

Chris Brooks – A Good Bet

By Luan Peszek, Photos by John Cheng

The Winter Cup Challenge took place in Las Vegas, so what were the odds that Chris Brooks would win the all-around title? According to Rustam Sharipov, his coach at the University of Oklahoma, the odds were good that Chris could take the title. Sharipov said, "It wasn't a big surprise to me that Chris won because he has been working hard for the past four years. He has set the right goals, was patient with his gymnastics, and it all came together."

In a break-through performance Brooks won the all-around and high bar titles. He said, "Winning the all-around at Winter Cup felt awesome! After hurting my ankle just before the 2009 Visa Championships and not re-making the national team, it felt great to earn my spot again. I trained very hard for this competition so competing and doing well felt good and winning was an added bonus."

Brooks' goal for 2010? "To continue training hard, and make a push for the World Team."

Coach Sharipov said, "I think Chris is capable of being in the top 10 at the World Championships and being competitive with Jonathan Horton and Fabian Hambuechen and the Japanese guys."

Last year at the Winter Cup Challenge Brooks was fifth all-around, third on floor and fourth on high bar. He earned an assignment to Moscow for an international competition but hurt his back and didn't go to the competition. He concentrated on getting stronger. Then 10 days prior to the Visa Championships he hurt his ankle on a difficult tumbling pass. He competed four events at Visa Championships and did well, but did not make the national team. He went back to the gym added difficulty and it all finally came together at this year's Winter Cup.

We caught up with Brooks and talked to him about his win at the Winter Cup Challenge.

USA Gymnastics: What event were you most pleased with at Winter Cup and why?

Brooks: I was most pleased with my high bar routine. It was only my second time trying that routine in a competition and I feel like I performed it well both days.

USA Gymnastics: How did it feel to win high bar title?

Brooks: Winning high bar felt good. The first time I tried this routine in competition it did not go very well, so I got back in the gym worked out the kinks and was very happy with how I did at this competition

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Chris Brooks

Birth Date: 12/19/86

Age: 23

Hometown: Houston, Texas

Residence: Norman, Oklahoma

School: University of Oklahoma 4-year letter winner

Expects to graduate: 2010 with degree in Business Management

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USA Gymnastics: What type of career do you want to pursue?

Brooks: Not sure yet but I have thrown around a few ideas. I would enjoy continuing involvement with gymnastics so owning a gym and/or being an NCAA coach come to mind or doing something with cars.

USA Gymnastics: Can you tell us about your hobbies outside of gymnastics?

Brooks: My hobby outside of gymnastics is sports cars. It is in my blood, my dad used to race motorcycles, so that's where it started. We rode for a few years until my brother turned 16 and got his first car; our passion went from dirt bikes to sports cars and we never looked back. I love car shows, testing my skills at the race track, and just hanging out with other car enthusiasts.

USA Gymnastics: Can you tell us about your family?

Brooks: I have a great supportive family. I have an older brother (Nick) and an older sister (Erica) who both did gymnastics when they were younger. My brother was one of my coaches in Houston before I went to college, and has been a good example to me in and out of the gym growing up. My mother Terry is awesome, she always thinks I'm the best gymnast competing even if I fall 10 times and is proud of me as long as I compete with passion and never forget anything is possible through Christ. I lost my father Larry a little over a year ago, but his memory and belief in me will stay with me forever. He always was supportive and believed I could go as far as I wanted in gymnastics. I learned a lot from him and I know he is watching over me guiding my walk in this path of life. ✕

Chris Brooks Favorites

Event: High Bar – It's pretty hard, but it's also fun and definitely can get the adrenaline pumping.

Skill: I don't really have a favorite skill. I like goofing around and trying to see how much height I can get on a giant or peach on parallel bars though.

Most memorable gymnastics moment: Winning NCAA Team Finals in Oklahoma my freshman year. It was a great competition and came down to the last event. Coming up with the win in front of the home crowd with all the alumni in the stands was definitely a moment I'll always remember.

Food: Too many to list but I don't like onions, they are gross.

TV show: I love *That 70's Show*. I've seen every episode but when it is on TV I'll watch it no matter how many times I have seen that episode.

