

VALPARAISO, THREE OTHER FORMER CHAMPIONS

MEET TO DECIDE 1998 STATE TITLE

Defending state champion Valparaiso bids for a record fifth state championship, while former state champions Columbus North, Fort Wayne Dwenger and North Central of Indianapolis all seek another title in the 26th IHSAA Girls Gymnastics State Finals Saturday (March 21) at Perry Meridian High School in Indianapolis.

Columbus North and Valparaiso each have advanced to the state finals for the eighth time each, while North Central is making its seventh appearance and Fort Wayne Dwenger its fourth.

Besides 1997, Valparaiso claimed state championships in 1981, 1991 and 1994. The only other schools with four state championships are Perry Meridian (1978, 1979, 1980, 1982) and Homestead (1983, 1984, 1985, 1996). Fort Wayne Dwenger was the state champion in 1995, and North Central claimed the crown in 1976 and 1977.

Fort Wayne Dwenger posted the best team score in regional competition last week with a 109.625 total to win the Homestead Regional. Valparaiso withstood a challenge from Porter County and Duneland Conference rival Chesterton to win the Valparaiso Regional by a 108.80 to 108.525 margin. North Central of Indianapolis successfully defended its regional crown at the North Central Regional.

Individually in regional competition, sophomore Ellison Tipton of Valparaiso posted the best all-around score with a 37.625 in winning the Valparaiso Regional. Tipton registered first-place finishes in floor exercise and balance beam to highlight her performance. Tipton was the state runner-up in all-around competition in 1997.

The other all-around regional champions were freshman Elizabeth Minix of Fort Wayne Dwenger, junior Kara Charnoski of North Central (Indianapolis) and senior Julie Houston of Columbus East.

A new state all-around winner is assured as 1997 champion Amanda Gwinnup of Lawrence North graduated. Besides Tipton, others from the 1997 all-around top six returning are Houston, junior Tiffany Stewart of Portage and sophomore Kristen Hines of Homestead.

The 1997 event champions were Aimee Melody of Valparaiso in floor exercise, Rachel Goldberg of North Central (Indianapolis) on balance beam, Heather Blevins of Blue River Valley in vaulting and Gwinnup on the uneven bars. Melody and Goldberg, both sophomores this season, have qualified to return to the state finals.

GIRLS GYMNASTICS STATE FINALS

March 21, 1 p.m.

Perry Meridian High School, 401 W. Meridian School Road, Indianapolis (four blocks west of 7700 South Meridian Street)

Tickets: \$6.

Credentials: Outlets may use 1998 IHSAA Winter Sports Pass. Outlets needing the pass should contact Jim Russell at IHSAA office. Approved requests will be left at Will Call at Perry Meridian High School.

REGIONAL RESULTS

March 13-14

| Site | Team Scores | All-Around Champion |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Columbus East | Columbus North 107.15, Connersville 106.25, Bloomington South 104.00, Rushville 94.40, Richmond 66.40, Jeffersonville forfeit. | Julie Houston, Columbus East, 37.00 |
| Marion | Fort Wayne Dwenger, 109.625, Homestead 109.25, Marion 100.725, DeKalb 100.60, Muncie Central 95.40, Jay County 93.95. | Elizabeth Minix, Fort Wayne Dwenger, 37.525. |
| North Central (Indpls.) | North Central (Indianapolis) 104.10, Plainfield 102.15, Harrison (West Lafayette) 93.725, Logansport 93.35, Western 92.45, Perry Meridian 91.85. | Kara Charnoski, North Central (Indianapolis), 35.80. |
| Valparaiso | Valparaiso 108.80, Chesterton 108.525, Hobart 104.95, Warsaw 93.90, Wawasee 90.25, Elkhart Central 87.20. | Ellison Tipton, Valparaiso, 37.625. |