

Heritage's Atwell completes career sweep in vault, floor | Gymnastics

Britni Atwell became the first gymnast in the 45-year history of the state meet to win four straight titles in an event, and did it twice — in vault and floor.

By [Terry Wood](#)

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TACOMA — Britni Atwell of Vancouver's Heritage not only set the standard at Saturday's individual finals, she set a precedent — becoming the first gymnast in the state meet's 45-year history to win four straight individual event titles.

And, she did it twice: on vault and floor in Class 4A competition.

"I'm in awe, I guess," Atwell said with a laugh at the Tacoma Dome Exhibition Hall. "I don't know what else to say."

Six gymnasts have previously collected three individual crowns, most recently Kennedy Catholic's Anissa Madrid (with floor titles in 2004, '06 and '07). But Atwell, who Friday night also won the 4A all-around title, is the first to earn a grand slam.

"I wasn't aware I could be the first ever to do it all four years," Atwell said.

Pressure?

"Yeah," she said, "but as my coach says, I do well under pressure, so I didn't mind it."

Atwell nailed her vault (9.825, the day's highest score in any event) to claim her fourth straight vault crown outright. She had shared two of her past three floor wins, and this time edged Tia Thomas of Federal Way, an athlete who didn't pick up gymnastics until high school, 9.7 to 9.625.

Atwell's proudest moment?

"That I placed on bars, because bars are my worst event," she said with a smile. "And I got third!"

Heritage teammate Nicole Moss won 4A bars (9.675); Atwell scored 9.425.

Atwell, who hopes to compete for Seattle Pacific, was the day's only double winner. Candace Ho of Newport won the 4A beam with a 9.625 after being the first of 11 competitors to perform.

"They have a random draw for the order," Newport coach Melissa Baker said. "She told me, 'I hope I go first. Every time I do that, I do awesome.' When she got it I said, 'OK, let's see it.' She got up there and it was the most solid routine. She didn't wobble; just one little misstep on her dismount. She couldn't have done any better."

"It was perfect," said Ho, who placed second in Friday's all-around. "I just slow my mind down and focus on one skill at a time. I loved everything about it."

In 3A/2A, four top-five finishers in Friday's all-around picked up individual titles on Saturday.

Mia Alvarez of Highline, second to teammate Kristen Rodal in the all-around, claimed the floor title with a score of 9.625. Sophomore Nykaela Dodson of Sammamish, third in all-around, took the top medal for beam (9.525).

Junior Olivia Bannerot of 3A/2A team champion Enumclaw (fourth in all-around) took the bars crown with a 9.375. Kelsey Jaquish of Kamiakin, fifth in A-A, won vault (9.675), edging Bannerot and Alvarez, who tied for second at 9.625.

"I've been working really hard on bars this year," Bannerot said. "In the middle of the year I had a mental block on my release move, so it's cool that I got over it. Today wasn't my best bar day, but I'm not complaining. I'm not as flashy as all the other people, so I just try to keep it tight and clean."

Alvarez returned to prep gymnastics after devoting her junior year to club in order to up her skills and reach level 10. She'll resume club training.

"I'm kind of sad because I won't be seeing my high school teammates in the gym," she said. "I'm going to miss them. They're really supportive and always happy. You don't see that in club. Most of them are serious and hardly smile. I'm going to miss their smiles."

Notes

- Rodal took second on 3A/2A beam (9.5). Beyond her second on beam, Bannerot was also second on floor (9.55). Enumclaw teammate **Molly Mattheis** took third on bars (9.175) and tied with Alvarez for fifth on beam (9.4).

- In 4A, senior **Monica Church** of Jefferson took third on floor (9.55); **Rose Kibala** of Roosevelt and **Ashley Parnell** of Kentlake tied for fourth (9.5). Woodinville sophomore **Emily Paratore** and Ho tied for fourth on bars (9.375). **Julia Winter** of Bothell was fourth vault (9.55).