

SPORTS

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2019 | sports@winonadailynews.com | SECTION B

HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASTICS



CRAIG JOHNSON, WINONA DAILY NEWS

Chloe Hughes elevates off the vault during Saturday's Big 9 Conference Championship Meet held at Winona Senior High School.

WInhawks step forward

WSHS fourth behind champion Owatonna

ALEX VANDENHOUTEN
Winona Daily News

Throughout the season Winona Senior High gymnastics coach Brittney Steine acknowledged the fact that there was going to be some growing pains at times for her young team that did not feature an upperclassmen, but she was confident they would put it together down the stretch.

On Saturday, the young Winhawks put a good first step forward to proving their coach right finishing fourth out of 11 teams with 132.45 points at the Big 9 Conference Gymnastics Championships in front of a packed

THE TOP 4

1. Owatonna, 144.175
2. Northfield, 141.75
3. Austin, 135.75
4. Winona, 132.45

house at the Winona Senior High Gymnasium.

Owatonna took first with 144.175 points followed by Northfield (141.75), Austin (135.75), and Winona.

According to Steine, it was the first time in at least 20-plus years the Winhawks had hosted the Big 9 Gymnastics Championships. After the boys basketball game ended Fri-

day night, it got off to a bit of a rocky start when the meet was postponed for an hour as officials determined the floor event was uneven and unsafe to start on.

But from there it was smooth sailing.

The Winhawks received another solid performance from sophomore Chloe Hughes.

She scored a 9.300 on the vault which wasn't good enough to podium, but she did leave one of the judges saying, "You don't see twisting like that too often." If she would have landed it clean she would have easily podiumed. But for Hughes, it's not about this week, it's about next week

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WINONA CO-OP NORDIC SKIING | ANNI SKILLICORN



BRUCE ADELSMAN, SKINNYSKI.COM

Winona High School sophomore Anni Skillicorn competes during Tuesday's Section 1 Nordic skiing sectional meet in Burnsville, Minn. Skillicorn won the sectional for the second season in a row.

Despite asthma, WSHS sophomore makes it to state again

ZACH JAMES
Winona Daily News

Winona Senior High School sophomore Anni Skillicorn was having trouble enjoying the sport she was so skilled at.

As an athlete who competes in cross country, track and field and Nordic skiing, Skillicorn had to deal with the challenges of asthma.

She's fought through those problems, and competing in skiing is much more enjoyable as Skillicorn and the Winona Senior High/Cotter nordic skiing girls co-op

will compete on Thursday at the MSHSL state meet in Biwabik, Minn.

Last season, Skillicorn wasn't getting the results she expected because of the asthma. She lost confidence due to the outcomes, and turned unhappy.

There were several goals Skillicorn set that weren't met, and that was hard for her to come to

terms with. If she failed to meet those, she wouldn't accomplish the big one — making the national Junior National team.

Skillicorn took a step back, stepped away from "the tunnel vision aspect of it," she said, and mapped out smaller goals that led to bigger goals, such as winning a state championship or returning to junior national squads.

The first goal was a big one — to not have an asthma attack during a race.

So, Skillicorn and her family went to an asthma specialist. The specialist gave Skillicorn breathing exercises to do when an attack was coming on.

The small stuff started to snowball into bigger goals.

"I had to take a step back and just look at different races and find small things that I'd want to do in each one, like cresting a hill better or cornering a scary down-hill or making sure that the last part of the race, I'm putting all my effort into it," Skillicorn said.

"Once I was able to break down the race in that way, I was able to just have fun in doing it and then

COMING WEDNESDAY

More on the boys' skiing team and why Cotter sophomore Grace Ping joined the co-op team.

just make sure I achieved that one small victory."

That led to a bounce-back season once she kept the "just have fun" mindset.

"One thing I really wanted to bring to the team was how to enjoy it again, because that was something I had to find," Skillicorn said. "Once I was able to step away from the number of a result, I was able to get back to where I needed to be mentally to perform at a high level."

Skillicorn's teammates appreciate the new mindset she brings to both the Winona boys and girls teams.

"Anni definitely works super hard at skiing and she's really dedicated at skiing," Cotter sophomore Grace Ping said.

STATE MEET

WHAT: MSHSL Nordic skiing state meet

WHEN: Thursday's schedule:

Boys races—10 a.m. (freestyle), 2 p.m. (classical);

girls races—11:15 a.m. (freestyle), 3 p.m. (classical)

WHERE: Giants Ridge, Biwabik, Minn.

Once the 2017-18 season ended, Skillicorn shifted her focus to qualifying for the national team.

In order to do that, Skillicorn competed over four weekends where there were

races on both Saturday and Sunday. Based on how she finished in those races — spoiler alert, she did well — her point total would

propel her to the national meet.

Please see SKIING, Page B2

NO. 9 MSU 79,
MINNESOTA 55

Gophers frozen in awe

Magic returns as part of title anniversary

LARRY LAGE
Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Magic Johnson was back at Michigan State, joining his teammates to celebrate the 40-year anniversary of winning the national championship.

The Hall of Famer and Los Angeles Lakers president had plenty of opportunities to flash his familiar smile.



Nick Ward had 22 points and Matt McQuaid scored a season-high 18, leading the ninth-ranked Spartans to a 79-55 win over Minnesota on Saturday to keep the festivities positive.

"That's why you come to places like this," McQuaid said. "This place is special."

The Spartans (19-5, 10-3 Big Ten) ended a three-game losing streak, their longest skid in two years.

Ward, in particular, started the game inspired and appeared to stay motivated to bounce back from his previous home game. He was 1 of 9 at the free throw line, including a miss that would have put his team ahead late in regulation, and the Spartans were 8 of 22 as a team in a 79-75 overtime loss to Indiana last Sunday.

"We've got to leave those games in the past and move forward," Ward said. "I just came out determined to do everything I could to win this game."

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UP NEXT

WHO: Minnesota at Nebraska

WHEN: 8 p.m. Wednesday

TV: BTN

NSIC BASKETBALL

WSU sweeps U-Mary in different ways

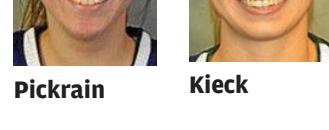
Warriors women grind; men cruise with 29-8 run

DAILY NEWS STAFF

The Winona State women's basketball team made its free-throw opportunities matter on Saturday.

The Warriors were a perfect 5-for-5 in the final 35 seconds to hold off the University of Mary squad in a 57-54 win on Saturday in McCown Gymnasium.

Warriors sophomore Allie Pickrain made four free throws and



Pickrain

Kieck

Emily Kieck made the fifth one. Those free throws were needed, too, as U-Mary's Emily Dvorak made a 3-pointer with 11 seconds remaining.

On the day, the Warriors were 13-for-15 from the stripe. The Marauders, meanwhile, were just

7-for-8.

Neither the Marauders nor the Warriors shot all that crisply from the floor. Both teams shot 39 percent, but Winona State made it matter from 3-point territory.

The Warriors made 8 of 19

3-pointers, but U-Mary made 3 of 21 3-point attempts.

Pickrain — who led with 22 points — and Kieck — she scored 21 points — both made four 3s. Pickrain made seven 3s in Friday's win over Minot State.

U-Mary had three players in double figures: Gabbie Bohl (11), Macy Williams (10) and Lexie Schneider (10).

UP NEXT

NEXT WEEKEND: at Sioux Falls on Friday, at SW Minnesota State on Saturday

BACK HOME: Feb. 22-23 vs. Concordia-St. Paul and MSU-Mankato

MEN

Winona State 84, U-Mary 56

The Warriors ended the first half and began the second half in

similar fashion.

Please see NSIC, Page B2



CHUCK MILLER, WINONA DAILY NEWS

Winona State's Allie Pickrain (2) takes a 3-point shot on Friday night during the Warriors' game against Minot State at McCown Gymnasium.