

Micah Miner overcomes odds to be tops in country for tumbling and trampoline

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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Woodland Elementary student Micah Miner, 8, is already attracting top national tumbling and trampoline status for his age group and putting his school and Edwardsville community on the map.

Miner is with the **Edwardsville YMCA Tumbling and Trampoline Team**. Miner was second in the nation on the floor (Power Tumbling); second in the nation on the Trampoline and third in the nation on the Double-Mini in the USTA-United States

Trampoline And Tumbling Association-Nationals held in Rapid City, South Dakota, on June 16 through June 20.

What makes Miner's story even more powerful is that he has Pervasive Development Disorder, also, commonly called PDD. This refers to a group of conditions that involve delays in the development in some basic skills. Most notable are the ability to socialize with others, to communicate and to use imagination. Micah Miner's father, Maurice, said in simple terms Micah has a high functioning degree of autism. Micah is involved in the CASTLE program within Woodland and the Edwardsville School System. CASTLE stands for Children Achieving Success through Therapeutic Life Experience. SIUE partnered with the Edwardsville School District for CASTLE and Micah participated last year, his father said.

Maurice Miner said there are some who view a person with autism being like the Dustin Hoffman character Raymond in the 1988 movie "Rain Man," but that is not necessarily true. He said inventor Alfred Einstein had high functioning autism.

"Micah is very intelligent," Maurice said. "He has the capacity to not give up, which is the key for him."

During Micah's first tumbling exercises when he was 4 or 5 years old, he couldn't focus and had to start back on basic exercises, his father said.

"One time I showed my wife how to do a back handspring and Micah was looking looking at it and thought he could do it," Maurice said. "He was able to do it and then he did backflips and now twists and double backs two flips in the air backwards and more."

Micah placed first in USTA Southern Illinois State Finals on the Floor (Power Tumbling); first in State on the Double-Mini and third in state on the Trampoline. State competition was held in Pana on April 18-19.

Micah's main competitor all season was Douglas Lackland from Extreme Air Gymnastics out of Springfield, IL.

The Woodland Elementary youth will move up to an even higher level for his degree of difficulty for this Tumbling and Trampoline competition season.

Often, Micah has not understood which competition was bigger than another. He works hard in practice and meets regardless if it is a basic meet or a state or national competition.

“We just tell him we are proud of him and don’t focus on the distinction of place with him,” Maurice Miner said. “We always try to make sure he is safe. He is not always aware of things that can injure a person. We have to be careful with him, but he is smart about what he does.”

When Micah was at a birthday party when he was 5, one of the coaches on the YMCA saw him doing flips and came to us and wanted to try him out for one of their advanced classes. He tested out of the first and second class and then moved to the advanced class and became part of the team last year, his dad said.

Micah practices four to five times a week and loves every minute of his time tumbling and using the trampoline, his dad added.

“Micah is upset when it is time to go from practice,” his father said. “He loves it that much.”

“The Illinois Metro East and St. Louis area has some of the most talented athletes in tumbling and trampoline in the USTA,” Maurice said.

The Woodland tumbling/trampoline star has set high goals for the future, hoping to become a national gymnast and eventually be an Olympic athlete.

With his tenacity and dedication, his father said he believes anything is possible for his young son, who has already overcome large odds to national success.

"We (my wife, Kimberley, and myself) love the saying on the back of our team's parent t-shirts and it sums up how we both feel about Micah.

"It says, "Most People Wait Their Entire Lives To Meet Their Favorite Athlete. I'm Raising Mine," his father said.