

West Aurora victory leaves Hicks relieved

By Tom Christensen

RON HICKS SHOULD have been rejoicing. After all, just about everyone else on the west side of Aurora was. It's not every day when West Aurora's beloved Blackhawks beat East Aurora's hated Tomcats. And when they do, as Chuck Tanner's favorite announcer would suggest, it's time to break out the Falstaff or whatever else is cooling in the 'frig.

But Hicks, West Aurora's impersonation of a sledge hammer, was hardly feeling festive. Relieved, certainly. But not festive.

"It wasn't our best one — I feel like we lost," the 6-5½ forward said after West's Blackhawk had survived a frantic East Aurora rally to advance from their own regional to East's sectional via a 50-48 victory.

"We should have beat them by more than we did. We turned it over too many times for an experienced team. But we won, and like they say, that's all that counts."

YOU'RE RIGHT, RON, that's all that counts — especially in one of these emotional affairs. "I don't know of any game in the state that could have had the electricity we had here tonight," said Blackhawk coach John McDougal, who may have had trouble separating the "electricity" from the fourth-quarter chills he must have had running through him.

"I don't know what happens to us against them," he added. "I don't know if we let up when we get ahead like that, but we invariably find a way to lose our momentum."

What does happen?
 "We start trying to run with them," noted Hicks, "and start taking outside shots. That's not our game. We've got to go to where the money is, and the money's inside for us."

AND WITH THE BLACKHAWKS forgetting where "the money is," the Tomcats — sparked by Doug Postlewaite's superb 19-point performance and Edgar Thomas' 14-point reserve role — pulled to within two points on four occasions in the fourth quarter.

"We had it won about four or five times, and we blew it," lamented Tomcat coach Ernie Kivisto. "Four straight times we traveled, and one was questionable on Edgar. And then they come right in front of us and travel, and they don't call it. You know they didn't have one violation on them, but I can't take it away from West."

Indeed, there was more to the Blackhawk victory than who was called for traveling and who wasn't.

As usual, there was that famous West Aurora defense, as exemplified by Jay Bryant [13 points] holding hot-shooting Mike Pierre to two points. And 6-8 sophomore Bruce Johnson [10 points] holding Tomcat center Henry Davis to three.

"THIS GROUP RANKS right up with the '73 team defensively," said McDougal. "Both are outstanding. It's tough to say whether one is better than the other."

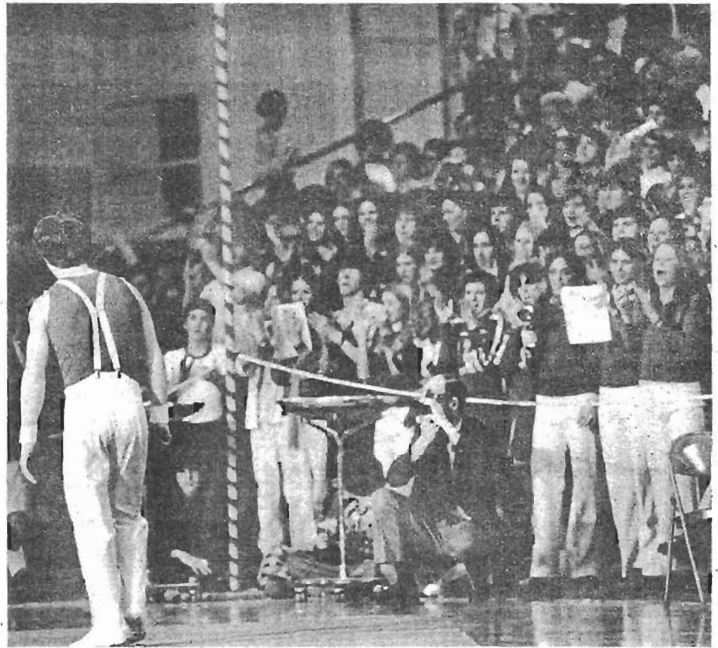
And then, of course, there was that ever present Mr. Muscle. "That Hicks [14 points and 13 rebounds] is as physical as any guy in the state," Kivisto said. "He's the strongest kid in this area. He's so physical. He'll kill you on the boards. We don't have anyone to stay with him."

And while Hicks, Bryant, and the rest of those defensive bandits take their 25-2 record to Wednesday night's sectional meeting with Glenbard East, Kivisto will have to wait till next year to pick up his 599th coaching victory.

"So close," sighed Ernie, "yet so far."

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Trib photo by George Thompson

Hinsdale Central fans greet Breck Grigas with standing ovation after his floor exercise performance in Saturday's state gymnastics meet at Prospect. Grigas finished second in all-around competition to help Hinsdale to its sixth state title in seven years.

Sixth in seven years

Red Devils 'bust' to state gym title

By George Knue

SOMEWHERE DEEP in the heart of the Himalayas, or maybe the Black Forest, there is a small cabin made out of discarded gymnastics mats and several sets of warped parallel bars.

Within crashes a man in red and white who bears a striking resemblance to Satan himself. He has seen many strange things in his travels on this planet, and he has sought refuge to contemplate these things, to meditate upon the very fabric of life itself. He is an old philosopher, or course.

And once a year, around the first week of March, he opens his notebook, and mumbles to no one in particular: "You cannot win if you don't hit routines."

It is not as if no one has been listening. It is just that this platitude has gone unheeded, and as a result, what was supposed to be the doggonedest state gymnastics meet in Illinois history turned into a little bit of a bust. Not much of a bust, but a bust nonetheless.

BUT THAT IS NEGATIVE talk, and even if the occasionally ragged performances in the preliminaries Friday casts a pall on the proceedings for some, it only made the efforts of others a little more magnificent. We talk of Hinsdale Central, Hersey, and Elk Grove, the three most consistent teams in the field of six that fought for the 1976 state crown.

And who expected anything less of Hinsdale Central? The Devils won their sixth state title in the last seven years at Prospect over the weekend, and they were their old awesome selves before the whole shebang drew to a close with showers for all Saturday

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night.

True, there were a few harrowing moments in the prelims when the Devils hinted at mere mortality, but that didn't keep them from totaling a meet-high 149.81 Friday night. Six of those scores could change, up or down, in Saturday's finals, but, like most everyone knew, it would take a complete Hinsdale collapse for anyone else to win.

But Devil coach Neil Krupicka and assistant Harrison Bull will protest to their graves their feeling that nothing was certain until it ended Saturday.

"NO WAY," exclaimed Krupicka. "If we had missed in the finals, we would have been in trouble. We had to duplicate what we did in the prelims. There was a lot of pressure on those kids."

But the Devils did not fold, spindle, or mutilate. They merely followed that gymnastics truism, took home the trophy and threatened innocent bystanders with dunkings in the victory shower for the joy of it all. And with three steady Eddies like Breck Grigas, Dave Stoldt, and Pete Velguth in the finals, no one expected less.

In many respects, however, people did expect less of both Hersey, the second-place team, and Elk Grove, the fourth-place team. They were figured for the back of the pack, but consistency rewrote the scripts.

Indeed, Elk Grove may have had the best-looking team in the whole meet. The Grenadiers didn't miss a routine, and that's as consistent as you can get. In the words of side

horse champ Tim Connelly, who along with rock-solid Gene Christensen led the Grenadiers, "We had a great meet."

HERSEY, FOR ITS PART, parlayed that gymnastics rule of thumb into a great score [147.78 to Hinsdale's 150.71], and after Oak Park had its troubles in the preliminaries, Hersey vaulted into second. In the if-wishes-were-horses category, what would have happened if the Huskies trampoline team had been up to par?

And, as promised beforehand, Huskie coach Don Von Ebers was pleased, almost as pleased as his team, which gave him a shower after the meet too. That's the first time that's happened since Hersey won the state title two years back.

This season was almost as satisfying as that. The Huskies weren't expected to do well, but paced by Dan Muenz, who was as tough as a piece of raw meat the whole tournament, they ended up second.

"Hersey was the underdog, really, but all of the kids did a heckuva job," said Von Ebers. "They deserve every bit of credit they get."

WHAT OF THE REST of the field? Oak Park was happy with the third-place trophy and the school's best finish ever in the state meet. Lyons, which had a rough preliminaries too, was fifth, and Addison Trail was sixth. Said coach Fred Dennis of Addison: "I wasn't happy with yesterday [the preliminaries], but I'm happy with the season."

Which brings us back to Hinsdale Central. Krupicka and his team have gone through a lot this season, periods of trauma when Grigas was hurt, periods of unsurety while the team fought to find itself, perhaps periods

STATE GYMNASTICS TOURNAMENT

Table of Points	
Hinsdale Central.....150.71	Elk Grove.....145.91
Hersey.....147.78	Lyons.....147.74
Oak Park.....146.97	Addison Trail.....140.32
Individual Results	
FREE EXERCISE — 1. Les Moore, Rich Central, 8.85; 2. Mark Goodson, Glenbard South, 8.45; 3. Gene Christensen, Elk Grove, 8.6; 4. Greg Weatherby, Homewood-Flossmoor, 8.55; 5. Craig Martin, Maine South, 8.5. SIDE HORSE — 1. Tim Connelly, Elk Grove, 8.1; 2. Dave Stoldt, Hinsdale Central, 8.65; 3. Ie. Bob Powers, Addison Trail, Craig Martin, Maine South, 8.5; 5. Iie. Doug Smdl, Fremd, Dan Muenz, Hersey, Breck Grigas, Hinsdale Central, 8.4. HIGH BAR — 1. Keith Liszewski, Rolling Meadows, 9.0; 2. Dan Muenz, Hersey, 8.9; 3. Craig Martin, Maine South, 8.8; 4. Gene Christensen, Elk Grove, 8.6; 5. Doug Zahaur, Prospect, 8.55. TRAMPOLINE — 1. Kevin Costans, Hinsdale South, 9.05; 2. Brian Avery, New Trier East, 8.85; 3. Ron Stefani, York, 8.6; 4. Dennis Orsog, Thornwood, 8.55; 5. Iie, Frank Criler, Maine East, Randy Berman, Niles North, 8.45. PARALLEL BARS — 1. Iie, Jim Tanagev, Prospect, Craig Martin, Maine South, 8.75; 3. Breck Grigas, Hinsdale Central, 8.65; 4. Dan Muenz, Hersey, 8.6; 5. Dewey Deal, Buffalo Grove, 8.5. STILL RINGS — 1. Pete Velguth, Hinsdale Central, 9.15; 2. Paul Fisher, Niles West, 9.1; 3. Breck Grigas, Hinsdale Central, 9.0; 4. Iie, Tom Stolev, Arlington, Dale Brungaber, Wheeling, 8.7. ALL-AROUND — 1. Craig Martin, Maine South, 8.57 average; 2. Breck Grigas, Hinsdale Central, 8.51 avg.; 3. Dan Muenz, Hersey, 8.38 avg.; 4. Gene Christensen, Elk Grove, 8.1 avg.; 5. Dan Osborn, Oak Park, 7.72 avg.	

of doubt after a dual-meet loss to Oak Park. But Saturday night they were home again.

You can thank Grigas, Velguth, Stoldt, Rick Harris, Bill Robertson, Mike Faletti, Brad Jeffries, Charlie Harrison, Bill Srch, Ron Herber, Jim Libby, and Mike Bing, each and every one, for that. And boy, it's great.

"Everyone was really pleased," Grigas said. "We did a really good job. No complaints."

"I CAN REMEMBER other years when I went to the state championship," Velguth said, "and people from other schools ripped down Hinsdale Central posters. That kind of stuff, where everybody is against you and you win anyway, that's a good feeling."