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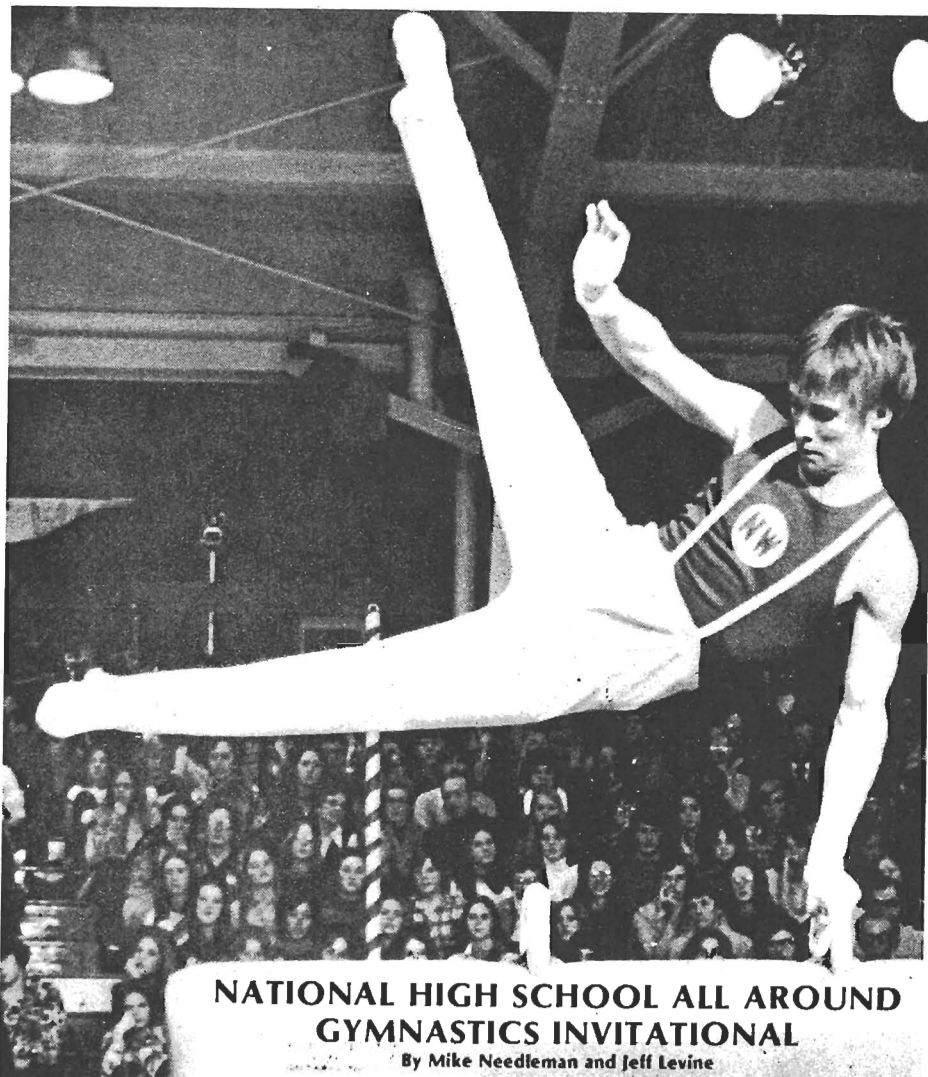
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NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ALL AROUND GYMNASTICS INVITATIONAL

By Mike Needleman and Jeff Levine

Usually there are a couple of good reasons why a gymnastics meet is successful. But in the case of the 1976 National High School Gymnastics All Around Invitational there are twelve good reasons—the dozen gymnasts who competed!

Hosted at Maine West High School (Des Plaines, Illinois) and co-sponsored by Porter Equipment Company, the 2nd Annual NHSAAGI attracted over 3000-fans and coaches alike to the April 24th extravaganza to witness twelve of the top men in the country participate in a "competitive with, rather than a competitive against" atmosphere. Scores by event were accumulated but the personal reward of participation and the camaraderie that was developed throughout the course of the weekend, prevailed through the final event.

An idea originally developed by Sid Drain and John Burkel, the meet was said to not only have some outstanding gymnastics, but it "rivals the Olympics in pomp, ceremony and atmosphere." The "Meet Weekend" consisted of an all-expenses-paid weekend (room, board, and transportation) Friday and Saturday workouts, seeing sights of Chicago and ending with the competition on Saturday evening.

Gymnasts were carefully screened by the organizing committee in the several months leading up to the event. The past year's scores from each State were evaluated, films of each gymnast were critiqued, and applications and recommendations were carefully reviewed in

order to enter the nation's best. Consequently, there was not a score lower than 49.20 at the finale with 11 of the participants scoring 50.35 or better.

"There was a good crop of kids in the nation this year and the choosing for the meet was tough," notes assistant director Burkel. "We wanted to get a tighter range of scores than last year so we took a great deal of time to find the twelve top high school gymnasts and also make sure that they could be in top condition to perform well at the meet. I think we achieved our purpose." Judges were also chosen for the meet upon reputation and recommendation in order to fill the tables with the twelve most competent officials by invitation.

Most of the routines were performed well, exemplifying a high degree of correct mechanical technique, form and individual style. It appears as if the country's younger gymnasts and coaches are now spending the time to attempt to master the basic skills, which are critical in the evolution of each competitor's ultimate potential. The top performers in each event represented well this proper technique illustrating the trend that we are beginning to develop throughout the nation.

THE COMPETITION

Highlighting this meet for the 2nd year in a row was Bart Conner, former Illinois State Champion and United States Pan-American Games team member. Conner's All Around

International GYMNAST August '76



Breck Grigas

showing of 55.10 topped the meet's performances even though this was the only time the Illinois gymnast competed in his home State in 1976. Bart made fine showings in most events but faltered in Free Exercise and Pommel.Horse. The next set of scores turned in was 53.45 by Illinois man Breck Grigas and Mario McCutcheon of New York. Along with Conner, this was the second NNSAAGI appearance by both.

The individual winner in Free Exercise was 1975 AAU-FX Champion Ron Galimore of Florida. Galimore floated through his routine to obtain an outstanding 9.65 as was expected from the Tallahassee "tumbler". His routine displayed a mount featuring a double back one could walk under, and a very distinctive double-full dismount. Sandwiched in the middle he performed a Rudolph to earn his risk and originality points. In general his routine was well executed and explosive with hardly a flaw and saving a step on his double-full. Grigas of Illinois and Wallace Miller of New York also had strong double backs, scoring 8.85 and 8.65 respectively.

Pommel Horse was highlighted by Nebraska's James Hartung, a high school sophomore who was perhaps underscoring at 8.95. Jim's set included a back-Moore, 1/4 Bailey, Russian on one pommel and a Shurlock. The performance itself was well-executed and rhythmically sound. Probably the only hold-up was an occasional tightness on Hartung's circles. Other Pommel highlights saw

McCutcheon's Back-Moore Bailly, and front-in-Moore. Breck Grigas had a smooth hop on the pommels while Dan Muenz, Illinois, performed a good stockli-in, immediate hop.

Probably the most exciting event of the evening was Long Horse Vaulting, won by Galimore at another 9.65. Galimore was the 1975 Midwest Open Champion and amazed everyone with his opening vault consisting of a layout 1/2-In, 1/2-Out. A bit to Ron's dislike, he acknowledged judges for a second vault and threw an extremely high round-off, Layout back. Pennsylvania's Joe Stallone (2nd in the meet) scored a 9.45 with a relatively good double front while Conner and Hartung executed good round-off piked back vaults.

Still Rings displayed poor handstands and shaky ring work from most every performer. Conner did a stock set with "no-fancy stuff" to score a 9.20 consisting of a lock arm shoot, a giant and a solid cross with a clean high dismount. Grigas obtained a 9.10 performing relatively well doing straight-arm work both ways and a beautiful piked-double back dismount. McCutcheon was solid with a high giant double-back dismount.

Conner performed well on Parallel Bars executing nearly every trick to its maximum for a 9.50. His routine consisted of a back toss, stutz, streuli, peach, and swing reverse—all to well balanced handstands. He capped it all off with a strong double back. Muenz surprised many people here with his well deserved 9.25 showing. A clean Diomodov and a well done Tsukahara off highlighted his routine. Illinois State Champion Craig Martin and Wisconsin's Stacey Maloney did clean stock sets for solid 9.0's while other notables included Hartung's front toss, Stallone's back-toss glide and McCutcheon's double-back dismount.

It was Conner again at 9.50 to highlight Horizontal Bar. In a sense, Bart's High Bar and Parallel Bar routines are very similar. He does difficult but conventional tricks, executing them technically correctly. His High Bar dismount was a delight as he popped a nice Full-in, back-out. Maloney was perhaps somewhat underscoring at 9.10 for his routine. He had the utmost in technique in his stalters with the early-drop method shown three times in his routine. He also had a strong double-back dismount. Hecht vaults were shown by Conner and Muenz, while McCutcheon had a good double full off. Stallone was strong with a weiler-kip and a German stoop-out. Stallone's performance in nearly all the events could have won him "originality" honors.

In retrospect, the National High School All Around Gymnastics Invitational is a possible foreshadowing of Olympic hopefuls in 1980. The meet is a giant step forward for the United States in organizing its international process of gymnastics development. Meets of this nature are necessary to make further progress in world game gymnastics endeavors. And next year, if there is anyway to make this meet better, you can be assured that directors Drain and Burkell and the organizing committee, will have thought it out to the final dismount.

RESULTS

	FX	PH	R	V	PB	HB	Total
1. Conner	8.95	8.60	9.20	9.35	9.50	9.50	55.10
2. Grigas	8.85	8.65	9.10	8.95	8.80	9.10	53.45
2. McCutcheon	8.75	8.75	8.85	9.20	8.85	9.05	53.45
4. Galimore	9.65	8.55	8.20	9.65	8.10	8.60	52.75
4. Martin	8.75	8.55	8.65	8.85	9.00	8.95	52.75
4. Muenz	8.70	8.40	8.45	9.15	9.25	8.80	52.75
7. Stacy Maloney	51.75						
8. Jim Hartung & Wallace Miller	51.60						
10. Joe Stallone	50.45						
11. Richard Ellis	50.35						
12. George Martinez	49.20						

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