

The Daily Tribune News

May 19, 2009

SPORTS

Twisters Level 3 wins title in Winder

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Sports Editor

Tuesday, May 19, 2009



Members of the state champion Level 3 Cartersville Twisters include, from left, (front row) Ashley Watkins, Lily Overton, Lexi Taylor, Haley Shook, Amber Seymour, Zoë Bryson, (back row) Gillian Ballard, Rachel Hawkins, Madison Mills, Abbey Michalke and Ryanne Ritch. CHRIS STEPHENS/chris.stephens@daily-tribune.com

When it comes to making a "State-ment," the Cartersville Twisters gymnastic team seems to know what it's doing on every level. And, the same goes for the Level 3 team, which won the state team title for the first time in Level 3 team history in Winder April 18-19.

"We're definitely proud of the girls," said coach Louiza Kouznetsov. "They pulled through this year, after finishing second last year at the state meet."

The Level 3 team, also coached by Alexander Stetsenko, won all of its meets entering the state competition, but remembered it had done the same the year before, in which it ended the season second at state.

"It was heart-breaking last year," many of the parents said.

To go along with the team state title, many of the girls won individual state titles. Winning individual all-around titles were Rachel Hawkins, Abbey Michalke, Madison Mills, Lily Overton and Ryanne Ritch. On vault, Hawkins, Michalke, Mills and Ritch won titles. On the uneven bars, Hawkins, Mills, Ritch, Gillian Ballard and Zoe Bryson won titles. On the balance beam, Hawkins, Overton and Ritch were victorious in their age groups. And, on floor exercise, Mills, Overton and Amber Seymour won titles.

"We had a lot of girls do well," Kouznetsov said. "And, the girls who didn't win an individual title, they didn't care. They were excited that their teammates had won."

During the competition, many of the parents said they had no idea what the team or individual scores were, due to the scoreboard being out.

"We'd be whispering down to the coaches asking what the score was or try to listen in on what the judges were saying," said Michalke's mom, Nicole.

As if that wasn't enough, the team scores weren't announced until the very end of the competition.

"It was torture for both the coaches and parents," Kouznetsov said. "They started with 24th place and worked their way up."

As the announcer was announced the team scores, the coaches, parents and players held on tight for what they hoped was a state title. Then, the second-place team was announced, and it wasn't the Twisters.

"We knew that the state title was ours," Kouznetsov said. "We started screaming because they didn't call our name for second and we realized we finished first. It was definitely a proud moment for us."

Many of the parents in attendance at Tuesday's practice said they didn't think the team title would be possible without the coaching. They added the Twisters' coaches are different from any other gym of which they've been a part.

"It's all about the coaching," members of the group said. "They're all about the details and you don't see the goofing off during practice. They get down to business and don't waste a minute."

So, what's next for these Level 3 state champions? The focus now turns to Level 4 and preparing themselves to bring home a state title at that level next year.

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