

Chapman balances confidence and skill

SPARKLE CITY:
Gymnastics event
begins today

By **TREVOR ANDERSON**
For The Herald-Journal

As a child, Alyssa Chapman would pretend she was an acrobat as she balanced along the top beam of a fence surrounding the backyard of her home.

She had no fear of heights, but her parents were a little anxious to find a safer activity for their daughter. For an 8-year-old there was only one natural alternative — gymnastics.

You won't find this Dorman High School junior skirting atop the backyard fence anymore — she has since progressed to even greater feats of elegance.

However, she said her favorite event is still the balance beam.

Chapman holds the rank of a level 10 gymnast at Kozeev's World of Gymnastics in Spartanburg. This is the highest rank in competitive gymnastics.

She has blossomed under the tutelage of former Soviet Union gymnastics legends Anatoly and Tamara Kozeev. The Kozeevs developed the talent of some of the most decorated Olympic champions like "The Russian Swan" Svetlana Boginskaya and Olga Strazheva.

This weekend, Chapman will continue her quest for perfection as she competes in the

Sparkle City Invitational gymnastics tournament at Kozeev's alongside 350 competitors from Aiken, Greenville, Greenwood, Florence and Tennessee.

The 17-year-old said she isn't too worried about her competitors and expects to win.

"I don't get nervous," she said. "It makes you obviously shaky to the judges and you don't want that. I'm just going to go out and try to beat my previous scores without worrying about other competitors — just like I do in practice."

Chapman said that invitational tournaments such as this are good opportunities for young gymnasts to showcase talents and hopefully attract the attention of colleges.

The top three schools that she would like to attend on a gymnastics scholarship include the University of Kentucky, Auburn and N.C. State.

"The important thing is that I improve each time I compete," she said. "I need to work on getting my routines and scores up to a consistent level. I have worked very hard and I'm confident."

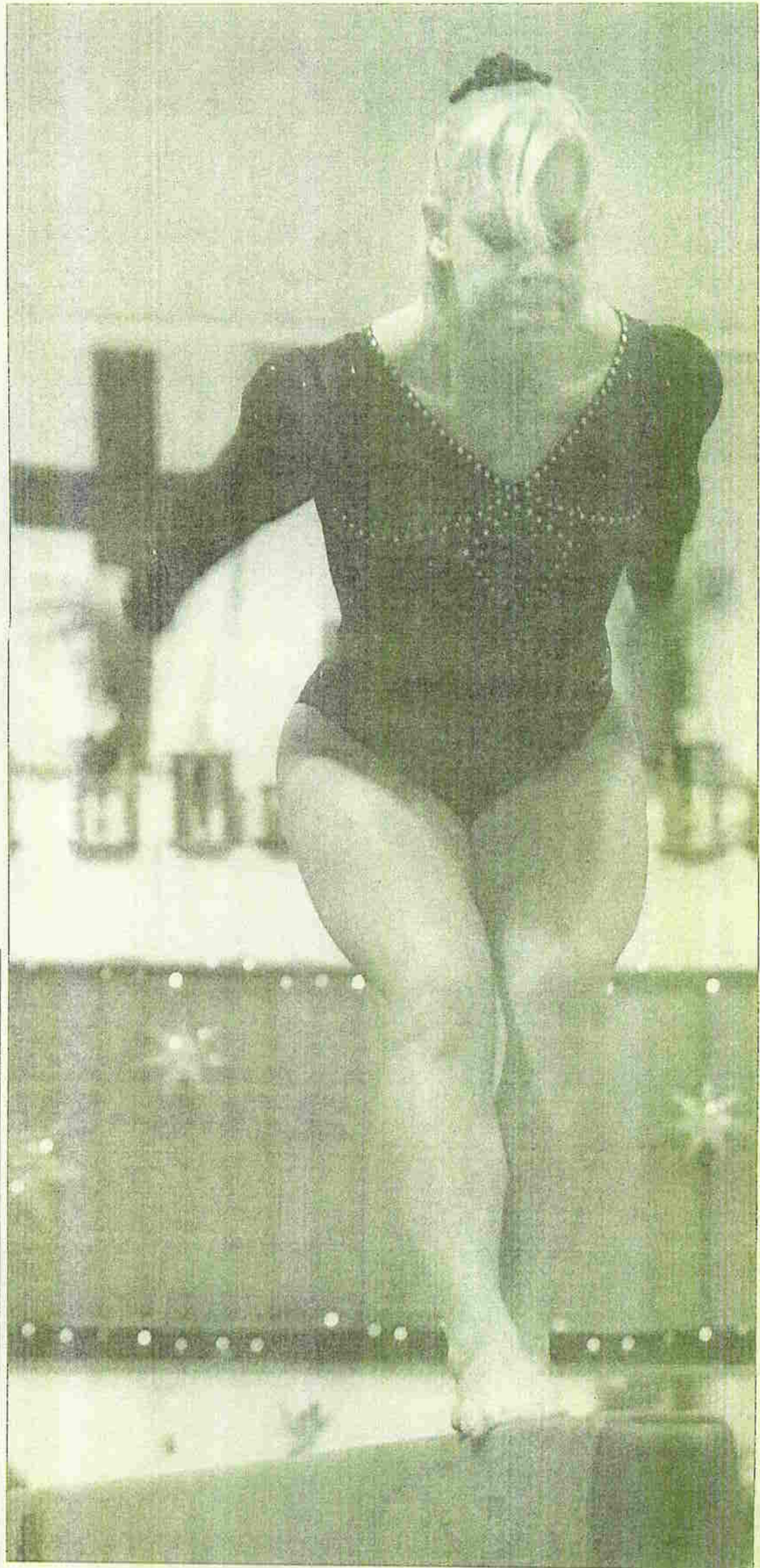
According to Chapman, she trains anywhere from 15 to 30 hours per week and attends competitions nearly every weekend.

As an 11th grader at Dorman, she is a member of the National Art Honors Society, the National Honors Society and Beta Club. She also maintains a 4.65 GPA. For more information about Kozeev's or the Sparkle City Invitational, visit www.kozeev.com.

FOR THE RECORD

STEADY SHE GOES

STAFF PHOTO BY ALEX C. HICKS



Alyssa Chapman, a junior at Dorman High School, performs her routine at the Sparkle City Invitational gymnastics meet at Kozeev's World of Gymnastics on Sunday. Chapman, who has a rank of level 10 gymnast, the highest in competitive gymnastics, was among 350 gymnasts at the meet.