

Wong chases her dream

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Chapman's Allyn Wong keeps her focus on gymnastics.

There are bad days for Allyn Wong, with those tired, unmotivated workouts where for a rare moment she wishes she were doing something else.

She'll think about some of the things she's missing thanks to her passion for gymnastics. Her mind will wander to the soccer field or horseback riding, and she'll allow for a moment of reflection.

"From the moment I started doing gymnastics, I loved it," Wong said. "I quit everything for gymnastics."

The 14-year-old Chapman ninth-grader has a tunnel vision that's focused on an athletic scholarship and maybe even a spot on the national team. This weekend could provide a strong push forward when she will be one of eight state girls competing in the Region 8 USA Regional Meet in Tampa, Fla.

Wong said she began taking classes at Kozeev's World of Gymnastics around age five. At seven she began to get serious about becoming a team member. As her workouts increased, she had to slowly give up other activities she loved -- ballet, soccer, piano, horseback riding.

"I wish I could do more school-related things with my friends, but I'm always here and I don't regret anything because I love it," Wong said. "I miss the other things sometimes, but this has been the main part of my life and I couldn't imagine life without it. If you're going to put your life into gymnastics, you've got to focus and put all your power into it."

There was a time Wong decided the sport wasn't for her, the summer after sixth grade, but even away from her training, it still weighed heavily on her mind. In fact, those two months off are really her only regret.



She strayed from her individualistic ways and found it wasn't for her. Wong enjoyed time with her friends, went to camp for three weeks up in the mountains, and stayed away from the gym.

But she still had the passion. She'd write workout schedules for herself and go through warm-ups and drills every morning to stay sharp. There was no coaching, just a girl and her dream, one that was simply on hiatus, but wouldn't dissipate all together.

"I just wasn't sure I still wanted to do it, but I'm over that and not going to (take time off) again," Wong said. "I enjoyed myself, but I regret that I could be at a different level."

With summer a time to work on skills for that season's routine, coach Chris Smith said it took a great deal for Wong to get her skills back and then another year to gain confidence.

"The talent has always been there, but she finally turned the key and said, 'OK, I'm ready' and here she is," Smith said. "For so long, she didn't think she could do it and if you tell yourself you can't do it, then it's not going to happen."

"One setback doesn't ruin everything," Wong said. "That missed summer set me back, but I'm still learning new things and achieving my goals. The harder I work, the easier it is and the better I get, the happier I am."