



Advocate staff photo by DENNY CULBER

Central High gymnast Chase Brown will conclude his high school career with the LHSA state gymnastics meet beginning Friday at Baton Rouge High.

Being all he can be

Brown to take gymnastics love to Army

BY DAMIAN FOLEY

Special to The Advocate

When most people think of soldiers fighting in Iraq, the vision that appears in their mind is what they have seen on television.

It's an image of men and women trudging through shattered villages with loaded rifles ready at their hips. These soldiers are not Hollywood-style action heroes who leap through midair to dodge bullets, keeping coiffed hairstyles intact.

Perhaps one day Central High gymnast Chase Brown will bridge that gap.

Brown has received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Once Brown graduates and is part of the U.S. Army — hopefully, he says, as a medic — he will be equipped to leap to evade danger.

After all, Brown is also one of the nation's top male gymnasts. This week he concludes his high school career with the Louisiana High School Athletic Association's State Gymnastics meet that begins Friday at Baton Rouge High with boys competition. Girls competition is Saturday.

Brown has reached the national finals three times, was a three-time USA Gymnastics Academic All-American and was a three-time Louisiana state all-around champion. In-

terestingly, Brown turned down the Air Force and Navy academies and signed to compete for Army. He will compete for 18-year Army head coach Doug Van Everen.

"The coach there was really in-depth," Brown said. "Their gym program is really good, and the school was much more prestigious. Their gym team was the best of the three. Everything about the school had a good feeling."

Brown joins a signing class that includes the North Carolina all-around runner-up, the 2008 Houston National Invitational all-around champion, and a 2006 Junior Olympic Championships qualifier.

However, for Brown, enrollment at Army is also the beginning of the end of a gymnastics career that began when he was six. He competed nearly uninterrupted through high school, save for a minor detour when he traded parallel bars for a springboard for a brief stint as a diver.

Often, when one door closes another one opens. That's precisely what Brown hopes will happen when he graduates from West Point.

After studying biological sciences, Brown plans to return home to Louisiana to attend the LSU School of Medicine to train as an anaesthiologist before undertaking his five-year commitment to the

army.

"I'll spend six weeks over the summer in basic training, and then I'll start my school work," said Brown of his future plans. "I will continue my military training during the summers.

"I've wanted to be an anaesthiologist since my 10th-grade year in my free enterprise class when we did a mock career day. When I came across that one I was just really interested in it."

While on the surface it may look as if gymnastics, medicine, and the military have little in common, Brown, who currently spends 17 hours a week training and working out at CG's Gymnastics, insists that the skills he has learned in the gym will hold him in good stead when he is trying to operate — literally as well as figuratively — under fire.

"My competitiveness, determination, and dedication will definitely give me an edge," he said.

His current coach, James Clement, agrees and predicts success for his protégé.

"He's one of the best kids I've had to coach," Clement said. "He helps with the kids and teaches classes in his off hours from working out. He gets straight A's in school, and that shows, he's very intelligent and keeps up with everything."