

UPCOMINGATHLETES

WINTER 2020

MAGAZINE



Peyton Biagioni

Winter 2020 \$24.99



ISSN 2371-2937



Christopher Biilmann



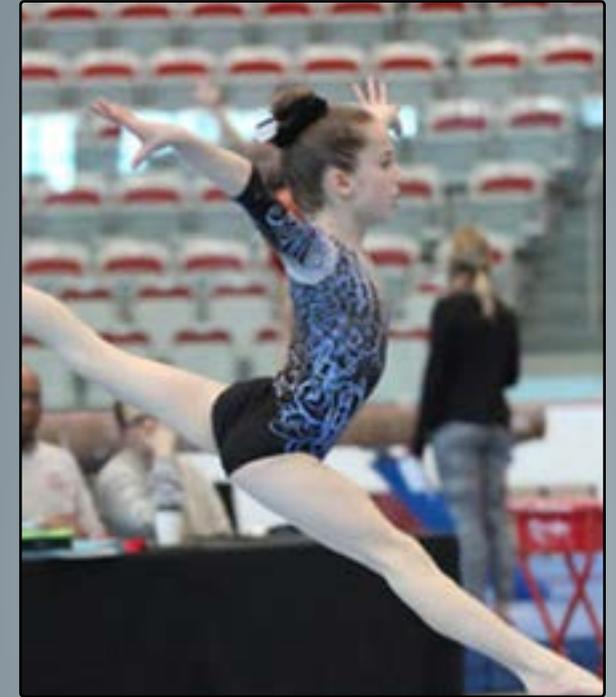
Gillian Cruz



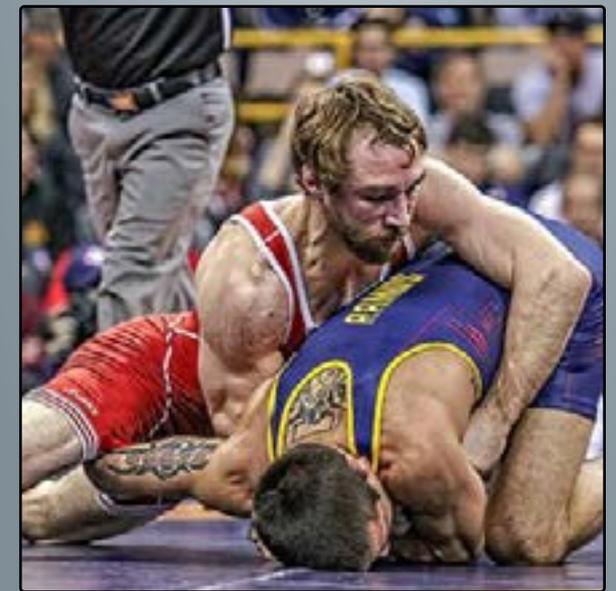
Lyza Brooks



Timothy Zittel



Peyton Biagioni



Daniel Dennis

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Chris is a Toronto native who is now living in Mississauga so he can train with a team out in Oakville/ Burlington. He has been a competitive swimmer for 14 years and has also taken a 2 year hiatus for schooling purposes. He is an extremely dedicated and motivated athlete who has goals he has been chasing for his entire career. This is also currently planned to be his last year in the sport as he has decided to focus on his schooling at York university after Olympic trials. He is taking a major in kinesiology and hopes to continue on to a masters of physiotherapy after. This is also not his first post secondary stint too. He completed a diploma at Mohawk college and spent 2 years at Brock university as well. Chris is from a family of 5 as well. His two sisters (one older, and one younger) both competed in the same sport as well. He has found nothing but massive amounts of support from his family and deems it to be one of the biggest reasons for his success over the years.

Achievements: Chris has not had a straight forward career to say the least. He has been bullied, been an outcast due to differences in schooling, suffered multiple major and minor injuries, been through a death in the family, depression, and serious complications with his asthma that have threatened to end his career. Yet through it all he still manages to return to his happy encouraging self. He chooses to lift everyone up around him as high as he can and support them in any way possible. He is very open to talk about experiences he has had with other team mates to help them through their own issues and continues to show leadership on a daily basis. He has always strived to go to the Olympics but his current goal is to qualify for the Olympic trials in April and make an a final. He has found that swimming for 14 years has provided him with skills and tools that have translated over to other aspects of his life that have helped him to succeed. Over his career he is cracked the top 50 in Canada for his event in multiple age groups and has demolished old team records on multiple occasions. He is never one to turn away from a hard training day. He has grand aspirations and a high expectation of himself for both his sport and his schooling. He is open to talk about any information about his life or sport.



Christopher Biilmann



Christopher Bühlmann



Gillian Cruz

I am a professional Wheelchair Tennis player. I have grown up in Grimsby Ontario, playing sports my entire life (Figure Skating, Hockey, Soccer, Tennis)

I am 32 years old, and when I was 23 I was diagnosed with an aggressive form of Multiple Sclerosis. It was extremely devastating, as many things in my life were ripped away from me, including my mobility and my ability to play sport. I met my husband through tennis (he was our club pro) and after years being sick of sitting on the sidelines, I made a promise to myself that if I could not play able bodied tennis in five years, I would play Wheelchair Tennis. I stuck true to my word and have now been competing nationally and Internationally as a Wheelchair Tennis Athlete.

Wheelchair Tennis is not only just a sport for me, it has changed my life. It has given me an avenue to apply my competitiveness, given me a regained purpose in life, and allowed me to be independent once again. Wheelchair Tennis brought me out of a very depressed state of my life. I am now more grateful for everything I have achieved rather than lost, and now see the world through a different lens.

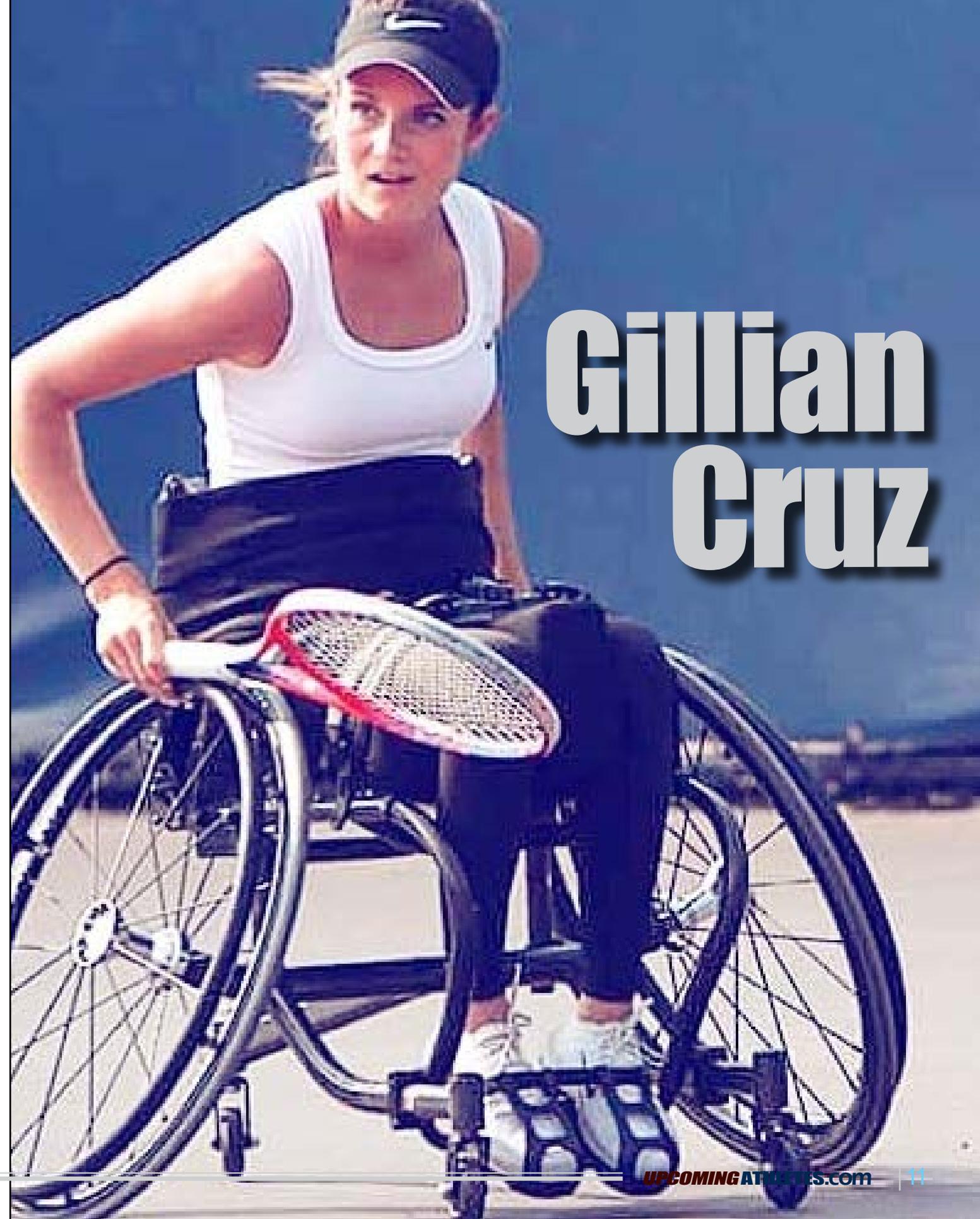
Achievements: Ranked 179 in the world
5th in Canada
National Doubles Finalist 2018 and 2019

The main difference between myself and the majority of other players, is that I fight through a debilitating and progressive condition (rather than an injury) My condition is constantly changing based on various factors, rather than remaining the same each and every day. I suffer from extreme nerve pain from right below my chest, around my back and to my feet. The fatigue is relentless, but when i am on the court I escape from all this and focus on the task at hand. My goal is to win Nationals next year in both singles and doubles, and I am more determined than ever to make that happen.

Credits: Coach: Tennis Canada Certified: Joel Cruz
-Also my Husband and head coach for Team Ontario

OnPARA
Parents, Son, Family, Teammates





Lyza Brooks



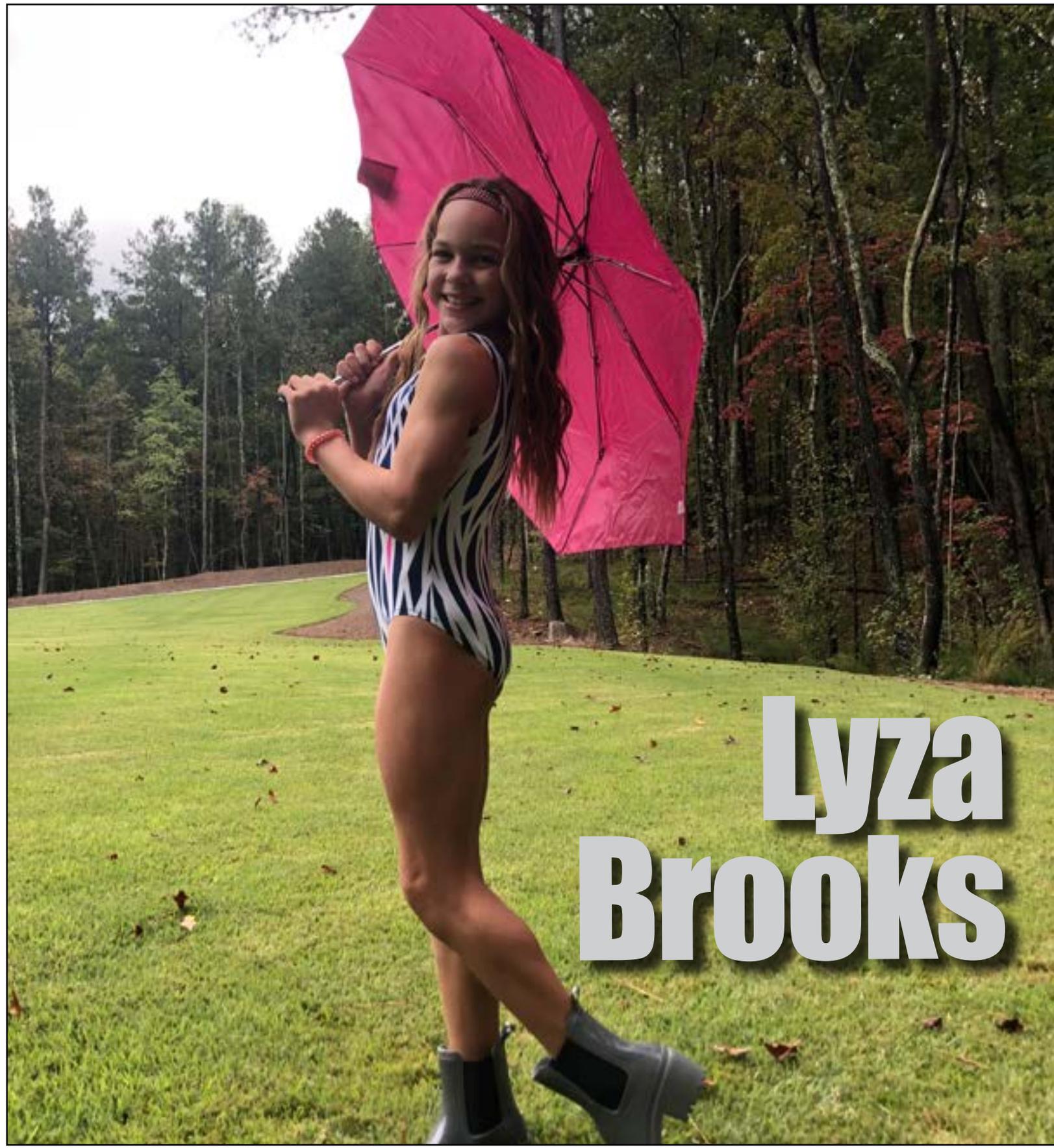
Lyza is a 10 year old level 8 gymnast. She trains 20 hours a week for gymnastics and workouts on her off days . She has been doing gymnastics since she was 5. She has two sisters and a brother, not to mention her two dogs. She is in a private school two days a week allowing for extra training, the other three days she is at home for school

Achievements: She aspires to do gymnastics in college....you wouldn't know it but she does. It have a ton of confidence in herself....that is her biggest challenge... competing level 8 as a fourth grader is a huge accomplishment and we think she is amazing

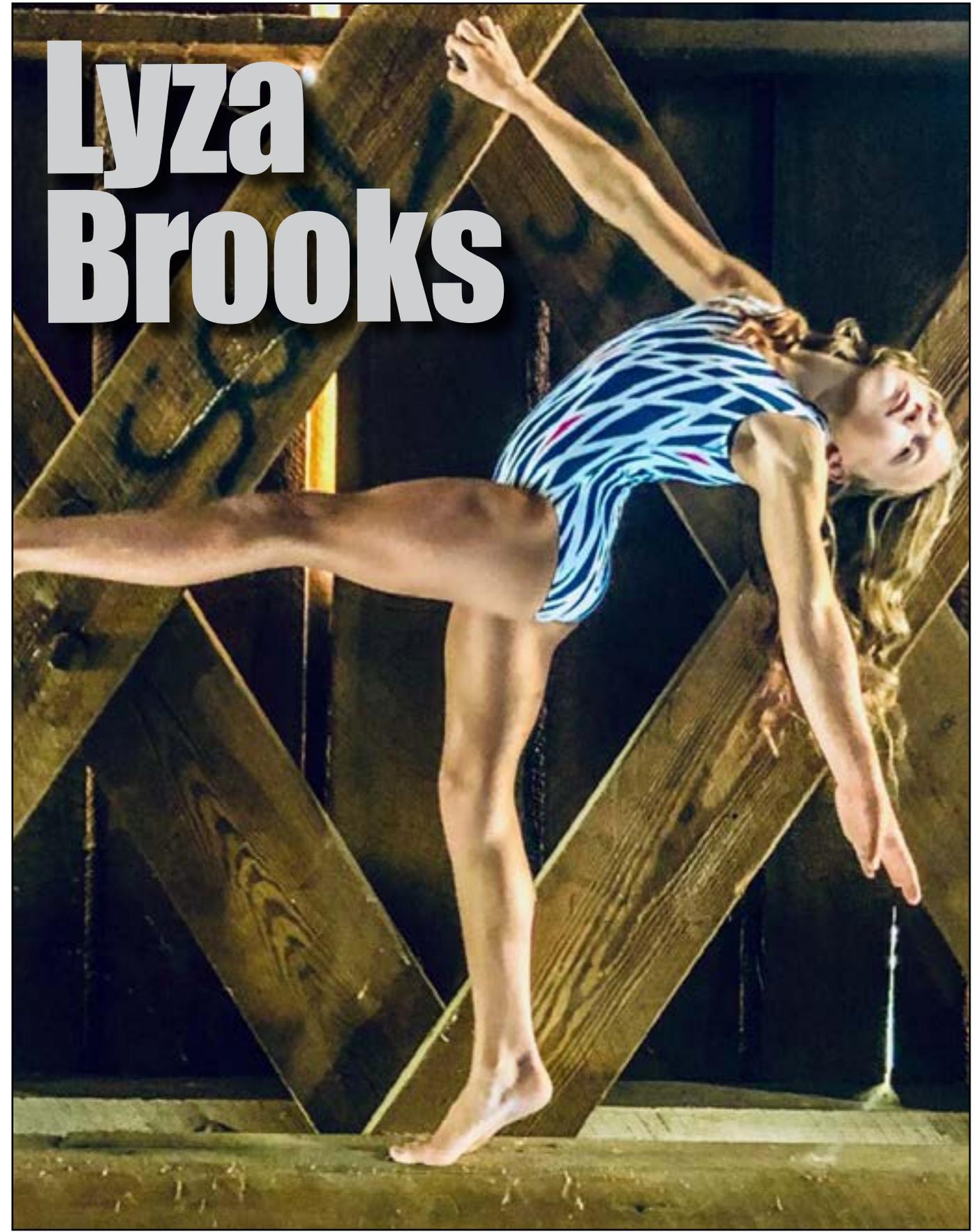
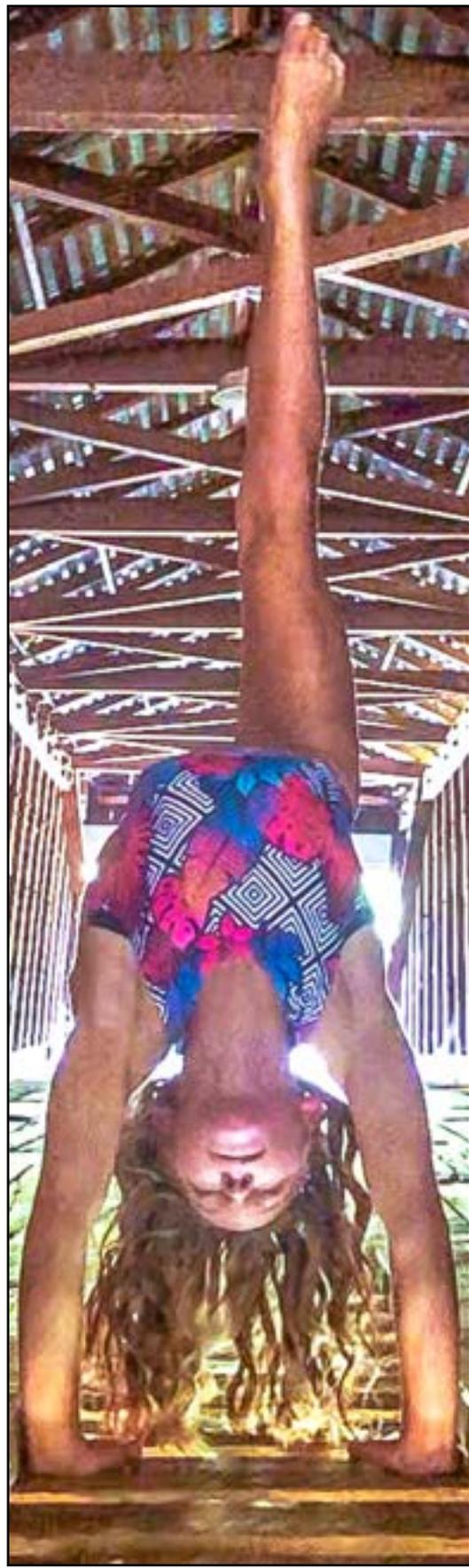


Lyza Brooks



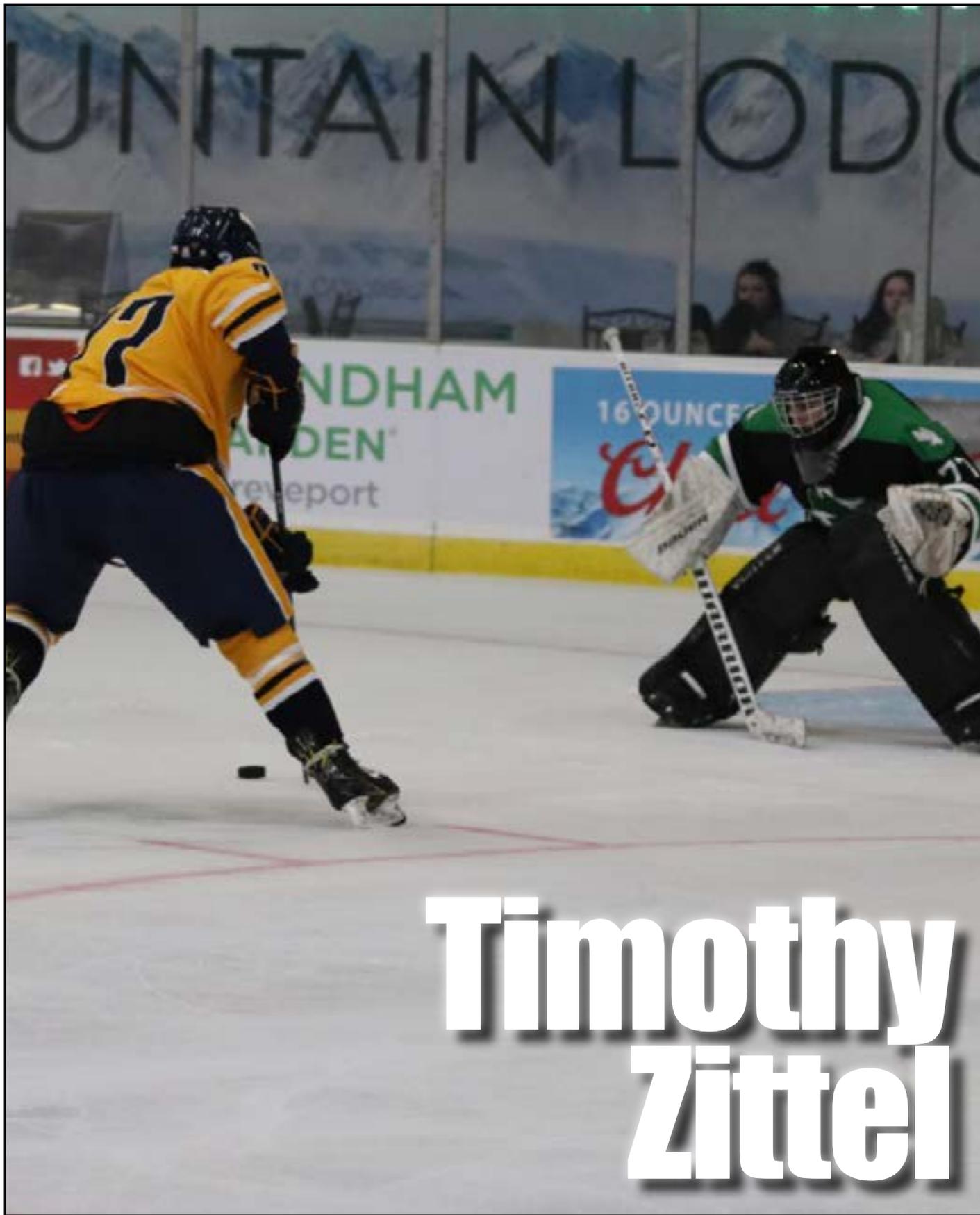


**Lyza
Brooks**



Lyza Brooks







**Kevin
Smith**



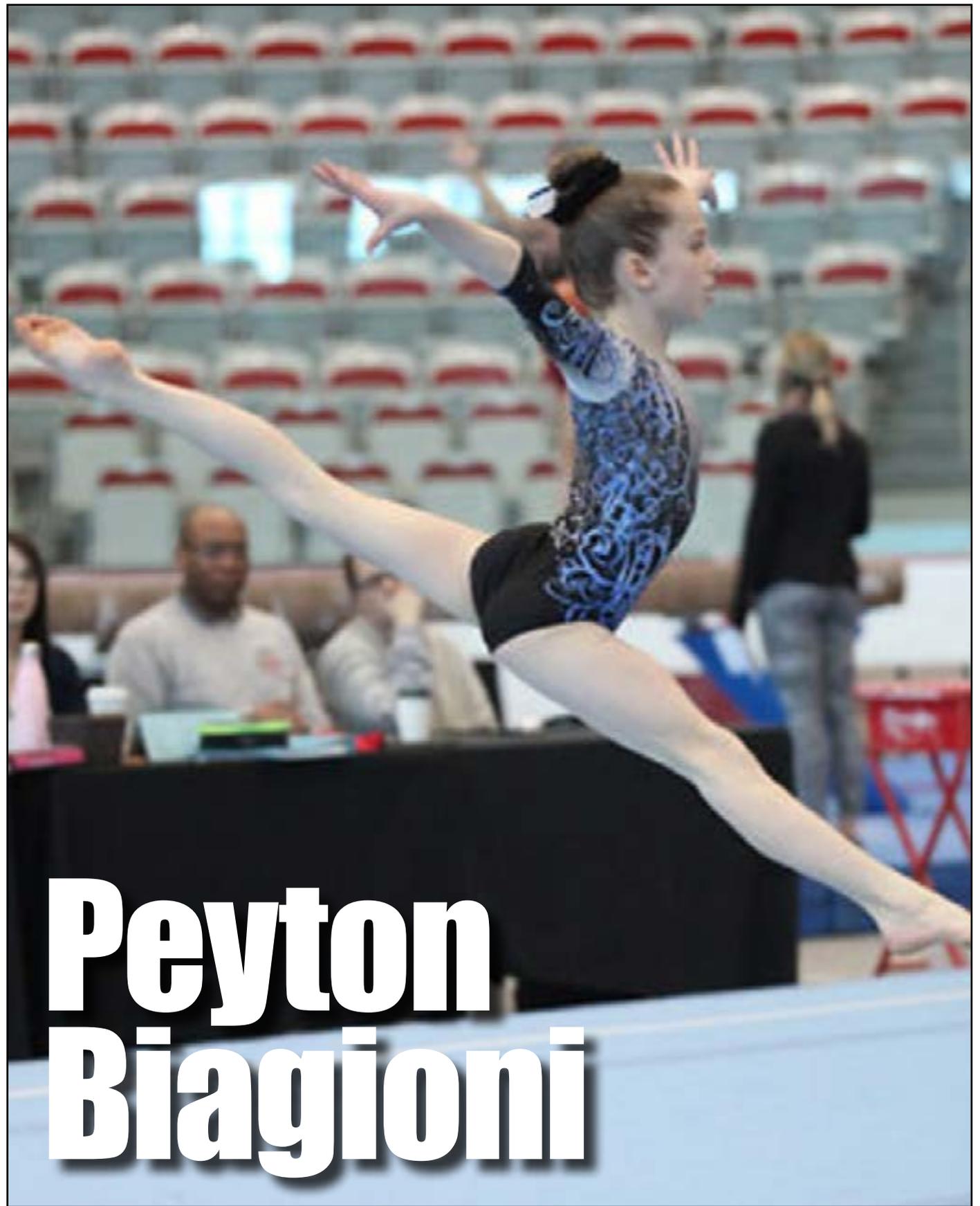
Peyton lives in Sherwood Park, AB with her mom, dad, younger sister and Grandma. She is in grade 5 at St. Theresa School and trains with the local gymnastics club, Salto Gymnastics 16 hours a week. Her first Competition of the season is in Frisco, Texas and she couldn't be more excited.

Achievements: Peyton started doing gymnastics when she was 2 years old in Edson, AB doing parent and tot classes in a school gym. Once she was 3, and the coaches were able to create an actual gymnastics club with real equipment, she was able to join the unparented classes and she quickly moved up levels

and was soon competing at competitions in Edmonton and surrounding areas. Edson Tumblers Gymnastics is where Peyton really found her love of the sport. We moved to Sherwood Park 2 years ago. She started at a bigger club, started training more hours and she still loves it more and more each day. She is learning so much and it seems like just this year, she is finally really starting to believe in herself. Without the club and coaches she has today, she would have never pushed herself enough to know what she is actually capable of. Peyton's dreams is to some day be in the Olympics.



Peyton Biagioni



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Mollie Courtney

NI & Ulster 100m hurdles Champion Mollie Courtney (Cheltenham & County Harriers / David Warner) became the tenth local athlete to achieve a Commonwealth Games nomination standard on an excellent weekend for local athletes. Kate O'Connor also smashed three records, while spectators enjoyed a plethora of encouraging performances at the NI & Ulster Age Group Championships at the sun soaked MPT, Belfast.

Great Britain & NI junior international Mollie was in competition over the 100m hurdles at the England Athletics Under 23 & Under 20 Championships (Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th June 2017) at the Bedford International Stadium and went under the CWG nomination standard (of 13.45) when she recorded 13.44 (+0.5) in her semi-final. The Cheltenham athlete then ran 13.51 (-0.4) for 3rd place in the final.

Mollie now joins Ben Reynolds (North Down AC), Ciara Mageean (UCD AC), Adam Kirk-Smith (Woodford Green Essex), Sommer Lecky (Finn Valley AC), Dempsey McGuigan (Finn Valley AC), Paul Pollock (Annadale Striders), Emma Mitchell (QUB AC), Adam McMullan (Crusaders AC) and Amy Foster (City of Lisburn AC) on the list of athletes hoping to make the final Gold Coast 2018 squad.

City of Lisburn AC pair Ben Fisher (Annie Rose) and Megan Marrs (Jerzy Maciukiewicz) were also in good form at the event. Ben picked up a gold medal in the Under 20 Long Jump with a 7.36 (+2.7) effort; this would have been a personal best for Ben had it not of been for the illegal wind reading but had a legal PB of 7.32m to back this up. Megan sped her way to the 100m hurdles final in 13.56 (+2.3) – unfortunately, like club mate Ben, the illegal wind reading rules out what would have been a personal best. Megan ran 13.85 (-0.4) for 5th place in the final.

Kate O'Connor produces record breaking performances at Leinster Championships

Multi-event star Kate O'Connor (St Gerard's AC / Michael O'Connor) again showed her potential with an exceptional display of throwing and jumping at the Leinster Track & Field Championships.

Kate broke the Northern Ireland Under 18 and Under 20 Long Jump record with a personal best leap of 6.10m (0.6); this was also a European Athletics Junior Championships standard and close to the NI Senior record of 6.13m (Linzi Herron – 2013).

In the Shot Putt, the Dundalk based athlete then threw the 3kg implement over 14 metres three times, finishing on 14.46m. This bettered her own record of 14.21m set in March.

Two athletes from the East Kootenay Track and Field Club showed off their skills at the CALTAF Track Classic.

On June 14-16 Kara Renzie, 10, and Kieran Shankowsky, 12, competed in Calgary against some of the best track and field athletes.

Renzie competed in a multitude of categories in the U12 group and is looking forward to competing in the classic again.

•Standing long jump 33rd; long jump 19th; ball throw 31st; shot put 27th; 100m 29th; and 600m she placed 11th where she had her personal best at a time of 2:08:04.

Shankowsky competed in the U14 group where he showed off his skills. On the first day of competition, he was fourth all around in the U14 men's group and on day two he was seventh.

•Hurdles third; 800m third; high jump fourth; discus 22nd; 80m eighth; long jump seventh; 600m fourth and shot put 19th.

The Caltaf Track Classic showcases track and field athletes from all ages, as well as some of Canada's best track stars. In the past stars such as Donovan Bailey, Bryan Barnett, Kelsie Hendry and more have been to the event.



Kieran Shankowsky

Kara Renzie



Ben Forestell of Huntsville has a dream of being in the Olympics running mid- or long-distance events. He is setting his sights on the next summer games in Tokyo in 2020.

Forestell got a taste of what it would be like when he recently qualified for the semifinals at the Canadian Olympic trials in Edmonton. He finished third in the qualifying race.

"It was my best performance and it was in a fast heat," he said from Montreal where he is in his third year at McGill University. "It was always my goal to qualify for the semifinals and compete against the top runners, Olympians and professional high-level athletes. I accomplished that goal and was really excited after that. I had to race the next day in the semifinals. I got caught up in the awe of who I was competing against. I didn't realize I could compete with them. I was more of a spectator than a participant and I learned from that."

Forestell finished 10th out of 12 runners in the semi finals. He said he was well back and more or less threw in the towel the last 600 metres of the 1500 metre event and enjoyed the experience.

That experience and other successes over the last year has whet his appetite to dream big.

"I have improved 13 seconds in the last year and I need to knock off another nine seconds to qualify for FISU Universiade in 2019," he said. "I want to run at the competit

Huntsville track coach Pierre Mikhail was also an influential mentor who helped jump-start Ben's track career.

He convinced Forestell he could make the cross-country running team. It meant extra commitment as he was already playing soccer, skiing on the cross country team and playing basketball. He joined in his final year in high school and the team went on to win the GBSSA cross-country championship for the first time in 12 years. That spring he ran the 800 metre race and qualified for OFSSA and got to see what high-level track looked like.



Ben Forestell

Daniel Dennis



Wrestler Daniel Dennis grew up in northwest suburban Ingleside and is representing the U.S. in the 57-kilogram (125.5 pounds) weight class. His career has been marked by ups and downs, both on and off the mat.

As a student athlete at Grant Community High School, Dennis was a two-time state runner-up.

"He was always pushing the limits – whether it was with Rollerblading, his motorcycle,

or wrestling," said Ryan Geist, Dennis's high school wrestling coach at Grant. "He's the only athlete that I've had to kick out of the gym."

Dennis went on to wrestle at the University of Iowa, where he finished second once again at the 2010 NCAA Championships.

Terry Brands, associate head coach of wrestling at University of Iowa, says that the second-place finishes that came to

define Dennis's wrestling career eventually took a toll on his psyche.

"It was almost a pattern. These situations that happen on the mat kind of turned him," Brands said. "That bitterness kind of stole him from our program. He was doing OK, but he really wasn't there."

In 2013, while his father was battling terminal cancer, Dennis left wrestling and moved to

California. For two years, he lived out of his pickup truck, disconnected from TV and the internet.

Following his father's death in 2014 and after briefly coaching a high school wrestling team, Dennis decided to return to the mat.

In 2015, he placed second in the U.S. World Team Trials; one year later he was crowned U.S. Olympic Trials Champion.

Brands said he always viewed Dennis' wrestling hiatus as more of a "needed relief" than a complete retirement from the sport.

"You kind of felt this moment and this swell of accomplishment starting to brew inside him," Brands said. "He's wrestling free and the bitterness is gone. You see a guy with a calm spirit and quiet mind."

Since high school, Geist has maintained a close friendship with Dennis. They often go on motorcycle rides together and Dennis frequently appears at Grant's wrestling camps.

"When I coached him, he sort of became my son," said Geist, who will be traveling to Rio de Janeiro to watch him compete. "Daniel has just as much a chance to win gold as anyone else."

Lizzie Dolan

McKinleyville senior Lizzie Dolan, right, pulls away from Fortuna's Camrin Dolcini and teammate Hadlie Ward on her way to setting a new league record in the 100 meter hurdles at the HDN championships last weekend.
- Photos by Ray Hamill



Paige Norton



Norton is one of the most decorated Abbotsford-based Special Olympics athletes ever, earning the 2019 Special Olympics British Columbia Athletic Achievement Awards in 2017 and winning medals at both national and international events during her career on ice. She also won the SOBC Achievement Award in 2011.

Norton's mother, Donna Bilous, was named to the Abbotsford Sports Hall of Fame in 2018 and has earned several accolades for her years coaching in the Special Olympics system.

Hamilton heads to the Games after a strong performance at the 2019 SOBC Winter Games, in which he earned bronze and silver medals. He also attended the 2004 Special Olympics Nationals in Prince Edward Island and also competes in the SO Summer Games in track and field.

Since qualifying for their spots on Team BC 2020 through their performances at the 2019 Special Olympics BC Winter Games in Greater Vernon, the provincial team athletes and coaches have been hard at work to be at their best at the National Games, training at least three times a week for the last 10 months.

Training has included sport-specific work in local year-round Special Olympics programs, participating in Club Fit, additional fitness and dry-land training, working with sport-specific experts, and focusing on diet and nutrition.

"This is an incredibly well-prepared provincial team. I am so proud of the dedication and effort shown by all of these inspiring athletes, coaches, and volunteers," stated Michelle Cruickshank, Special Olympics Team BC 2020 Chef de Mission.

"They have been working hard for three years to reach this event, and I know they will do B.C. proud at National Games. Their abilities and their sportsmanship will inspire everyone watching."

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