

BLANCHARD – BOUNCING BACK TO TRAMPOLINE

By Luan Peszek

Erin Blanchard, 17, won the trampoline title at the 2006 Pacific Alliance Championships in the junior division. Then she moved up to the senior division and took first in trampoline at the 2006 Trampoline and Tumbling National Championships.

"It was very exciting to win," said Blanchard. "It was my first time competing senior and it was definitely my goal to win."

When asked why she likes trampoline, Blanchard said, "Because it's a rush, especially when you learn new skills. I love the feeling! It's great. It's like jumping off a roof or flying. You're so high in the air and you see everything."

Blanchard got involved in trampoline when she was 5 years old. "My family and I were watching the Olympics on TV and saw artistic gymnastics. It looked like a lot of fun. My mom signed me up at the local gym, Trampoline and Tumbling Express. I started out doing tumbling, double mini and trampoline, but I had the most potential in trampoline. So in 2001, I concentrated just on trampoline."

One reason Blanchard is so competitive in the sport is due to her family. She's the youngest child and the only girl. "I have three older brothers and we used to fight, which made me tough," said Blanchard. "Now that we're older we look after one another." Blanchard's mom is a third-grade teacher and her dad is manager of a warehouse company.

Blanchard took a break from trampoline in 2002 and took more than two years off to try other things. She came back last summer because she missed it.

"It's what I love to do. I thought I was missing out on other things so I quit trampoline to do track, but I learned trampoline is what I love to do."

When asked what she missed the most, Blanchard said, "I missed going to competitions and meeting new people. I also missed seeing the excitement on my coaches' faces when I do well. They look very proud when we do well."

Blanchard trains about 18 hours per week and just competed in three competitions including The Pan American Championships in Mexico, and two World Cup events in Switzerland and Germany. She was gone about three weeks in late August and early September.

So how does she travel for three weeks and handle her junior year at Comeaux High? "We start school on the day I leave for my competitions. I've already talked to my counselor and I'll just get my work when I get back. The teachers are great about giving me time to make up my work. They're very supportive."

Blanchard says biology is her favorite class and she'd like to go into the medical field to become a pediatric nurse.

As for Blanchard's goals in trampoline? She said without hesitation, "I want to make the 2008 Olympic Team for sure." She added, "I'd also like to finish in the top eight at the 2007 World Championships." ▶

Erin's Info

Hometown • Youngsville, Louisiana

Birthday • Nov. 20, 1989

Club • Trampoline and Tumbling Express

Coach • Tara Guidry and Dmitri Poliaroush

Began Gymnastics • 1995

Most difficult element in routine • full in, full out pike

Car • Mitsubishi Galant

Favorite color • yellow

Favorite store • Target (although she's not a big shopper)

Favorite clothes • adidas shorts and T-shirt

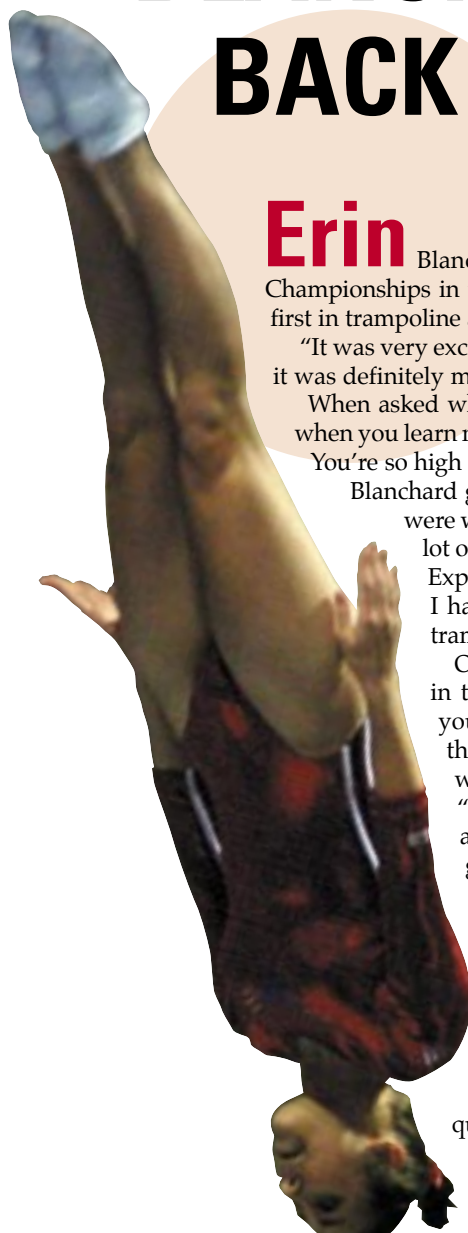
Favorite Sport (other than trampoline) • Football, to play and watch.

Favorite Food • mac and cheese

What's on her iPod • Everything from hip hop to country to her dad's old rock and roll music. She listens to everything.

Hobbies • She has a pool at her house and likes to swim a lot. She likes to go to the library and read, mostly fiction books.

What's in her gym bag? Her warm-up and leo. Two pairs of socks because she wears a long pair and a short pair when she jumps trampoline. Hair clips. iPod. Phone. Water bottle.



2006 Trampoline & Tumbling National Championships

Trampoline and Tumbling U. S. Championships were held in Schaumburg, Ill., July 7-9. Taking gold in Senior Trampoline were Chris Estrada and Erin Blanchard, both of Trampoline and Tumbling Express in Lafayette, La. Estrada is a two-time national champion, repeating his win from 2005. Blanchard took her first title at the Senior Elite level, having previously won as a Junior Elite. Kalon Ludvigson of Texas Dreams in Plano, Texas, took first in men's double mini and also in men's tumbling. New women's champions are Shelley Klochan in double mini and Leanne Seitzinger in tumbling, representing Great Lakes Griffins, Grand Rapids, Mich., and Novak's Gymnastics, Dumfries, Va., respectively. The synchronized trampoline title went to Amanda Bailey, Acrospirits, Levelland, Texas, who paired with Blanchard in women's action and Michael Devine, J&J Tumbling & Trampoline, Winnebago, Ill., with Estrada for the men.

Junior Elite champions include Steven Gluckstein and Nani Verdecruyssen, both of whom took gold medals in both trampoline and double mini. Gluckstein, representing Ultra Twisters, Middletown, N.J., is a four-time Junior Elite champion in trampoline, winning in 2003-06. Hawaii Academy's Nani Verdecruyssen of Honolulu, Hawaii, was a repeat champion from 2005 in trampoline. Dacyn Caudell of Xtreme Trampoline and Tumbling, Lee's Summit, Mo., took her second tumbling championship in as many years, while the men's title went to Maurice Dunker of Gymnastic Academy of Rockford Ill. Junior Elite synchronized trampoline champions are Verdecruyssen and partner Kaci Barry, of GTC Academy, San Diego, Calif., for the women and Gluckstein with partner Jesse Kiley of Great Lakes Griffins, Grand Rapids, Mich., for the men.

Following the U. S. Championships, the J.O. Championships were held, with more than 1,600 athletes competing for titles in Levels 5-10. Highlighting the J.O. Championships was the Regional All-Star competition, featuring Level 10 regional champions competing for the six regions. Region 4 took the title of Grand Champion team for the third year in a row. ❌

Results and photos from both events are available at www.usa-gymnastics.org/tt/2006/champs/index.htm.



Above: Chris Estrada Below: Senior women's trampoline awards

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