varsity.

"I'm so glad I stuck with gymnastics. It's made me so happy and I can still look forward to going to gymnastics every day and I'm really going to miss it," Yager said.

"I've literally had the most amazing coaches I ever could have asked for. They're like my second set of parents. I've met the nicest girls. I feel really, really lucky to be doing gymnastics with the girls that I did from club all the way up to high school."

Yager qualified for sectionals on vault thanks to a season-high 8.825 at regionals. She still scored well at sectionals and was rewarded with one last great gymnastics memory.

"Making my full and a half (vault) all the way around (was great)," Yager said. "My friends were sitting right there on the balcony over the runway, and I looked up and they were all standing up and cheering and had these

huge smiles on their faces. It was really nice of them to come out and watch."

-- by Bill Stone