

# Madison Torok

## Against the Odds

**F**or most gymnasts the story is pretty much the same--training in the gym four hours per day, four to six days per week; eating on the run, and competing weekends in different cities. The story for Madison Torok is somewhat different.

Madison was born with a birth defect called Arthrogryphosis Multiplex. In most children, this birth defect is crippling with possible surgeries involved. For Madison, the right side of her body was affected, most severely in her right foot and hand. Madison's mom Lisa said, "When Madison was a baby we were told by the doctors that she would probably never run and even walking would be somewhat clumsy for her. Her foot and leg were casted at birth and surgery was performed in her first year to correct her foot. She couldn't bend her arms until the age of 4."



To this day, Madison still struggles to grasp with her right hand. She has minimal fine motor skills and bending her arm to bring her right hand to her mouth to do the simple task of biting a cookie is still difficult for her to do.

Madison started gymnastics at age 5 as a means to stretch and condition her body and develop her motor skills. It was through this training that it was discovered Madison not only loved being in the gym but she was also very flexible and eager to learn. Lisa said, "I was a high school gymnast and knew that the sport has so many benefits. I knew that conditioning and stretching could help her body. She was so small and frail and I thought gymnastics could help her muscles develop."

With the help of Peter (shown at right) and Tania Gueorguiev (shown above) of Euro Stars Gymnastics in Plymouth, Mich. Madison's dream to actually become a gymnast came true. The coaches saw the passion and determination in Madison and decided to dedicate their time and knowledge to help her achieve her goal. It took many hours of practice and conditioning before Madison finally made it to Level 4 as a pre-team gymnast. At that level she was able to participate in "Fun Meets" and it was only the beginning!

Peter said, "Madison's story is just amazing. Our gym philosophy is that all children have a place in our program and

we wanted to give her an opportunity. Our expectations for Madison were to improve her disabilities, but we never dreamed she would be a member of our competitive team. We treated her the same as the other kids in our gym and she continued to improve."



In September of 2004 Madison became a member of the Euro Stars Level 5 team. Madison's right hand and her arm strength are her biggest obstacles physically, but her setbacks have not discouraged her. Madison just finished her first competitive year as a Level 5 and placed fifth on floor and 13th on vault at State Meet in the gold level. She also started the season scoring 5's on bars but managed an 8.00 at State Meet despite her difficulties of even grasping the bar!

With the help of some very caring coaches and the determination of one child, anything is possible even when the odds are against you!

