

# **Rising Stars Club: Paige Mouser, 16, Overcomes Obstacles on Way to Stardom as Gymnast**

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# RISING STARS -CLUB-

ALTON – Midwest-Illinois Gymnastics and Dance Club's Paige Mouser, a 16-year-old gymnast, had herself quite a weekend March 2-3 as she competed in the St. Louis Classic meet held at America's Center in Downtown St. Louis.

Mouser, a sophomore at Alton High School, won the Level 8 all-around title in the meet, excelling in the vault, uneven parallel bars, balance beam, and floor exercise during the meet. The win added to her recent honors, as she finished second in the all-around both the King Arthur meet this past January in Bourbonnais and the Gateway Classic in Belleville in February.

Two of her teammates also did well in the St. Louis Classic meet. Allison Jennings, 11, was fifth in the all-around, and Sevasti Binolis, 14, placed sixth.

The Midwest-Illinois Gymnastics and Dance in Godfrey state qualifiers are Olivia Swagger (Level 6), Madison Honke (Level 7), Jaylee Evans (Level 6), Caroline Cain (Level 6) and Allison Wooden (Level 6), Sammi Hentrich (Level 6), Ruby Pruitt (Level 6), Sevasti Binolis (Level 8), Paige Mouser (Level 8), Sophie Rose (Level 6) and Allison Jennings (Level 8).

“It’s a good feeling to know that you’ve worked hard to achieve a goal,” Mouser said in a recent interview. And what was her reaction to finding out she had won the all-around?

“I was shocked,” Mouser said. “I had some good practices leading into the competition, but I didn’t think I’d finish first.”

And what makes her achievements that much more amazing is that she’s an insulin-dependent diabetic who was also recently diagnosed with a gluten allergy. It means Mouser has to have a gluten-free diet, lest she becomes ill.

Even with the obstacles, Mouser is enjoying a standout season.

“She’s having one of her best seasons ever, even with the diagnosis,” said her dad, Ryan Mouser. “She’s the oldest girl on the team, a level 8, so she’s an inspiration to the younger girls in the club. I am absolutely proud of Paige and her accomplishments.”

Her coach, Louise Moehn, is equally proud of Mouser as well.

“She is a really good kid, and very hard working,” Moehn said of Mouser. “I find her kind and helpful to classmates and teammates. And also as a diabetic, she’s overcome quite a bit.”

Mouser is assisted in managing her diabetes by her mother, Tina, and serves as an inspiration to others on her club and classmates.

“I think she’s inspirational to other kids who might have something like this,” Moehn said.

Mouser’s personality is one that’s very giving and friendly to others, and she’s always willing to help her teammates and other people as well.

“She’s one of the most genuine, nicest and inspirational persons that you’d ever want to meet,” said Ryan Mouser.

And Mouser knows that it’s important to be someone that her younger teammates can look up to as well. As a younger gymnast, she looked up to one of her former teammates, McKenzie Butler, for inspiration.

“It’s good to be looked up to,” Mouser said. “I know what it was like looking up to someone and wanting to be like her, so it’s a great feeling.”

Mouser is set to take up tumbling soon, which she was a national champion in when she was younger. And with two years left in high school, there’s also college coming in the future for gymnastics. There’s also the possibility of competing in college down the road as well.

“I wouldn’t be surprised,” Moehn said. “I could see the makings of college for sure. It’s not easy.”

Even Mouser herself isn’t sure about her long-term goals in the sport, but she does know that she’s willing to work very hard to achieve whatever goal she and her family sets for herself.

“I haven’t thought about my long-term goals in gymnastics,” Mouser said. “I do want to keep getting better every day.”

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