

**McKinsey Hultmark needed all of the time possible to return to the Hinsdale South girls gymnastics team as a senior.**

**"It was a very last-minute decision. Like a day before (practice started)," Hultmark said. "I think it was Sunday night that I decided and then I came to school Monday and early on I just went to (Hinsdale South coach Jennifer Fichter's) office and I asked if I could still join and I just came to practice that day."**

**One of the main reasons Hultmark said she returned was her friends on the team. During winter break, Hultmark will be spending plenty of time with them in and out of the gym.**

**The Hornets had their final meet of 2013 at the Homewood-Flossmoor Invitational Dec. 21 and finished ninth with 100.65 points.**

**They don't compete again until their home meet with Leyden Jan. 9. In the meantime, they will have a busy couple of weeks practicing and participating in two major events.**

**As a team, the Hornets plan to volunteer for Feed My Starving Children and participate in the second annual West Suburban Conference Bowling Event at Tivoli Lanes in Downers Grove.**

**These will be new experiences with the Hornets for Hultmark, one of five seniors on the team who last competed as a sophomore.**

**"I won't be on a team in college. I'll have track late on, but that's a little different," Hultmark said. "(I enjoy) being with my friends and definitely just pushing myself to learn a couple of things outside my comfort zone for the most part.**

**"I like hanging out with them. It's their senior year. I'm going to miss them next year so I just wanted more time to be with them and to do a fun sport. It was calmer (than junior year). All of my college stuff is done and my classes are hard, but they're not as hard as junior year so it'll be fine."**

**At the H-F Invite, senior Jorie Smith had three season-high totals. She was a team-best 20th in all-around (season-high 27.30) behind tying for 13th on vault (8.2) and equaling her season best on beam with a team-high 6.5.**

**Senior Brenna Budaitis was 21st in all-around (26.30). Sophomore Eva Bucke had a team-high 5.4 on uneven bars, a season best by .4, and Smith had a season-high 5.2. Budaitis (7.5), Smith (7.4) and senior Shur Batmunkh (7.35) were the team's top scorers on floor exercise.**

**Senior Claudia Lundgren, made her varsity season debut with a 4.2 on uneven bars. Lundgren has been competing on the junior varsity I level.**

**Lundgren and Hultmark are former gymnasts who returned to the team after not competing as juniors. Immediately after her sophomore gymnastics season, Hultmark was an exchange student in Costa Rica from February to July, 2012.**

**"It was a very rural area that I was in, out in the farmland," Hultmark said. "I was blessed to be able to go. It was a blast. I learned a lot."**

**As a junior, Hultmark remained with her other two sports, cross country and track, but took off the gymnastics season "to relax a little bit." She focused on a rigorous year of academics and was able to perform in a play with her church.**

**Hultmark said she has had to work hard for her return to gymnastics has not felt overwhelmed or frustrated.**

**"I've had to relearn a lot of things, but I'm just staying at the basics and I'm learning from the basics," Hultmark said. "It's a lot of fun. I'm not asking to be very good. I'm just asking to have fun and learn some new tricks."**

**Feed My Starving Children is a non-profit Christian organization that ships hand-pack meals designed for malnourished children to approximately 70 countries worldwide. The organization has permanent volunteer sites in Aurora, Schaumburg and Libertyville.**

**This will be the first time the Hornets have done volunteer work as a group.**

**"We decided it would be better to have the team bond more," Budaitis said. "Last year, we were just talking about volunteer stuff and we just mentioned that and that it was really fun so we decided to give it a shot."**

**Hultmark previously has volunteered at Feed My Starving Children with her family and other members of the La Grange Bible Church.**

**Hultmark said volunteers gather measured amounts of dry or dehydrated foods and seal them in boxes to be delivered to various countries worldwide. Fichter said the team will probably work for two hours one evening.**

**"I've gone there before. You have to work together to package a lot of food as quickly as you can," Hultmark said. "It's a lot of fun so it'll be a team bonding thing, as well as a way to give back to the community."**

**The bowling event is a fundraiser for the Illinois High School Girls Gymnastics Coaches Association. Fichter said about 75 to 80 gymnasts from various WSC schools participated.**

**Hultmark said she plans to participate, regardless of the sport.**

**"I've managed to get gutter balls even with the bumpers up so bowling is not my cup of tea, but that's OK. It'll be fun," Hultmark said.**

**-- by Bill Stone**