



STAFF PHOTOS BY BRIGON LEMMON

A real workout: Laura Welling (left), a senior at Ladywood High School in Livonia, has a go on the parallel bars. Gymnastics instructor Bob Koch (above) shows Jody Schostak of Franklin how to arch her back while stretching.

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training course for gymnasts. In the Dynamites, which is part of the Team program for 7- and 8-year-olds, future gymnasts work on strength and flexibility skills year around. They compete in national competition such as the one held in Rochester in January. Jody Schostak, 7, of Franklin, passed her second day flexibility test with a 65.5 percent score at the meet. On this day, Schostak goes through her strength drills with unfettered determination tempered by a childlike gleam. Her best days are ahead. Nearby, Laura Welling tackles the uneven bars with the same ferocity. At 17, though, her gymnastics skill has reached its peak.

The senior at Livonia Ladywood looks forward to coaching and judging. Welling still practices 20 hours a week, going to the center four to five days, in spite of an ankle injury. "It's sad," Welling said. "I've been here forever. I can't imagine what it will be like without it." Such is the reality of a sport where rigorous requirements can make a teenager a veteran. Mahoney admits the burnout rate is high for gymnasts. For that reason, the staff tries to keep things upbeat. Those who reach certain goals might get chocolate shakes, despite a strict regimen regarding nutrition. They also get to travel to meets in Ohio and North Carolina.

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Public March 1, 1993

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