

Gymnasts win state

Devastating Devils do it again!

by John Wilson

WOW!!! That's what Bart Conner, all-around star of Niles West, had to say as he stood in astonishment after the Red Devils of Hinsdale Central outclassed everyone in the 18th annual state gymnastic championships of Illinois, winning by more than 60 points.

Held at Mount Prospect, the state meet was supposed to be one of the closest in the history of Illinois gymnastics. It wasn't, as the Devils collected their fifth state championship in six years.

The Devils wiped their competitors out, beating second place Niles West (alias Bart Conner) by 60½ points and defending state champ Hersey by 68 plus. The Devils scored 194 points, the best state total since the 1971 Red Devils scored the best ever, 228½. The 1971 Devils featured Bob Anderson, Ted Marcy, and Marty Meyers all who were state champs that year.

With WGN-TV cameras adding to the pressure, the Devils combined confidence, consistency, clean sets, and avid support from their fans to lock up the state championship. They had enough points to win, even without their rings scores, unlike last year when it was just about even down to the rings event.

The avid team spirit didn't stop after the meet ended though, as all three Central coaches (Neil Krupicka, Steve Mikez, and Harrison Bull) took a half-expected dip in the showers fully clothed. Fortunately the coaches foresaw what might happen and brought along an extra change of clothes.

Consistency has been the big plus for the Devils all season and triggered the downfall of Hersey this year. Because of this consistency the Devils did not miss any of their routines in the finals. Central coach Krupicka, who favored his Devils in the finals said, "When you've got confidence and consistency it is tough to beat."

The big man in the meet was (who else) Bart Conner, a one-man team for Niles West, the second place team. The cool, blonde junior set three state records including a 9.09 average in all-around, a 9.55 on p-bars, and a 9.35 on high bar. His lowest score was an 8.9 on rings. He also tied for first in free-ex. He may be headed for the 1976 or 1981 Olympics or possibly both.

Most of the finalists for the Devils earned their place in the "mobbed, picked up, and hair pulling group". The coaches and other Central performers did the honors. Remember what happened to Tom Truedson last year after he threw a 9.0 set on sidehorse? He almost got mugged. The group will be called the MPH club.

One of the more prominent members of the group is the no. 1, numero uno, etc.

sidehorse man in the state of Illinois, none other than Paul Black. Black threw a near perfect, clean set with ultra-high scissors for which the judges awarded him with a 9.1 and the gold medal. Since Black went ninth there was one athlete left to go.

There were other medals passed out to Red Devil gymnasts—five others. Steve Economides, another member of MPH, captured a tie for third place with Mark Goodson (Glenbard South) with a 9.0 in free exercise.

"Econ" lost first by .05 points to his state rival Keith Oehlsen of Hersey and to Bart Conner. The rivalry between Econ and Oehlsen stands at two wins apiece in the four meetings between Central and Hersey. Econ said after the meet, "This was our best meet ever. Everybody on the team hit."

Junior Breck Grigas also had a banner evening. In all-around competition Grigas placed fourth with an average of 8.35 which earned the Devils another medal.

On high bar Grigas took seventh place with an 8.7. On still rings Grigas finished in a tie with Conner for sixth place with 8.9. Grigas, a pressure man himself, said after the meet, "We do better under pressure, we've proved it."

Pete Velguth, another junior, hit a clean set which earned him an 8.85 and an eighth place tie. Another junior, Mike Faletti, scored an 8.4 which placed him in a tie for fifth on sidehorse and earned Central another medal. Faletti did well considering he was the first man to compete on sidehorse.

Although shadowed by Conner's record-breaking performance, Mike Jebb and Steve Delcarson placed three-four on the p-bars for the Devils. Two more medals. Jebb took third with 8.8, while Delcarson tied for fourth with 8.75. As usual the p-bars duo of senior was outstanding.

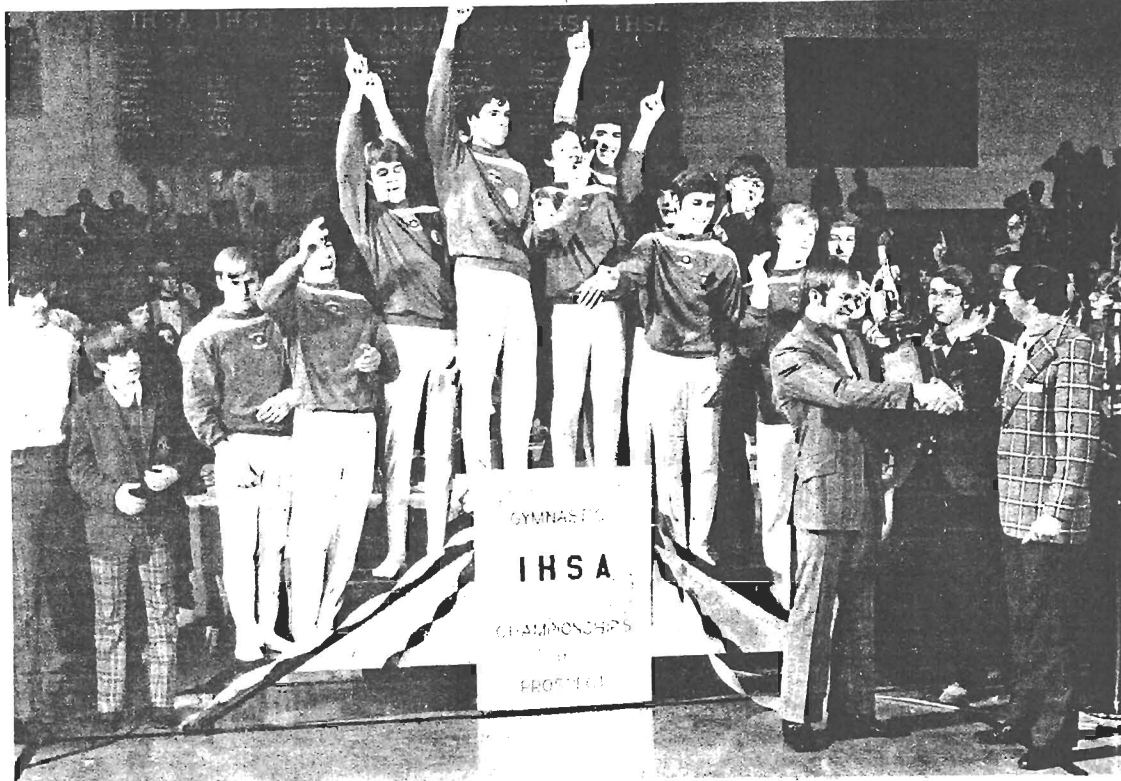
After the meet had ended a garbage bag full of confetti was unloaded on Central's gymnasts and fans. Poor janitors!

The gymnastic team was so overjoyed with their victory they stayed up all night and partied thanks to the host Rick Harris, a junior gymnast whose house was commandeered for the festivities.

The graduating senior gymnasts, who helped give Central one of their best seasons ever are: John Jacus, Steve Economides, Paul Black, Todd Gardiner, Mike Jebb, Steve Delcarson, Rich Goebel, Tom Chism, and manager Russ Eanes.



Red Devil yell leaders watch a gymnast routine holding hands to contain the excitement at state meet which devastated Saturday.



A happy Red Devil team signals "We're number one" as coach Neil Krupicka accepts state gymnastics trophy at state meet Saturday night.

Last call for L.L.