

Lyons Township junior Jackie Fuller shrugged off the immediate pain to her foot and injured ankle following a tough dismount off balance beam at Oak Park-River Forest Wednesday, Jan. 22.

What really stung Fuller was that she didn't stick her landing.

"I didn't really hurt my ankle. I was just frustrated that I missed that (dismount)," Fuller said. "It's just a little sting. I'll be fine. I've just got to stretch is out a little bit."

Fuller was close to a near-perfect meet, and now she and the Lions finally will have time to polish their skills with uninterrupted practice.

After beating the Huskies 148.90 to 134.50 to complete another undefeated West Suburban Conference Silver Division dual season, LT won't compete again until the Silver Meet at 11 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 1, at Hinsdale Central.

Following winter break and no meets since Dec. 16, LT had five meets or invites from Jan. 11-22. The Jan. 13 dual at Glenbard West was rescheduled from Jan. 8.

"We've had like five meets in 12 days, which is insane," LT junior Kelsy Kurfirst said. "We're so relieved that we finally get a week and a half to kind of wind down, not wind down but practice what we need to do. We've got that week and a half to get ready for conference and the state series so I'm excited."

Kurfirst won the all-around (38.25), floor exercise (9.7), vault (9.65) and balance beam (9.4). Senior Katie Carling won uneven parallel bars with a career-high 9.7 for the second meet in a row.

The Lions' other six varsity regulars also saw action, Fuller, seniors Michelle Cozza and Mackenzie Stotz, juniors Olivia McGann and Kelly Ryser and sophomore Cat Mossing.

Carling (37.25) and Cozza (35.85) were second and third in the all-around.

The Lions opened with two falls during their five uneven bars routines but then came back to sweep the five highest scores on vault and floor and the top three scores on beam, where they also had two falls, even though the Huskies posted a season-high score.

"Like always, we're just learning more about how we can compete and if something doesn't necessarily go our way on one event, we're learning how to pick ourselves up and move on and make up for it on the other events," Kurfirst said.

"It definitely wasn't perfect (for me). My bars routine was a little off and I had to fight for a couple of different things but overall I'm happy with how I did. I know what I need to work on for the upcoming meets."

On vault, Kurfirst was followed by Cozza (9.5), Carling (9.4), Fuller (9.35) and Stotz (9.2). Kurfirst, Cozza (9.4), Carling (9.25), Stotz (9.2) and Ryser (9.1) had the top five scores on floor with Stotz and Ryser equaling season highs.

Carling, Kurfirst (9.5) and Fuller (9.4) went 1-2-3 on uneven bars with McGann (8.8) fifth. Kurfirst, Cozza (9.1) and Carling (8.9) were the top three beam performers with Mossing (8.6) tying for sixth.

This is Fuller's first season on the team. She started the season as an all-arounder but injured her left ankle vaulting against Downers Grove North Dec. 11. To assist her recovery, Fuller continued competing but didn't rejoin the lineup as an all-arounder until the Fremd Invite Jan. 18. Fuller did not compete on floor Wednesday. Besides beam, she tied her season high on uneven bars and just missed her season high on vault of 9.4.

"I'm getting more confident on every event and feel like they're starting to kind of just find their way in and be good routines. I'm excited, minus the dismount on beam," Fuller said.

"We're going to be working hard these next couple of weeks, getting ready for conference and the rest of the meets. We've just got to get on

our groove and go."

The postseason is entirely new to Fuller as a competitor and spectator. Kurfirst and Ryser are the lineup's veterans in their third varsity seasons.

The overall Silver title is a 50-50 combination of regular season and Silver Meet results. Last year, LT won the overall title outright by winning the Silver Meet after going 5-0 in duals.

The Lions begin IHSA postseason competition as the No. 1 seed for the Hinsdale Central Sectional with the LT Regional at 6:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 31, in La Grange.

"(Practices and competition are) both emotionally and physically straining, but I think we can handle them pretty well," Kurfirst said.

"Definitely (our mindset is) changing a lot because we know there's more pressure on us, but we can definitely handle it. We've just got to stay confident and know that we've come this far and we've learned a lot about how we compete and we've gotten better. We've just got to trust ourselves and do what we know how to do and we'll be fine."

-- by Bill Stone