

# Following the lead of Brady's bunch

Khederian, Tigers show dominance.

**By DAVE MATTER of the Tribune's staff**

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Last night's meet had just ended when Missouri gymnast and Massachusetts native Ashley Khederian turned her attention to the weekend's next big event.

"Oh yeah, they're going to win. Patriots by 10," she proudly predicted in the Hearnese Center interview room, of course referring to the New England Patriots, tomorrow's Super Bowl XLII participant, who play their home games about 40 miles south of her hometown of Carlisle, Mass. "And then the Celtics are going to win it all, too."

In the style of her favorite football team, Khederian's 15th-ranked Tigers efficiently cruised through their latest challenge last night, getting the most out of its balanced and deep lineup to outscore Illinois-Chicago 195.40-190.50. In what Khederian called the team's most complete meet of the season, the Tigers (3-1) overcame a sluggish start to set its season-high score for the fourth consecutive meet.

"We put up 24 competitive routines and hit on all 24," Missouri Coach Rob Drass said. "That's what we want to do every time out. That's what we call the big thing. If we get the big thing right, then you can fine-tune ... and count just small errors and a step here and a step there."

The big thing for the Tigers of late has been their mastery of the balance beam. Last night was no exception as Danielle Guider, Sarah Shire and Adrienne Perry all earned season-high scores on the apparatus, including Perry's meet-best 9.9. Consistently the Tigers' most troublesome event last season, a revamped lineup and the addition of assistant coach Amy Smith have made for a dramatic turnaround on the beam. Last year, Drass didn't have a full-time assistant to coach the beam, relying instead on former MU gymnast Lauren Schwartzman.

"Amy has really pushed us a lot," said Alicia Hatcher, who finished third on the beam with a 9.775. "She's really fine-tuning everyone and pushing us to that next level, like a national-caliber team would."

Smith, a two-time All-American at UCLA in the late '90s, came to Missouri in the offseason after spending the last four years on Florida's coaching staff. With the Tigers, Smith has added weekly intrasquad competitions during practice to simulate the conditions and pressures of a weekend meet. Missouri came into last night's competition with the nation's 10th-ranked average beam score.

"Amy does a fantastic job of putting them under pressure sets, making them confident and helping them with internal dialogue so they're talking to themselves in their head as they're going through beam," Drass said. "There's a quiet calm over there, and when you can approach beam like that, good things will happen."



*Parker Eshelman photo*

Missouri redshirt freshman Brooke Boehmer dismounts from the balance beam last night during MU's 195.40-190.50 victory over Illinois-Chicago at the Hearnese Center.

"She's kind of a hard-ass," Khederian said, "just hounding us all the time. ... We practice under so much pressure, so you'll know what it feels like."

Smith's practice regimen paid off on the floor exercise, too, as the Tigers earned the top five scores of the night, led by Shire's 9.85. That clinched the second all-around title of the season for the Utah transfer, whose 39.375 all-around score marked a career-high. She edged teammate Perry (39.125) and Khederian (38.825) for the all-around honors.

Shire also had the night's best score on the uneven bars, scoring a season-best 9.875.

That helped boost Missouri's uncharacteristically slow start on the vault, the night's first rotation. Several Tigers had problems making a firm landing, resulting in season-low scores for four of the six entrants, including Perry, whose 9.575 was her lowest vault score in more than a year. Missouri's team score on the vault (48.60) was its lowest since March 2006.

Drass didn't seem too concerned. He said the judges' scores on the vault were tighter than usual, particularly tighter than last week's meet at Nebraska.

Freshman walk-on Lauren Stephenson won't need many repairs to her routine. In just her third official competition at MU, the Kansas City native nailed her attempt, scoring a career-best 9.8, enough to edge Shire and win the event.

"We get to see that vault in practice that we haven't seen in competition yet," Drass said. "She ignited the whole team and really energized them."