

Hinsdale South junior Erica Meyer made big strides with her gymnastics skills during winter break.

Meyer proved she wasn't completely done progressing in the Hornets' final home meet of the season Tuesday, Jan. 27, against Morton.

Meyer unveiled a new floor exercise routine -- and landed her 1 1/2 full twist to complete the second pass -- as the Hornets prevailed 132.80 to 91.35 in their West Suburban Conference Gold Division finale.

"I learned (the routine) last night. It was fun," said Meyer, who scored a 7.95.

"I'm happy that I hit my 1 1/2. I've been having some trouble with it recently so just hitting it was really great. My other (routine) took a lot of extra energy and it made it a lot harder to hit that middle pass so the change in floor routines helped me."

Junior Maddie Nowak won all-around (36.70) and swept all four events – vault (9.55), uneven parallel bars (9.3), balance beam (9.15) and floor (8.7).

Nowak, Meyer, senior Lauren Haney and freshman Kaitlin Hall swept the top four places on all four events and all-around. Freshman Lizzy Lowery, who competed on three events, was fifth on beam with a varsity season-high 7.35, and freshman Kayla Ramos vaulted.

"I did two layout (Yurchenko) vaults and then a toe shoot on bars and then a Rudi on floor. Those were all improvements (to my routines)," Nowak said.

Still, it was a bit of a rough night for the Hornets, who have scored more than 133 points in their previous four meets since winter break. But the victory clinched second place in the final Gold dual standings with a 4-1 record heading into the Gold Meet at 5 p.m. Saturday at Willowbrook.

The Hornets could still earn a share of the overall title if they win Saturday over defending champion Downers Grove South, which beat the Hornets in their dual 137.70 to 133.55 Dec. 10 and has scored at least 137.10 three other times. Hinsdale South's season high is 136.00 at the Neuqua Valley Invite Jan. 17.

"We did not do very well tonight, but it's OK, just get all of our bad vibes out before conference and regionals," Haney said.

The ultimate goal is advancing to the six-team sectionals Feb. 11 at Hinsdale Central as a team. The Hornets compete at the Lincoln-Way East Regional at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 3 and need one of the top six scores among the 16 teams in the sectional field. Hinsdale South was seeded No. 6 in the sectional Jan. 14, three days before the Neuqua Valley Invite score.

"We're trying to keep it together for regionals because we really want to hit there," Haney said. "I think everyone's kind of nervous about that, but we're working our hardest so hopefully it pays off. It's great to qualify individually, but it would be really nice to qualify as a team. We all could definitely do it, but it depends if we all hit in the same meet."

All five Hinsdale South all-arounders have achieved season high totals since its first meet after winter break Jan. 10 at the Lincoln-Way Invite.

Meyer scored a then season-high 32.65 at the invite but jumped to 34.00 at the Neuqua Valley Invite Jan. 16 with season highs on beam (8.65) and uneven bars (8.3) and a then season-best 8.3 on uneven bars.

Meyer scored an 8.4 on uneven bars Tuesday for second place. She not only has added a giant swing, which she never had before, but actually does two and can do them fluidly.

"The first time I competed them (at Lincoln-Way), I fell on them but after that it's been pretty smooth," Meyer said.

"Definitely my giants (are a highlight) because I've had them for a little while, except they've never been consistent. I was able to work on them so much (over winter break) I was able to get them a lot more consistent, and add a flyaway (dismount)."

The Hornets' only other season high Tuesday came from Lowery on beam. Everyone else counted one fall, but Meyer (8.05), Haney (7.85), Hall (7.75) and Lowery were second through fifth.

Haney (8.15) and Hall (7.85) were second and fourth on floor, and Haney (7.85) and Hall (7.35) were third and fourth on uneven bars.

On vault, Nowak, usually opens with a pike Yurchenko followed by a layout, This time, she perfectly landed a layout on her first attempt and tried a layout again but missed. Haney (8.45), Hall (8.3) and Meyer (8.15) placed second through fourth.

“Vault was pretty much one of my best vaults so far this season,” said Hall, who landed a half on, full off. “I think I’ve competed it like twice. I don’t practice it that often because I’m having back problems.”

Hall has been battling back issues over the past two years. She said she missed half of her club season as a seventh grade with a strained spine.

“Now it’s getting worse than it was before,” Hall said. “I’ll stick it out for the end of the season. It’s pretty bad, but I push through it.”

The Morton meet was originally scheduled for Jan. 7 but rescheduled after frigid temperatures caused school to be canceled. The Hornets’ original home finale Jan. 22 with Willowbrook remained as Senior Night.

--by Bill Stone