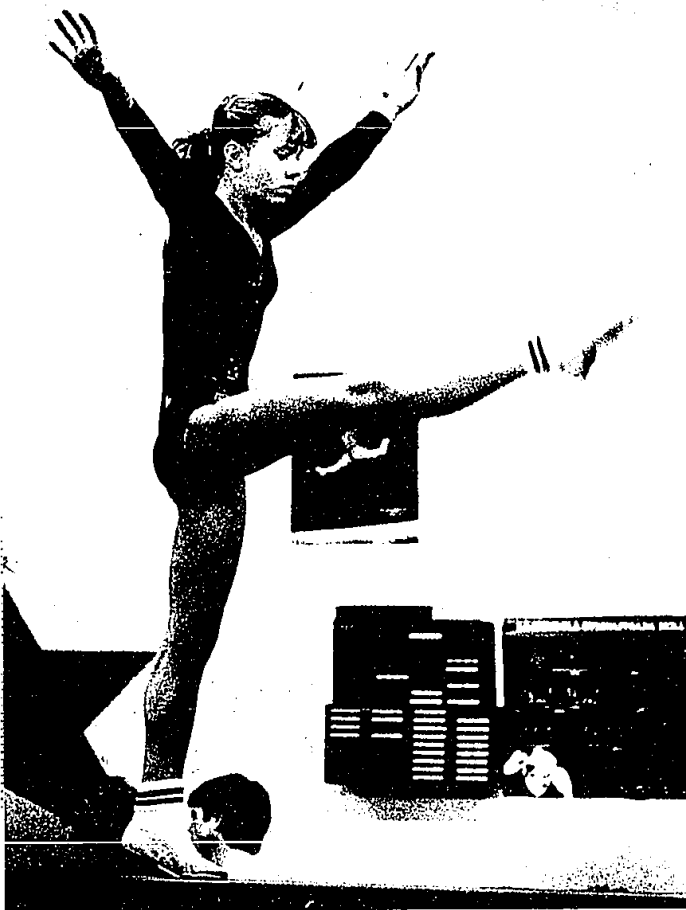


Hard work pays off for gymnast



Kristin LaFountain shows the form on balance beam which earned her a USGF championship this spring.

By Loraine McClish
staff writer

Kristin LaFountain walked away from the U.S. Gymnasts Federation (USGF) competition this spring with the title of Michigan State Champion and first-place awards in the events for beam, bar and floor performances in the Junior Division.

"We're very proud of Kristin, but not really surprised she is the new champion," said Dennis Spencer, her coach at Farmington Gymnastics Center.

"The first year she entered the Junior category she came in fifth place for all-around competition and she came in second for all-around last year. So she was considered a top contender just on past performances by the judges."

Spencer continued to say that the North Farmington High School student's win was no surprise to him because she works hard at everything she does.

"She gets straight A's in school and puts her heart and soul into everything she attempts."

All of the kids who work out here and are going to make it have to work hard. They all budget their time very closely. For most of them it's school, training, dinner, homework and bed, so as teen-agers they suffer socially to get out of it whatever they want," he said.

THE WHATEVER-they-want might be a medal, or a spot on the Olympic Team. For Kristin, it's a college scholarship.

"By the time she's ready for college she'll be able to pick and choose. She's already been approached by a couple of college coaches who've had their eye on her for several years," Spencer said of the ninth-grader.

'She gets straight A's in school and puts her heart and soul into everything she attempts.'

— Dennis Spencer
gymnastics coach

"This is not unusual," he said, naming Mary Kay Marshall and Ingrid Racka, both students at North Farmington who studied under Spencer and who will be picking and choosing a year or two before 14-year-old Kristin.

To get to that point, the gymnasts work out on an average of four hours a day, six days a week, and enter anywhere from 15-20 meets a year, either as individuals or on a team.

Most of the meets are in Michigan, though as the gymnast grows in proficiency, the travels extend to regional meets in the Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky areas; and from there anywhere and everywhere in the country for national competitions.

FARMINGTON Gymnastics Center, which Spencer opened four years ago, is now considered one of the top clubs in the United States.

To get that reputation, Spencer said, "You have to turn out a pretty hefty number of Class 1 players, consistently bring in top competitors to the meets and come home with a good number of awards."

So, as owner, operator and head coach at Farmington Gymnastics Center, Spencer is either coming or going to one meet after another with individ-

ual competitors or some part of his 60-member team.

"That's one of the benefits for the kids," Spencer said. "They can win as an individual or as team players, and I think that's partly what has made gymnastics the biggest girls' sport in the country; it appeals to both of those personalities."

Spencer, who holds a teacher's degree but has never taught in a formal classroom, considers his gym "an open classroom from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. where everything they learn here carries over to all facets of their lives."

The students in his gym classroom are from 2-18 years of age.

"They learn a lot more than gymnastics," he said. "They learn about exercise and strength and flexibility training which is all predicated on mental preparations, concentration and thought processes that are valuable in everything they will ever do in their lives," he said.

SPENCER is a graduate of North Farmington High School. He took the state championship that Kristin won this year in 1968.

While he was working toward his degree at Western Michigan University, he served as team captain for the school's men's gymnastics team and earned the all-league honors in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) competitions.

He worked as a high school and collegiate head gymnastics coach before opening the center at 24717 Crestview Court, Farmington Hills.

He and Kristin are getting ready now to travel to the next meet, a regional competition in Kentucky.

'Hear and See' Miss Michigan

The women's auxiliary of William Tyndale College in Farmington Hills is presenting a two-part "Hear and See" program for women at Orchard Lake Country Club on Thursday.

The "Hear" part will be a song and music program by Kathy Lou Pennington, Miss Michigan of 1982. Headline Hair Fashions for Spring has planned the "See" program.

Pennington has had extensive musical training in voice, piano and guitar. She has sung professionally with two gospel groups for the last four years. With Living Sound International she

toured the United States, Great Britain, South Africa and Zimbabwe. In 1980, she was invited back to South Africa to tour for eight months with New Song, a Youth for Christ gospel group.

AT SPRING ARBOR College near Jackson she is specializing in youth guidance and music.

"Being given the honor of wearing the Miss Michigan crown is one of the most exciting challenges I could ever encounter," Pennington said. "I want to represent this great state and what the

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Kathy Pennington
Miss Michigan 1982

Community Center gears up for auction

Volunteers and friends of the Farmington Community Center are preparing for the second annual benefit auction to be held at the center at 7 p.m. Friday, May 13.

Due to the success of the inaugural event, the auction is considered one of the major fund-raisers at the center.

"This year will be no exception," said Kathy Dowling, who directs the program. "With more than 150 diversified items to be auctioned, this year's event promises to be another successful venture."

Proceeds from the auction will be used to help meet the needs of the center.

THE SILENT AUCTION begins at 7 p.m., followed by the live auction at 8:30 p.m. Among the items offered are certificates for dinner at area restaurants, symphony and theater tickets and gifts and other items donated by local merchants.

Volunteers are offering services such as typing, house sitting and wall papering, handcrafted gift items and sailing trips on private boats.

Don Munier of the Farmington Historical Com-

munity will be the evening's auctioneer encouraging bidding on items such as lunch with Detroit Tiger radio announcer Ernie Harwell, a tour and interview with television personality Sonya Friedman, a hat autographed by football coach Bo Schembecker and lunch and a studio tour with Channel 2's Ronnie Clemmer.

THE AUCTION ALSO features mini-vacation packages at the Westin Hotel in Detroit's Renaissance Center, the Grand Traverse Resort and the Farmington Holiday Inn (including the use of the Holidome).

The auction is being organized by 30 volunteers who have been accepting items and services from local merchants and friends of the center.

"We are pleased with the community's response to our requests for auctionable donations," Dowling said.

Tickets, \$7.50 per person and \$15 per couple, are on sale at the center, 24705 Farmington Road. Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served throughout the evening.

At Oak Hill Nursing Home

They celebrate No. 65

Way back in 1918, more than 1 million American troops were fighting "the war to end all wars" in Europe, an influenza epidemic raged throughout the land and prohibition was about to become the law of the land.

And on April 30 of that year, Christie Scott and Ed Doering were married in the home of a Baptist minister in Detroit. The Doerings, both 69, have had a good thing going ever since.

The couple celebrated their 65th anniversary last

Wednesday at Farmington's Oak Hill Nursing Home where Christie is a resident. Ed lives at the Detroit Baptist Manor in Farmington Hills.

"They're really a wonderful couple," said an Oak Hill nurse who attended the party given for the Doerings. "You'd never know they're both 69, and you can see that they're just as much in love now as they ever were."

The Doerings have a son, Robert, a psychologist in Novi, and two grandchildren.

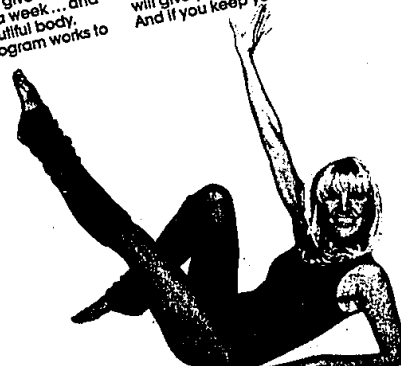
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