

Hinsdale Central sophomore Jamie Sherlock had never completed a giant swing on the uneven parallel bars in a gymnastics meet.

That changed during the Red Devils' dual meet Wednesday, Dec. 18, against Downers Grove North.

Sherlock has improved so much this season that she even pulled off two giants in a row.

"I was more relaxed and confident and just wanted to do my best and I knew I wanted to make it over really bad," Sherlock said. "Just nerves and confidence kind of got me over. It was just overwhelming because everyone was cheering so loud. It was just really exciting."

It was just part of a great meet for Sherlock on an otherwise rough night for the Red Devils in a 130.75 to 125.15 loss in West Suburban Conference Silver Division dual action.

Sophomore Elle Bergevin joined the lineup for the first time this season to compete on uneven bars and beam. However, junior Maddie Sesemann and sophomore Lindsey Riker had to overcome illnesses just to get through the meet.

"We were lucky they did as much as they did," Hinsdale Central coach Kim Estoque said. "(But) Jamie had a good meet. She's getting there so it's good."

Sesemann scratched from beam after throwing up following uneven bars but managed to return for floor, the Red Devils' final event. Riker made it through as an all-rounder but looked visibly worn down as she plowed through her routine on floor, often her strongest event.

"I didn't warm up at all. I just threw everything," Riker said. "It wasn't that hard (to compete), but I just knew that the team needed me."

Sherlock, meanwhile, built upon her strong showing at the Red Devil Invite Dec. 14. She had season-high scores in all-around and all four events, four of them scores from the Red Devil Invite.

Sherlock was most excited about her second-place 7.75 on uneven bars to Downers North's Ellia Leger (8.4). Sherlock also had a team-high 8.55 vault to share fourth and was third on floor (8.3) and tied for seventh on beam (7.4), edging her 7.3 from the Nov. 27 season opener.

"I think each meet is getting better and better (for me)," Sherlock said. "So far it's better than my first meet I've ever competed in so I'm definitely getting better and better."

Sherlock's fourth-place 32.00 in all-around was more than a point better than her 30.925 at the Red Devil Invite. Senior Alex Yager (31.35) and Riker (29.95) were fifth and sixth in all-around.

"I think confidence wise (she's stronger). I think her anxiety has been a lot less," Estoque said. "She has to get her back handspring in (on beam). She's just scared going backwards."

Usually the Red Devils' top performer on floor, Sesemann pulled off a third-place 8.3 despite having the option of scratching the event. Sesemann had just tied for fourth on uneven bars (7.5) when she began feeling ill from what she believes was food poisoning.

"I went to the bathroom and threw up and then I came back," Sesemann said. "I had a pretty good floor. It was pretty funny. I pulled a trash can into the corner (just in case) and was like, 'I'm going to do this.'"

"I've only missed one meet in my life and I don't want to miss another, even half of it. The coaches kept saying, 'It's OK if you don't want to do it.' It's kind of the event I'm good on so I really, really wanted to do it. I was like, 'No matter what, I'm going to do this. I'm going to pull through.'"

Riker also was strong on uneven bars, taking third (7.65). She said the hardest part of competing was complying with school rules and attending a full day of school with her cold to be eligible to compete.

"I had so many tests that day," Riker said. "I just had to stick it out because we all needed to just come together (as a team)."

On beam, Yager had a team-high 8.1 to tie for fourth, and Bergevin was sixth (7.6). Yager also was fifth on floor (7.65) and sixth on vault (8.5).

Bergevin received the medical clearance to compete earlier in the day. She has been battling a back injury and wearing a brace and a foot injury that had her in a protective boot.

"I knew I was going to compete, but I only wanted to do two events that were not so hard," Bergevin said.

On uneven bars, generally her strongest event, Bergevin fell in the early moments of her routine but then rebounded for a 7.15. She followed that with a solid but conservative beam routine.

"Whenever I get back from something (like uneven bars), I always have to mess up, but then I do fine. I don't have a lot of super hard tricks (on beam) so it was easy to get that," Bergevin said.

"(My goal for uneven bars is) just getting back in the swing of doing routines every day because I haven't done them in a while. It's harder (than just skills). I've done light workouts on the other events but not enough to compete. I have to see how it goes but hopefully (I'll do more events)."

Freshman Mia Randell, who made her varsity debut at the Red Devil Invite, was slated for two events. She added beam in place of Sesemann and her 6.75 was 1.05 higher than at the Red Devil Invite.

Randell made an additional contribution by giving Riker back messages to help her persevere through the meet.

"I'm her favorite masseuse," Randell said with a smile.

-- by Bill Stone