

# Salavec shines at national competition

BY KATHERINE CONSORTE

Back in December 2004, gymnast Christina Salavec made her goals quite clear. She wasn't too concerned with the various invitationals and meets throughout the season, but rather the most important of them all — the national competition. Salavec strived



Photo courtesy of Gold Medal Gym  
Christina Salavec competes on the beam, one of her best events.

for first place honors, and despite a minor setback, she accomplished her goal, earning the gold medal with a score of 37.425 at level nine. Six of her teammates qualified for the national meet.

"Her goal was to win nationals and she trained to do that," said coach Tammy Marshall, former NCAA national champion. "It was great. She deserved it. She worked really hard to do it. She wanted to win and she set that in our meeting before the season. Just because you want something doesn't necessarily mean it's going to happen. In our sport one tenth makes the difference."

Salavec, a Mansueton resident, was in second place when she stepped up to the first event, the vault. She had already scored 9.225 on bars, 9.50 on beam and 9.60 on floor. Getting two opportunities, the 13-year-old needed an 8.9 to move into first place. But unfortunately, Salavec missed her first attempt and scored 0. But she quickly regrouped and was able to pull out a 9.10 on her next attempt, good enough to win the championships.

"She was scoring well over a nine every week on vault," Marshall said. "Your hands have to hit and she came on really high so her hands went right over. When she landed she heard the judges say zero so we had a pep talk. I said you can do this vault, you've done as many. And her comment to me was 'I know, I'm not getting a zero' and she didn't."

To qualify for the national meet, Salavec had to compete in the New

York State and Regional competitions, two meets in which she excelled, placing first. At the state meet, she needed to score 34 or higher and she finished at 37.75, and at regionals she had to place within the top 10 and she scored 37.7.

Salavec began gymnastics with a recreational class when she was five years old. After showing much promise, she was selected a year later to become a member of the USA Gymnastics Junior Olympic Program. She trains anywhere from 24 to 28 hours a week with Marshall and assistant coach Oscar Romero at Gold Medal Gymnastics Center, owned by Al Notaricola, and located in Centerville and Huntington. She began competing at level five and at level six she became the state champion. She then moved to level eight and became the regional champion.

"I couldn't be more proud of her," said Sharon Salavec, mother of Christina. "She is amazing. I don't know how she does it."

Right now, Salavec is not training for any meets during the summer, but rather preparing for the upcoming season, which begins in December. She is training to compete in level 10 in the Junior Olympic Program and also training the elite developmental skills, a level only the top professional gymnasts compete in, as shown on television. Marshall said Salavec has the skills to compete at such a prestigious level, but wants to make certain she is ready.

"I think she will get there," Marshall



Photo courtesy of Gold Medal Gym  
Christina Salavec won states, regionals and nationals this year.

said. "She is very determined. She knows what she wants and she knows what she needs to do to get there. She's not one that gives up. She pushes and I think she's going to do great. It's going to be very exciting to watch her progress over the next few years."