Women's Gymnastics Sets New Record Three Times

by Catherine Garrett

The women's gymnastics team opened its 1994-95 season with three record-breaking competitions in a row.

At the season opener meet on Dec. 3 against Division I rival Rhode Island, College, host team MIT's score of 166.05 to RIC's 165.63 set a new mark and took the team two places ahead the previous record by over 3 points.

The first two meets in 1995 have continued along this trend as MIT beat Springfield College, Jan. 11 and scored 170.2 to SC's 172.875, breaking the team record set on Jan. 11.

The team's first away meet on Jan. 14 was a tri-meet against host team Yale University along with Brown University. The women scored yet another record-breaking team score there totaling 170.525 to Brown's 174.3 and Yale's 180.5.

The strength that two new members, Michelle Miles '98 and Ali Christenson '96, have added to the team was evident at the first meet against RIC where Miles and Christenson both performed full-twisting vaults for respective scores of 8.4 and 8.55.

Team Captain Janet Sollod '96 also landed a handspring full-twist dismount for an 8.55 while Valentina Sequi also landed a handspring full-twist and tenson both performed full-twisting layouts in their last tumbling runs for scores of 8.4 and 8.7, respectively.

The floor exercise provided an exciting conclusion to the meet as MIT was able to lead the competition, after reconstructive surgery on her back, assistant captain Jan Assenza '97 lent her support to the squad scoring an 8.75 with her 1/2 on the floor.

Returning All-American Tasi Chiarenza '97 returned to competition, after reconstructive surgery on her back last spring. The floor performance was in grand style, scoring an 8.75 for her giant full-twisting pummel horse and slider handstand to take first place overall in the event. Chiarenza also had a solid routine, earning an 8.2 for a routine that finished with a layout full-twisting dismount, which she executed successfully over the event.

The balance beam competition proved to be the Engineers' strongest event as they took the top four spots among the squad. Chiarenza and Sollod both shone with their aggressive tees, jumps, and acrobatic skills for respective scores of 8.4 and 8.65 while Miles and Christenson both finished All-American Sheila Rocchio '97 were the team's top performers on the event with scores of 8.75 and 8.7, respectively.

The floor exercise highlighted yet another solid performance by Dow, who earned an 8.0 for her routine that was creatively done while Miles and Christenson each improved their scores for respective marks of 8.6 and 8.75.

Sollod's graceful dance to classical music, contrasted with strong acrobatic tumbling, earned her a 9.0. Christenson was again the top performer of the meet, as she landed another powerful double back somersault for a score of 9.3.

Rocchio, Christenson, and Sollod were 1-2-3 in the all-around placings with their total scores of 35.6, 34.5, and 33.8, respectively.

Gymnasts maintain momentum

Up against the two Division I teams of Yale and Brown, the Engineers did not lose momentum.

Stephanie Shaw '95 and Dow led off the meet with solid performances on the vault, earning 7.35 and 7.85, respectively. Miles and Sollod added scores of 8.6 and 8.65 for their performances that featured full-twists. Christenson and Rocchio were the top vaulters for MIT earning 8.75 and 8.9, despite a low landing for Rocchio.

The uneven bars showcased the skills of MIT's top four all-arounders as Miles, Sollod, Christenson, and Rocchio each performed well despite a few problems with 1-1/2 somersault dismounts for scores of 8.25, 8.35, 8.4, and 8.45, respectively.

On the balance beam, Chiarenza had a nice beam routine despite a fall on a twisting jump, for a score of 8.0. Miles, Sollod, and Rocchio had excellent routines for scores of 8.7, 8.8, and 8.85, respectively. Christenson landed her roundoff-back handspring routine and stuck her best routine of the season for the team's top score of 8.95.

Shaw and Dow's floor exercise scores of 8.75 and 8.05 led off the Engineer's final event of the competition. Miles and Christenson added their top scores of 8.75 and 8.75 to the team total.

Sollod and Rocchio were again the top two for MIT as Sollod earned and 8.8 and Rocchio scored a 9.2.

Overall, Sollod had her best ever all-around total of 34.6 while Rocchio's 35.4, Christenson's 34.85, and Miles' 34.125 helped MIT to its third consecutive record-breaking team.

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