

Four returning state champions

lead the field into 29th state finals

Led by 2000 all-around state champion Shellen Goltz, every event will have the defending champion back for another title quest Saturday (March 17) in the 29th Annual IHSAA Girls Gymnastics State Finals at Perry Meridian High School in Indianapolis.

Also back is reigning state champion Chesterton, which took runner-up honors in last week's Valparaiso Regional. For the second year, the state finals field includes eight teams. The four regional champions will be joined by the four regional runner-up teams.

Goltz, a senior from Homestead, took all-around honors at the 2000 state finals while winning the balance beam and finishing second in floor exercise and uneven bars.

The other event champions returning to defend their titles are junior Lisa Diederich of Crown Point in floor exercise, senior Elizabeth Minix of Fort Wayne Dwenger in vaulting and sophomore Nicole Howe of Columbus East in uneven bars.

Allyson Zipse, a freshman at Homestead, compiled the best all-around total in last week's regional competition at four sites with a 38.075 at Muncie Central. Howe captured three events and the all-around title at Columbus East with a 37.90. The other regional all-around winners were sophomores Christie Theissen of Plainfield (37.425) at the Harrison Regional and Lauren West of Chesterton (37.575) at the Valparaiso Regional.

Fort Wayne Dwenger recorded the highest team regional total with a 113.350 to win the Muncie Central Regional. The other regional champions were Columbus East (108.15) at Columbus East, Lawrence Central (110.475) at Harrison, and Merrillville (109.25) at Valparaiso.

2001 GIRLS GYMNASTICS STATE FINALS

March 17

Perry Meridian High School, 401 W. Meridian School Road, Indianapolis

12:30 p.m. -- Opening ceremonies

1 p.m. -- Competition begins.

Tickets: \$6.

Credentials: The 2000-01 IHSAA State Finals media pass will be honored.

Directions to Perry Meridian High School

From I-465 on the south side of Indianapolis, exit at the U.S. 31 interchange and go south to the first stoplight at Thompson Road. Turn right (west) on Thompson Road and follow one mile to Meridian Street. Turn left (south) on Meridian Street and follow three miles to Meridian School Road. Turn right (west) on Meridian School Road and follow four blocks to the school.