

TOUGH
INNOVATIVE
AGGRESSIVE



Orlando

by Luan Peszek

Sixteen-year-old Tia Orlando of Parkettes in Allentown, Pa., is known for her amazing power. On floor she tumbles as if she had springs in her legs. She holds the floor title from the 2003 Pan American Games and is the 2001 and 2002 Junior National Champion on floor as well. The tumbling passes she used at the U.S. Classic included a double layout where she splits her legs on the first flip, which adds flare. Her second pass is a long one ñ front handspring, double twisting front into a tuck front full into a pike front into a double stag, sissone jump. For her third pass, she does a piked full twisting double back. She finishes the routine with an incredibly high punch double front!

These great skills on floor and vault (double twisting Yurchenko), as well as her routines on bars and beam, helped Tia to win the U.S. Classic this May in Rochester, N.Y. She said, "It was outstanding to win. Going into the meet I felt very well prepared. My practices at the competition were great. I knew I just had to hit."

Tia added, "This event is really important because I've been injured (stress fracture in foot from overuse). I felt behind everyone a little bit. So, to go in and win was great for me."

Coach Robin Netwall said, "Tia is just a great kid to work with. Tia's strength to the U.S. team is floor and vault, plus her bars and beam are coming along nicely, too." Tia is coached by Bill and Donna Strauss and Joe Stallone

Tia had to stay off her foot about four weeks prior to the U.S. Classic but was able to do a lot of bars! "My bars are a lot better now," said Tia. "At first I couldn't believe it (the injury) was happening to me, but then I realized everything happens for a reason. Bars was always the event in which I had to work a little harder. Now I feel my bars are right with my other events."

Tia and her family moved to the Parkettes five years ago from New Jersey when she was a Level 7 gymnast. Her mom is a dance teacher and her dad is a cameraman for the NFL so he

travels a lot and was able to live in Pennsylvania. "My family loves it here and supports me 100%," said Tia. "My sister and brother didn't mind so that was a lot easier."

Coach Netwall was quick to point out that Tia is very supportive of her younger siblings as well. "She goes to their baseball games, cheerleading practice and is very supportive of her brother and sister."

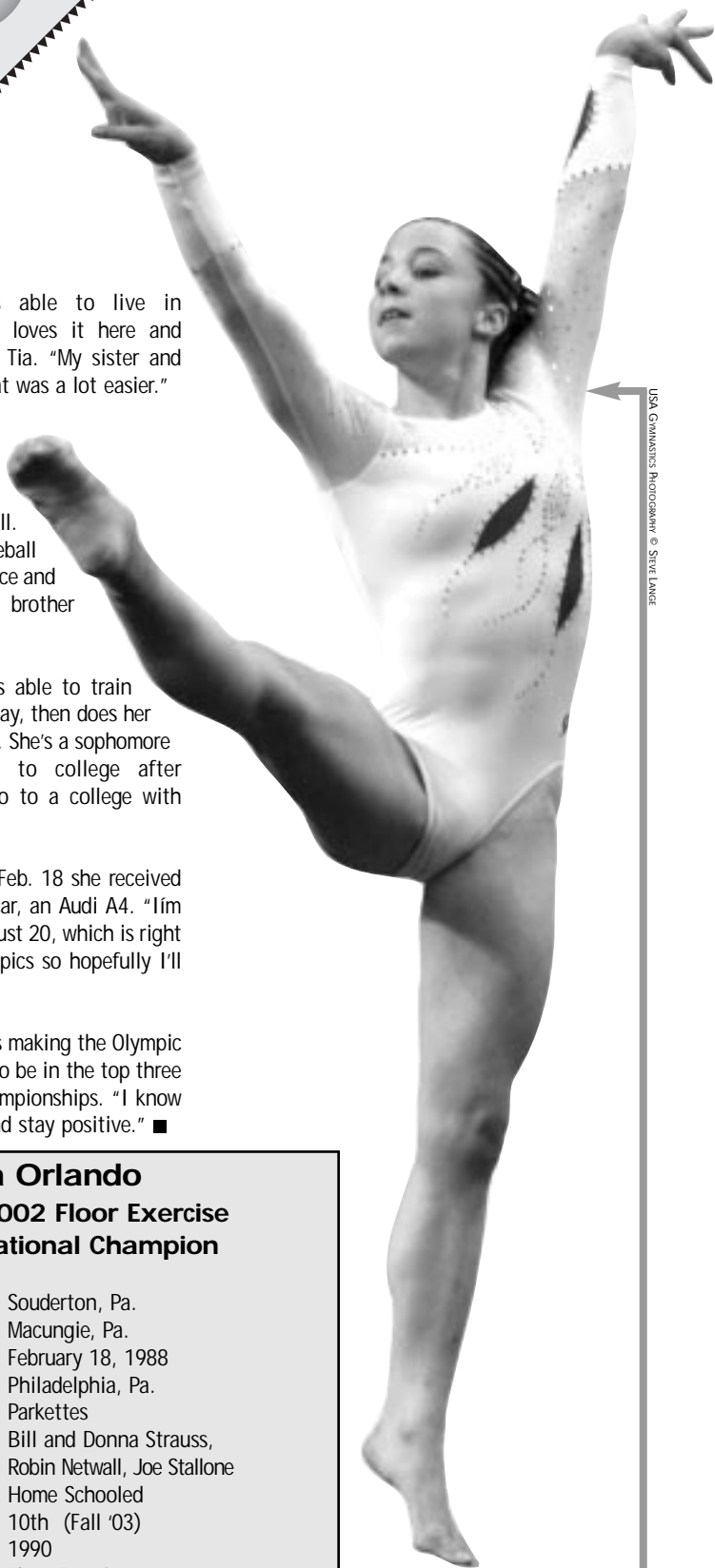
Tia home schools so she's able to train from around 8:30-4 each day, then does her schoolwork in the evening. She's a sophomore and would like to go to college after graduation. "I want to go to a college with warm weather," said Tia.

For her 16th birthday on Feb. 18 she received her driving permit and a car, an Audi A4. "I'm able to get my license August 20, which is right in the middle of the Olympics so hopefully I'll have to delay my license."

Of course her goal includes making the Olympic Team but the first goal is to be in the top three all-around at the U.S. Championships. "I know I have to be consistent and stay positive." ■

Tia Orlando 2001 & 2002 Floor Exercise Junior National Champion

Hometown: Souderton, Pa.
Residence: Macungie, Pa.
Date/Place of Birth: . . . February 18, 1988
 Philadelphia, Pa.
Club: Parkettes
Coach: Bill and Donna Strauss,
 Robin Netwall, Joe Stallone
School: Home Schooled
Year in School: 10th (Fall '03)
Began Gymnastics: 1990
Favorite Event: Floor Exercise
Years on National Team: 3 (2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04)
TOPS National Team: 1999



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