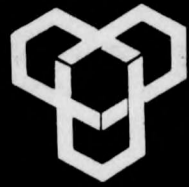




SPORTS



Rookie leads York gymnasts to OWIAA title

by Josh Rubin

The Yeowomen gymnastics squad has edged out McMaster to take their fourth provincial title in the past five years.

The York contingent won by the narrowest of margins, squeaking past with 6/100 of a point more than the Marauders.

The Yeowomen were led by first-year physical education major Trista Bernier, who finished seventh in the all-round competition with 34.7 points.

Bernier also paved the way for York in Sunday's event finals, as she took gold in both the vault and uneven bars competitions.

Bernier, who has competed at the provincial club level, was happy with her performance, despite having finished as high as second all-round at earlier meets this season.

"I needed the [provincial championship] to bring me down, but now I'm hoping to do well at the nationals," said the North Bay native.

After having what some observers describe as their worst meet all season, the Yeowomen sat in stunned silence as Saturday's team scores were announced.

The meet took place at Queen's during reading week and had five teams competing, including Western, Uoft T and the host Golden Gaels as well as McMaster and the Yeowomen.

After the competition, York head coach Natasa Bajin said the results were proof of the strength of the York program.

"We're so strong, that even if we have a bad day, we can still win,"

Bajin said. "We still didn't expect it to be this close."

But not everything was positive, as team captain Becky Chambers found out the hard way.

While going through her floor routine Saturday evening, Chambers twisted her foot as she neared the edge of the platform. With a sickening tear and pop, Chambers had broken a bone in her foot.

Although Chambers is expected to recover in time for mid-March's National University Cup at York, the injury seemed to deflate team spirits somewhat.

Another athlete who will be nursing an injury for some time was last year's all-round champion, Cynthia Facchinato.

The Queen's gymnast suffered a similar fate to Chambers', spraining her ankle during the floor competition.

One source suggested that both Chambers' and Facchinato's injuries were preventable.

"Both of them were concentrating on not going off the edge of the floor surface. If they [the meet directors] had marked the boundaries properly, the girls wouldn't have been hurt," said the source.

Chambers' injury also proved to be the source of some controversy.

With the top eight competitors in Saturday's preliminary qualified for the event finals, Natasa Bajin argued she should have been allowed to substitute for Chambers, who took eighth in the floor routine despite her fall.

But meet organizers stood tough, saying OWIAA rules are explicit in



YOUNG 'UN: York gymnast Heidi Clark goes through her floor routine at last week's OWIAA championships. Though she didn't qualify for any of Sunday's event finals, the diminutive 18 year old is expected to figure

heavily into the Yeowomen's plans in upcoming seasons. Trista Bernier, another York rookie, captured 7th all-round to lead the team to yet another provincial title.

disallowing substitutions for the finals.

That stance was echoed by McMaster coach Kevin Eby, who added Bajin had "been in a [OWIAA coaches'] meeting five hours ago, and she understood it when we went

over the rules."

Notwithstanding the dispute, the Yeowomen are expected to do well (as are the Yeomen), when the national championship takes place at Tait McKenzie March 15 and 16. Canadian gymnastics star Curtis

Hibbert, who trains here at York, will be on hand to give an exhibition performance.

Tickets for both the Friday and Saturday portion of the meet can be obtained by calling 736-5183, and can also be purchased at the door.

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