



Athletes of the Week



Katelyn Hyde

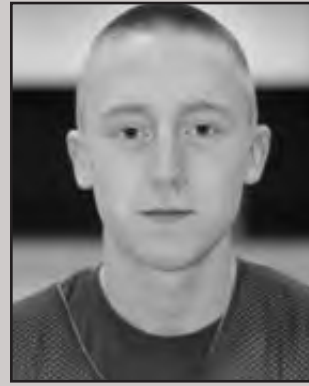
Southington High School gymnastics

Class: Junior
Reason: Scored in three out of four events and led by example at the Class L championship.

Katelyn Hyde leapt toward the ceiling at the Class L championships and landed firmly on a four-inch beam. She twisted, tumbled, and turned with the balance of a cat on a fence. It was no problem. The entire meet was a balancing act of sorts. Hyde balanced her roles as gymnast, leader, captain, and cheerleader. She did it with perfection, and the Knights came away with the title. "Team leadership is 25

percent of what is going on out on the floor," said Lady Knight coach Byron Knox. "It's team morale and cheering. If you start training inspired, it only helps your performance when you compete." With their coach absent from the meet due to other coaching duties, Hyde's responsibilities became even more important. She finished second on the team on beam (8.65) and vault (8.7), and finished fourth on floor (8.6), but Hyde's contribution goes

way beyond her numbers. She was sick all week, but Hyde is used to fighting through adversity. She's been battling back from injury all season. "She wasn't even sure if she was going to be able to compete this year," said Knox. "We told her it was one step at a time. It's a week at a time, a meet at a time, and I knew she'd be great." *For her outstanding athletic accomplishments and leadership, Hyde is our female athlete of the week.*



Jordan Lamson

Southington High School boys basketball

Class: Senior
Reason: Scored 14 points in the first round of the CCC tournament with two three-pointers to start the game.

Jordan Lamson's first shot looped in a perfect arc and landed with a swoosh. When New Britain answered with a three-pointer of their own, Lamson responded with his second long-range jumper. The next time down the court, there were two players. hands in Lamson's face. In the first minute of the game, Lamson's hot shooting had New Britain scrambling on defense to battle the unexpected

threat. "It was huge for us," said Blue Knight coach Bob Lasbury. "Jordan's kind of like the Unknown Soldier. He's one heck of a player. He makes some real highlight plays at times, and that completely eliminated their ability to play a triangle-and-two." Lamson set the pace for the Knights' first post-season contest, but Lasbury said that Lamson has been a big key for the Knights all season. Known for his defense, Lamson

has moments of brilliance on the offensive end. "I think he's a tremendous example of what hard work and effort will bring about," Lasbury said about Lamson's rise from role player to starter. "He makes some really spectacular plays. He's very quiet. [Tyler] Dube and [Nick] DeFeo make the highlight plays, but he sneaks one in there every so often, too." *For his outstanding athletic accomplishments, Lamson is our highlighted male athlete of the week.*

TOP FEMALE PERFORMANCES

- **Olivia Morrell, SHS gymnastics team:** Led the Knights on vault (8.9), bars (8.925), beam (9.0), and floor (8.8) at the Class L championship meet.
- **Toni Penta, SHS gymnastics team:** Tied for first in team scoring on the bars (8.925) and scored on vault and floor at the Class L championship meet.

TOP MALE PERFORMANCES

- **John Gradante, Hall-Southington ice hockey team:** Collected 80 saves in two games last week, including 44 saves in the season finale against Conard on Feb. 27.
- **Tyler Dube, SHS boys basketball team:** Scored 17 points with 5 assists in a 69-64 loss to New Britain in the first round of the CCC tournament on Feb. 25.

Gymnastics: 2010 Class L champions

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on bars (7.95) and Cassidy Chamberland scored on bars (7.9) and beam (8.35). Mirando and Hyde did their part. They tied for second place on vault (8.7). Hyde (8.65) edged Mirando (8.25) on beam. Mirando (8.7) edged Hyde on floor (8.6). As a team, the Knights led the meet on vault (34.95) and bars (33.7). Southington dropped to third place on beam (34.25) and entered the floor competition trailing New Milford by 0.2 points. That's when the 'think tank' stepped in to give last-minute advice. "I told the girls that it's just that one extra head swing or smiling at the judge," said Kiback. "They are tired at the end of the day, so they just want to get us through. If you cheer loud and do well, they'll give you

the score we want. I think we were very good at that." Mirando said that she wasn't aware of how close the score was, but knew that the Knights had to perform on floor. "I told the girls that we needed to show off everything with tight form, land everything, and that's about all I knew," she said. "I didn't know how much we needed, but I knew it was close." Chamberland danced into the corner to a crowd of cheering teammates, turned to judges and flashed a smile. Penta attacked the mat with her power, spinning in corkscrew flips and tumbles. Morrell countered with finesse, sliding across the floor like a ballerina to clinch the victory. Unaware of the final result, Mirando and Hyde scored even higher. Then the girls huddled by the podium to await the final verdict.

"We actually were saying, 'We lost states. It's really close. I don't know if we made it,'" said Mirando. "And then when [New Milford] got called for second we kind of screamed a little bit. We actually did do it." The Knights scored 137.725 out of 140 possible points. It was far from the state record (151.525) set by the Knights in 2005, but it was enough to edge New Milford (136.675) for the Class L title. For the fifth time in six years, Southington earned the title. "Early on in the season, this was the goal," said Knox. "We knew we could win it. We didn't know what else was out there, but we knew that we'd work hard enough to make them chase us this year." Hyde broke from the podium in a sprint to celebrate with Kiback at the far end of the gym.

"I said that it was just as much hers as it was ours," said Hyde. "She helps us through a lot. She's always there by Byron's side in the gym, and she knows what she's talking about. She helped us through today." Knox hopes to carry the momentum into the state open competition in New Milford on Saturday, March 6. "The idea for all of the teams is to place in the top two and advance, but our goal is to win," said the coach. "We want to show everybody that we were as dominant all year long as we expect ourselves to be in the postseason. This is all post-season play, now. It is, in effect, one and done. It's all about placement." *To comment on this story or to contact sports writer John Goralski, email him at jgoralski@southingtonobserver.com.*

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