

Fort gymnasts face jitters in early season meets

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If the key to victory is improvement over time, the girls of the Fort Saskatchewan Gymnastics Club are on their way to success.

The club members made their way to a pair of tournaments in January, and they've already shown that great strides can be made in a short time, with ribbons and medals already coming to the team.

On Jan. 14-15, the team was at the St. Albert Winter Flip Tournament, the first of the fledgling season.

The Fort club sent seven competitors to the event, but head coach Leanne Cameron admitted the team showed a measure of early season jitters.

The following weekend, five of the team members headed into Edmonton to the Capital City Gym Power tournament to try and improve upon their scores, something the 3 returning competitors did with style.

Grace Lacoursiere, a P2 Tyro; Kayla Sloman, a P2 Open; and Meigen Smith, a P2 Novice, all moved into new competition and age groups this year.

Returning competitors Kaitlyn Krauskopf and Carly Mak moved into a new age group as P1 Novices, but chose not to advance to the P2 level

Joining them on the team this year are Madison Bossert, a P1 argo; Katelyn Carson, a P2 Open competitor returning to the club after time spent competing for St. Albert; Cierra Plamondon, who joins Krauskopf and Mak in the thinly populated P1 Novice category; and Rayleen Sloman, the groups' sole P1 Tyro.

Of the competitors who attended both events, perhaps the most improvement came from Krauskopf, who ranked fourth overall (out of four) at the St. Albert event but moved to third (of six) in Edmonton.

While she grabbed gold on the vault in St. Albert, Krauskopf's big improvement came courtesy of her parallel bars and floor scores.

In one week, Krauskopf improved her bars score from a 9.75 to an 11.1 out of 13 and her floor score from a 10.5 to an 11.65, which was good for Krauskopf's second gold of her gymnastics career.

"The only change was that it was tighter and cleaner," Cameron said of the two events.

"It was beautiful," she added of Krauskopf's floor routine. "It was how I know she can do it."

Also showing improvement was Lacoursiere, who faced stiffer competition at each event with 22 in her group.

She improved her vault score from an 11.6 to an 11.85, a mere 0.1 off the eighth place ribbon, and she brought her parallel bars score up from an 8.25 to a 10.53.

Cameron explained Lacoursiere seemed nervous in her first P2 competition in St. Albert, leading to three falls, worth one point docked from her score each.

Again, Lacoursiere showed vast improvement on her beam routine, moving from an 8.9 up to a 10.73.

Cameron noted the gymnast fell off the beam in each competition, but the Edmonton event saw her complete both a cartwheel and a back walkover, which added to her score.

Lacoursiere also improved her floor score. moving from a 10.6 up to a 12, her best score ever and good for a

seventh place ribbon.

Overall, she moved from 21st of 22 in St. Albert to 15th of 22 in Edmonton. With that rate of improvement, Cameron commented Lacoursiere should be well on her way to doing well at the zone qualifier later this year, as the top 12 competitors will move on to provincials.

Also improving, but showing nerves on one event, was Smith, who had an equal 11.6 at both events on the vault but improved her bars score from 10.3 to 11.2.

The trouble for Smith came on the beam at both events, with nervousness leading to falls and forgetfulness at each event.

The performance left her shaken on her floor routine, but Cameron said potential areas of improvement were discussed with the judge, which should lead to better scores in future competitions.

Cameron spoke well of all her competition team, noting the newest faces had impressed, with Bossert claiming a fourth place ribbon on the bars and Rayleen Sloman grabbing ribbons on the vault and beam, both in St. Albert, their first ever competitive meet.

Kayla Sloman was once again in a small group, but found herself nervous and disappointed in St. Albert at her first P2 event, ranking fifth overall

For Mak, the St. Albert event showed her skills have increased since last year, as she grabbed second with her floor and vault routines along with bronze medals on the bars and beam.

"She's come a long way," Cameron said, adding Mak was "thrilled" to rank second overall in her category.

In Edmonton, Carson proved she hadn't gotten rusty in her time away from the Fort, as she ranked second in all the events except on the floor, which saw her 11.95 score be good for third.

Cameron noted the P2 Open category had only four competitors, and one girl claimed first in all four events although Carson's 12.35 on the vault was only 0.05 points off the gold ranking.

Finally, Plamondon also had a good showing, ranking fourth of six in her age group and taking a bronze with her bars routine.

"I'm happy with all of them," Cameron said, "Especially with the improvement from the first meet to the second.

"They worked really hard. They all got over their first time jitters."

Next up for the team is the Mardi Gras meet at Sherwood Park's Salto club on Feb. 17-19.

The event will see all of the club's precompetition members and most of the competitive team out to show their skills.

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