

NOT JUST FOR KICKS Sophia Griffith (10) had done gymnastics for ten years. She has stuck with it for so long because of the many benefits of the sport. "I like having something to do after school and then it also keeps you fit and it also helps you prepare for life and it has a bunch of skills that you can do," Griffith said.

photo by ellie guanella

THE REAL REASON TO AIM FOR THE SKY

Sophia Griffith realizes her true love for her sport through pain

When you heard the word gymnastics, what did you think about? Leotards, chalk, handstands? For a girl who had done gymnastics for the past 11 years, gymnastics was about more than just leotards, chalk, and handstands. It was a way of life. Doing many other sports before gymnastics, including ice skating, soccer, swimming, and even basketball opened my eyes to how gymnastics was so much more different than all those other sports combined. It was a sport that taught me balance, determination, control, and work ethic.

Balancing included the balance beam and being able to put in the extreme hours required for greatness and keeping up with school work.

Determination was a matter of going on with my routine even if I was exhausted, and keeping on going to practice, even if I felt like I couldn't take another step.

Control included controlling my body so I didn't put myself in a dangerous situation and controlling my actions in life.

Finally, work ethic taught me that if you work hard during the week on your skills and routines, you get to stand on the podium at competitions. In reality, work ethic taught me that even if you worked hard, you might not have gotten a physical award; however, you got the satisfaction of knowing you worked hard to get where you were. Gymnastics did more than teach you skills in the gym; it teaches you skills about life.

The number one question that people always asked me was "Is it

hard being a tall gymnast?" Personally, I always thought my tallness was the number one cause of all my possible flaws in gymnastics. But one day my coach said, "Being tall gives you the advantage to show off your lines and your long legs hold all your power." I lived by it every day. I won level 6 and 7 state championships and I won level 7 regional championship in 2017-18, and it was all because of my lines and high tumbling. In 2018-2019 I was able to compete in level 8 and qualify for regionals; however, I had a back injury and was unable to compete in regionals.

In summer of 2019, due to reduced coaching staff, I was forced to move to Broomfield High School gymnastics [an all-BVSD team]. After already not being able to compete in regionals, I wasn't the happiest of the bunch at the time. Nevertheless, I found this as an opportunity to start fresh and I, eventually, learned that with all of the skills I evolved in club gymnastics, I was able to succeed very well. In fall 2019, I qualified for state championships and I was able to compete on beam in state individuals. The happiness brought back memories of the first day I stepped foot into the gym.

If I had to say one thing about gymnastics to anybody, anytime, anywhere, it would be "Don't complain about someone saying you can't do it; instead show them and prove them wrong." Yes, gymnastics was about leotards, chalk, and handstands, but it also prepared me for life and opened my eyes to failure and success.

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