

Sports



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Our Athletes

Class L Champions

Lady Knight gymnasts regain state title

By JOHN GORALSKI
SPORTS WRITER

Stephanie Kiback huddled with Rebecca Mirando and Katelyn Hyde at the edge of the Pomperaug gym, discussing strategy and teamwork at the start of the Class L championships. Two were Southington co-captains, and one was along for the ride. With Coach Byron Knox called to other coaching responsibilities, the three girl 'think tank' was essentially running the show.

Gymnastics

Knox said that the girls were prepared for his absence, and he had confidence in the three upperclassmen.

"All week, I was giving the girls constructive criticism at the end of their workout rather than during the course of the workout," Knox said. "If they were going to vault, I gave them feedback when vaulting was done. I wanted them to use their head and start to think and feel more about the correction than depending on the videotape, which is me."

Kiback, the third-ranked gymnast going into the upcoming state open was assisting her father, the interim coach for Knox. As a gym-



Year	Score
2005	*151.525
2006	147.100
2007	150.425
2008	141.550
2010	137.725

*State record

nast, she had no reason to make the trip. As an individual without a team that travels and trains alongside the Southington girls, she wouldn't have missed it.

"These girls are my family," she said. "I've traveled with them all season. The reason why I'm allowed to do gymnastics is because I'm allowed to shadow them. I believe that it's my job to step in and help them because they're always helping me out."

On Saturday, Feb. 27, the top-

ranked Knights returned to the top of their division, winning their sixth Class L championship in five years and first since dropping to fourth place in last year's competition. The Southington dynasty is back, but this time it's different. No longer packed with club-level gymnasts, the Knights worked harder than ever.

The banged up upperclassmen contributed in as many events as they could, relying on youth and inexperience for all-around scores. It was a recipe for success that should quiet critics.

"We only have two girls on the CATS team, and all the rest of them are from other gyms or just high school," said junior co-captain Katelyn Hyde. "This really is a true high school team more than anything. We're in the gym with high school more than we are with any club gymnastics or anything else."

Freshman Olivia Morrell was the only Lady Knight to contribute four scores to the team title. She led the Knights on vault (8.9), bars (8.925), beam (9.0), and floor (8.8). The only other four-event competitor was freshman Toni Penta. She tied for first on bars (8.925), placed second on floor (8.75), and fourth on vault (8.65). Rachel Wrinn scored

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VINNY ROSSITTO

Katelyn Hyde performs on beam at the 2010 Class L championships at Pomperaug High School on Saturday, Feb. 27. See more photos, page 18.

Pennies from Heaven

UNICO steps in to sponsor Unified Sports

By JOHN GORALSKI
SPORTS WRITER

Around Thanksgiving, Marguerite Maddalena was strolling through the high school hallways when she saw Carrie Miranda and Denise Ingriselli running at her as if they'd won the lottery. The three had been working tirelessly to try to secure funds for their fledgling Unified Sports program, so it was nice to see them so happy.

I'm very proud of UNICO. I think they stepped up big-time. Kudos to our members. This is something we can look forward to doing for years.



Ron Ingriselli,
Local businessman, UNICO member



JOHN GORALSKI

Members of UNICO presented the Southington High School Unified Sports team with a \$3500 check on Wednesday, Feb. 24.

Unified Sports

"You're not going to believe this," Miranda exclaimed.

"We got another donation?" Maddalena asked.

"Better," was the reply. "They want to sponsor you."

"I got chills," said Maddalena as she recalls that bright November day. "I was so excited that I started hugging people."

At a time when purse

strings draw tighter and grant monies are rare, Maddalena never expected such a big gesture for her Unified Sports program. But UNICO, an Italian American service organization dedicated to mental health causes, was listening to her program's needs. They jumped at the chance to help.

UNICO had heard about her program's financial struggles, and they had volunteered to support the

program 100 percent.

On Wednesday, Feb. 24, members of UNICO gathered in the high school gym to present a giant check to cover all the team's expenses and watch as some of Southington's most special athletes competed in a basketball scrimmage to prepare for an upcoming tournament.

"To see how excited these kids get makes it all worthwhile," said UNICO Assistant Treasurer Mike

Fasulo. "We are always looking for something major to do, and we have a strong commitment to mental health. When this came along, we knew it was a perfect fit. Why not fund the whole thing?"

Nobody at the school expected such an enthusiastic response. With no money in the school budget, Maddalena was forced to petition the CIAC for funds just to pay for a team bus last fall. She and her staff spent the following

weeks writing grant proposals and mailing letters to local businesses hoping to fundraise for future events.

Denise Ingriselli, a paraprofessional at the high school, brought the letter to her husband, Ron, and that set a train in motion. Ron Ingriselli, a local carpenter and member of UNICO, brought the letter to the November meeting. The Ingrisellis were surprised by the overwhelming response.

"When they said that

they would fund whatever we needed, I was amazed," said Denise. "I thought it would be just a couple of hundred dollars to pay for a bus or some other expenses. They wanted to fund the whole program."

In the ceremony last week, UNICO members gathered to share a \$3,500 donation and assert a pledge to support the program for the years to come.

"They've offered to

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