

The buzz was beginning for junior Emma Christoph and her Hinsdale Central gymnastics teammates after their first two events Saturday.

“(Senior Erin Morgan) told us when we were on beam, ‘We’re at a 70. If we can get the same scores we’ve been getting, we can get the 140,’ ” Christoph said.

When it was all over, Hinsdale Central had won its seven-team Red Devil Invitational for the second time in the past three years and third in the past five.

That wasn’t even the best part.

After chasing 140 points all of last season, the Red Devils were elated in scoring 141.575 points to win by more than two points. Morgan led the way by capturing all-around with a career-high 37.70 and three events.

The 2010-11 Red Devils finished sixth at state with 146.675 points. With no seniors in last year’s lineup, the Red Devils came close but never reached 140 points.

They scored 138.95 twice, including at the Hinsdale Central Sectional, 139.075 at the conference meet and an agonizing 139.95 to finish second at last year’s Red Devil Invite.

“We were hoping we did well enough to get the 140 and hearing it was so exciting because we fought for it all last year and couldn’t get it. It was really exciting because it is so early in the season,” Christoph said.

“It wasn’t even one our best meets and we got 141. It really gives us hope to

make it to state (as a team).”

Morgan won the all-around by more than a point over Hinsdale South freshman Maddie Nowak (36.65). Morgan won uneven parallel bars (9.65), floor exercise (9.45) and beam (9.4) and was second on vault (9.2) to Nowak (9.35).

Junior Cayley Brenk, senior Annie Zircher and Christoph added top-five finishes and senior Hannah Kapelinski added top-10 finishes. Brenk, the Red Devils’ other all-arounder, was fourth (34.55), just .4 from third.

The Red Devils had scored 138.70 and 137.60 in their previous two meets.

“It was really nice. Our goal all of last year was a 140. We missed it, we got close and then this year we went over,” Hinsdale Central coach Kim Estoque said. “I think that’s just going to boost their minds and look what we can do. We still have misses and we’ve got a 141 so we can go up from there.”

The Red Devils won comfortably over Lake Park (139.40) with Hinsdale South (133.75) third. Stevenson, last year’s invite champion en route to finishing second at state, dropped out of the invite to compete at the second annual DeKalb/Sycamore co-op Invite Friday.

The Red Devils had season-high team event scores on floor (35.925), beam (35.65) and uneven bars (34.95). On beam, the Red Devils finished 1-2-3 with Morgan, Brenk (8.9) and Zircher (8.85).

Considering that the Red Devils still counted three falls, each an automatic .5 deduction, talk is starting to turn toward scoring a 143. Even as great of a meet that Morgan had, she had to put her hands down when she fell

forward landing her handspring front vault.

“I know I could have improved myself, but my bars was probably the best I’ve ever done in my high school career,” Morgan said.

“I was very proud of myself and the team. Personally I tied my highest all-around score of 37.70, which is very exciting, knowing that it wasn’t even a perfect meet for me and I can still get a high score like that. For the team, it’s very exciting, but knowing that we can do better to improve our routines as well.”

Besides defending her invite title on floor, Morgan stuck her beam routine for the third straight meet and won by .5. On uneven bars, she couldn’t have done a much better routine.

Morgan’s older sister, Colleen, was an all-stater on uneven bars as a junior in 2008, taking second with a 9.65. Erin Morgan reached her first state finals last season on beam and was an all-state fourth (9.45).

“I was never a really big fan of bars. I was always leaning more toward floor and beam. Colleen always pushed me to like bars, but it never happened,” Morgan said.

“Usually I get all of my deductions on form breaks, swinging and stuff I get deductions there, but my routine was very flowing and I didn’t have too many deductions there.”

There were many other highlights. On beam, Brenk had a season-high score despite a fall and Zircher achieved a career high after never scoring higher than the mid-8s. Kapelinski was eighth (8.5).

“That (8.85) was way higher than I ever would have expected. I think I just had a good warmup. It was surprising,” Zircher said. “(Now) I think everybody’s just so much more excited and motivated to get even better, get an even higher score.”

On floor, Christoph enjoyed a personal triumph by scoring in the 9s on floor (9.05) for the first time this season to finish third to Morgan and Nowak (9.15). Brenk (8.75) and Zircher (8.675) were fifth and seventh.

“It’ll help me, especially in practice, to say, ‘If I add one more thing,’ or ‘If I get this one thing cleaner,’ I can get that much higher of a score and stay in the 9s consistently,” Christoph said.

“Last year, I would always really want the 9 and I’d get it once or twice. That’s the most exciting event for me because I’m used to doing floor. Just adding skills and getting them cleaner and getting such a big score back is really exciting.”

Brenk and Kapelinski tied for eighth on uneven bars (8.5), and Christoph (8.85) and Kapelinski (8.6) were eighth and 11th on vault. Sophomore Maddie Sesemann tied for 16th on uneven bars (8.3).

With a 10 a.m. start time, the invite might not seem to be the best environment for great performances. But it encourages great team camaraderie as the varsity and junior varsity lineups not only compete side by side but alternate performances for different judges so both levels can be completed faster.

Hinsdale Central’s JV scored 125.85 and won its concurrent invite by 14.725

points over second-place Downers Grove South.

“When you get there at 7 a.m., you’re not as pumped up as you get when you start the meet,” Christoph said. “Once the meet starts, you get in the zone and you get ready to do the meet and it gets really exciting, especially when you start getting the scores back.”

“We know going into the meet that we’re going to have a lot of fans there. All of our families are going to be able to come so I think that helps us mentally,” Morgan added. “(We also benefit) just knowing that it’s our own equipment. It helps us just knowing that we’ve done it on this equipment before so we’ll be able to do it again.”