

Phoenixville makes short trip to nationals

GYMNASTICS

By DENNY DYROFF

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WEST BRADFORD - For years, the top competitors from the Phoenixville YMCA Gymnastics Team have put the finishing touches on their seasons with road trips. Each year in late June, they hit the road to compete in the YMCA Gymnastics National Championships.

This year was different for the members of the Phoenixville YMCA team. There was no road trip - unless a quick drive to the United Sports Training Center in Downingtown constitutes a road trip. For the first time ever, the Phoenixville YMCA is serving as the host team for the huge national championship meet - a meet that has drawn several thousand competitors from all over America.

"It's cool because we get to see the behind-the-scenes part of a big meet like this," said Phoenixville Y's Gwen Alvord, who qualified for the finals in Level 9 competition at this week's meet. "It's different because at Nationals we usually stay in hotels and hang out as a team a lot. We've had trips to a lot of very different places including Niagara Falls, Seattle, Sheboygan and Savannah."

"This year, we get to go home and sleep in our own beds. And, being the host team, we feel like celebrities. At the big march-in during the opening ceremonies, we got to march in last because we're the home team."

Her teammate Lindsay Beatty said, "There is a little extra pressure on us because you want to do well when you're representing the host

team. We want to have someone in finals in as many competitions as possible."

Alvord and Beatty along with their teammates Rebekah Heverly and Lauren Terstappen all performed well enough in Thursday's session to qualify for Friday's Level 9 finals. Ironically, three of the four - Alvord, Heverly and Terstappen - all competed in track and field at the high school level.

"This was my ninth time to compete in Nationals - for gymnastics," said Terstappen, who finished sixth in the 110-meter hurdles and ninth in pole vault at this year's PIAA Class AAA Track and Field Championships as a Phoenixville High junior. "I also competed in the high school track and field Nationals this summer."

"My best event here on the first day was floor. It was still my best in the finals but I definitely improved on bars and vault today. In vault, I did a half/one-and-one-half and scored well."

Heverly, who was a sprinter for Owen J. Roberts' track team in the spring, also felt floor was her best event at this year's Nationals.

"I did well on floor yesterday," said Heverly, who is headed to the Indiana University of Pennsylvania in the fall. "Today was good too. I got an 8.8 - not my best but decent. My best pass was a front handspring/front layout."

Phoenixville YMCA gymnasts also fared well in the Level 8 competition with five girls earning berths in today's finals - Jania Mackenthun, Julia Jacobson, Candice Hilliard, Katie Clare and Maddie Benner. The team's top performer was Macken-

thun, who had the top floor score in her session (9.45) and the third-best overall score in the event.

"I was happy with my floor routine," said Mackenthun. "My coach and I worked together on choosing the music. We go toward gracefulness. I studied ballet for four years when I was younger. So, I'd say my floor routine is graceful rather than powerful."

Jacobson, who had the best beam score during her session and the third-best floor score, said, "Floor was my best event here at this meet. My scores weren't my highest ever but they were still good."

Benner, who had the top beam score in her session, said, "I had a 34.325 all around Thursday and that was close to my best ever. Floor was probably my best event. I scored a 9.35 and that's close to my best. I was really happy with my front handspring/front layout."

