

Senior Lauren Haney and her Hinsdale South teammates know all too well that individual scores often can vary from gymnastics meet to meet regardless of performance.

"As long as the scores are consistent, we don't really care," Haney said. "We try not to look at the score anyway because if you did better, that's what matters. Sometimes the scores are kind of off so you can't really base it on that."

The Hornets ran into tight scoring for their important dual meet at Addison Trail Thursday, Dec. 18, but any concerns quickly evaporated as they emerged with a 130.15 to 127.80 West Suburban Conference Gold Division victory.

The Hornets and Blazers are expected to be the top challengers to Downers Grove South for the Gold title. Despite a season-high score, Hinsdale South (1-1 in Gold) lost its conference opener at Downers South 137.70 to 133.55 Dec. 10.

Hinsdale South was coming off scoring 132.75 at Hinsdale Central's Red Devil Invitational Dec. 13. Addison Trail scored a season-high 130.075 Dec. 13 at the Hersey Invitational.

"We were actually really nervous about this, pleasantly surprised (about the margin of victory)," Haney said.

"I've told them you can't leave it up to the judges. Forget about the score," Hinsdale South coach Mia Tritch said. "You've got to do your best and if you feel that if you did your best on the event, you can't really look at the score. If we lose today, it's not because of the judges. It's about how we performed."

Junior Maddie Nowak dominated the meet, easily winning all-around (36.30) and all four events -- floor exercise (9.35), uneven parallel bars (9.15), vault (9.1) and balance beam (8.7).

Haney (32.10) and junior Erica Meyer (31.75) were fourth and shared fifth in all-around, and they and freshman Kaitlin Hall (30.00) had top-five event finishes. Freshman Elizabeth Lowery also made her varsity debut, competing on everything but floor.

Despite counting three falls Thursday, the Hornets outscored the Blazers on all four events but by only .1 on floor and .2 on vault.

"We thought it was going to come down to tenths in the end, but it didn't so we were glad about that," Nowak said. "But this meet still taught us that every tenth counts and we need to go out hitting our routines and if we fall, then get back up and make it up somewhere else."

Haney did so on beam, the Hornets' final event. She still has a large bruise on her thigh from when she hit the beam after missing a trick during her routine at the Red Devil Invite but managing not to come off the apparatus.

"I was doing a new jump when I did that. I'm not doing it anymore because it's not worth risking it," Haney said.

Thursday's routine went much better. Haney (8.3) completed a 1-2-3 event sweep with Nowak and Meyer (8.4).

"I feel good about it because I know the team really needed it. I was just happy to stick. I was about to fall but then I stayed on so I was like, 'OK, whoa,'" Haney said.

Nowak won vault by .5 with her layout Yurchenko and uneven bars by .45. On floor, she edged Addison Trail senior Casey Boksha (9.3) by .05.

"I actually don't look at my scores. I don't know what I scored on vault or bars (until afterwards). I just happened to see beam and floor," Nowak said. "I don't focus on the scores at all. Going into a routine, I just think I'm going to give it 100 percent and at the end if that's what I do, no score is going to change how I felt about that routine."

Meyer (8.0) and Haney (7.75) were fourth and fifth on uneven bars, Haney tied for fourth on floor (8.05) and Hall tied for fourth on vault (8.1).

On beam, Meyer hadn't scored higher than 7.8 on the event previously this season.

"I think we improved on beam a little bit (from the Red Devil Invite). Erica improved on beam. It's one of the first beam routines she's stuck," Tritch said.

Lowery also proved to be a welcome addition. Her 7.1 on beam was the same as Hall, who counted two falls. Lowery also opened with scores of 7.8 on vault and 5.8 on uneven bars, which did not count toward the team total.

"I was excited but kind of like nervous at the same time," Lowery said. "(It went) pretty good. I stuck my landings. Things could have been cleaner but I stuck it."

"(Lowery) seemed a little bit nervous competing varsity but she did a really good job and I'm really proud of her," Nowak said.

This was only the second time the Hornets used a fifth competitor in a varsity meet this season from the junior varsity I lineup. On Dec. 4, freshman Kayla Ramos was added for vault in the home dual against Riverside-Brookfield after Meyer was injured during warmups and her vaulting status was unsure. Meyer ended up vaulting and Ramos' 7.7 did not count toward the team total.

"This meet for sure (we wanted insurance). We knew it could come down to a couple of tenths," Tritch said. "In the invites, we probably won't have Lizzie but the next couple of conference meets to come, we'll probably have Lizzie in there just to get her comfortable competing with the varsity because I think we can really shape her into a varsity athlete by the end of the season for sure."

Before, during and after the dual, several Hornets enjoyed talking with Boksha, who works out with many of the varsity in the offseason at Action Gymnastics, which is co-owned by Hinsdale South assistant coaches Jody Raymond and Erica Wolf.

In 2014, Boksha qualified for her first state meet on floor. She was joined at state by current sophomore Kennedy O'Neill.

"It's fun, yeah (seeing Boksha)," Haney said. "She's improved a lot so it's fun to see. She's doing really well."

-- by Bill Stone