

Kurt Browning sure has come a long way.

The 22-year-old Caroline native recently became only the fourth Canadian in history to claim the world figure skating championships.

And while many feel that such an accomplishment isn't exactly deserving of merit I think it is.

Browning's rise to the top of the class shows that, at least in the long run, hard work and determination pay dividends.

It's a lesson everyone should take note of in whatever they do.

When Browning and I were much younger, we shared the same ice surface in Rocky Mountain House. No, I didn't figure skate. To me and the other kids I played minor hockey with, figure skating didn't take any talent and was a sport

"I'm gonna show you SOB's"

fitting for pansies and pansies alone.

Even when my coaches tried to dissuade me from that train of thought by saying Bobby Orr a boyhood idol at the time took figure skating before playing hockey, I still scoffed at the idea of dancing on the tippy-toes of skates. The skate blade is a foot long use it all, not just the toe.

Besides, those cutesy, frilly getups the young Browning wore were just too much. Hilarious.

So my entire hockey team sat and watched and laughed and made catcalls at the only boy on the Rocky Mountain House figure skating club.

Why couldn't he be like the rest of us manly nine-year-olds and don the hockey jerseys and helmets?

But Browning ignored us. He stuck his nose in the clouds, probably as if to say 'I'm gonna show you SOB's.' He worked and worked and eventually started skating at Royal Glenora here in Edmonton.

Now he's world champion. With fat contracts worth big bucks. And few if any are laughing at this 'skinny little kid dancing on skates like a girl.'

I don't know if he's looking back and laughing at the asses who made fun of him and said he had no future in figure skating, but if I were him, I know I would be.

I have a lot more respect for figure skating because of Kurt Browning. But those costumes still have to go.

Gymnast worried about program, Universiade

by Ajay Bhardwaj

Michelle Hannemann, CIAU women's individual champion has a perpetual smile on her face, she's suffering from the flu. "She's had it for three months," jokes Monica Kmech, captain of the Panda gymnastics team and a close friend of Hannemann.

The Panda gymnastics team, for two years running, are national champions in their sport. They boast another individual national champion, Panda Diane Patterson won last year. Hannemann finished second last year and Patterson landed second this year.

"Winning nationals is a real personal thing," Hannemann gestured. "I was disappointed with nationals last year. I'd injured myself on the last event at Canada West, so I wasn't ready. This year I really wanted to have a good meet."

She did. Hannemann won the balance beam, an apparatus she admits she's terrified of. "I'm chicken," she says. "I don't consider myself to be an overly-talented gymnast," says Hannemann.

"Michelle sets an example of working ahead," Kmech emphasizes.

Hannemann's hard work paid off to the point where she was ready to try out for Canada's Universiade team. However, all such plans were put on hold when she was informed by team coach Stephanie Bishop that Canada would boycott the games which will be held in Brazil.

"I'm disappointed," Hannemann says. "It's something I kept in the back of my head." Adds Kmech, with a note of sadness, "she had an excellent chance to

make it."

If missing the chance to go to Universiade was disappointing, then the lack of support for the gymnastics program has been disappointing too. Knowing that the program is in jeopardy every year has been difficult on the team.

"It's hard to stay motivated in the summer. You wonder if there's anything to work for," says Hannemann. "It's so unfair," continues Kmech. "I don't think it matters so much to the people upstairs (the phys. ed. department). Ya, we're bitter about it."

Winning nationals "is almost like a safety net," says Kmech, speaking about getting funding in the face of having their program

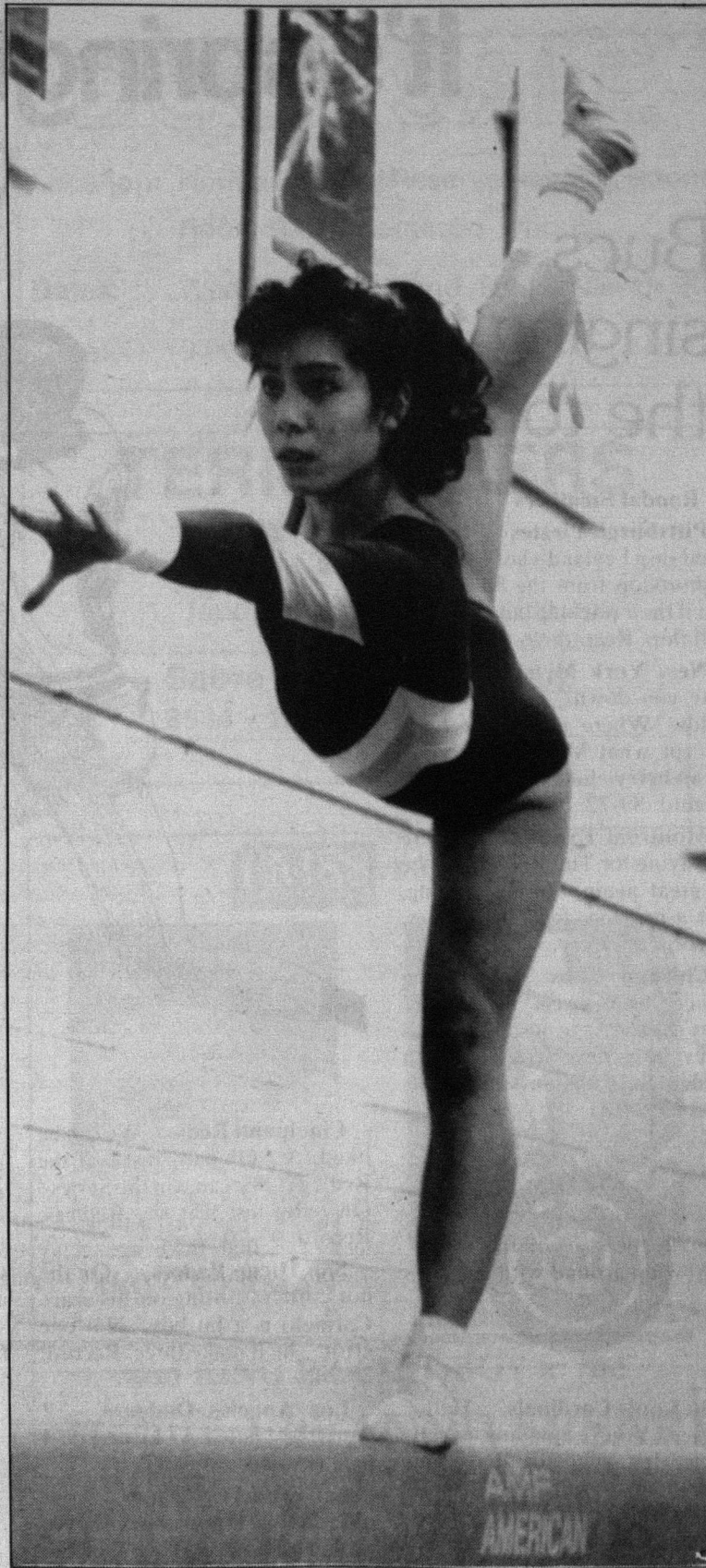


cancelled, while other teams which aren't very successful keep receiving funds.

Although the Pandas haven't received the support they would like from administration (but they were happy about 'adopt a Panda,' which raised funds for trips to Vancouver and Seattle), their program hasn't gone totally unnoticed.

Cheryl Hempstead, who is currently enrolled at the University of Brandon, and who is a top Canadian gymnast, is interested in transferring to the Panda's program.

"She can go anywhere she wants



Panda gymnasts worry about funding despite winning two CIAU titles.

to," says Kmech, "but she wants to come here. She hasn't seen our facilities yet, but Stephanie has

probably told her about them." The Pandas currently use a floor which was used for the 1978 Commonwealth Games. It's torn and ripped.

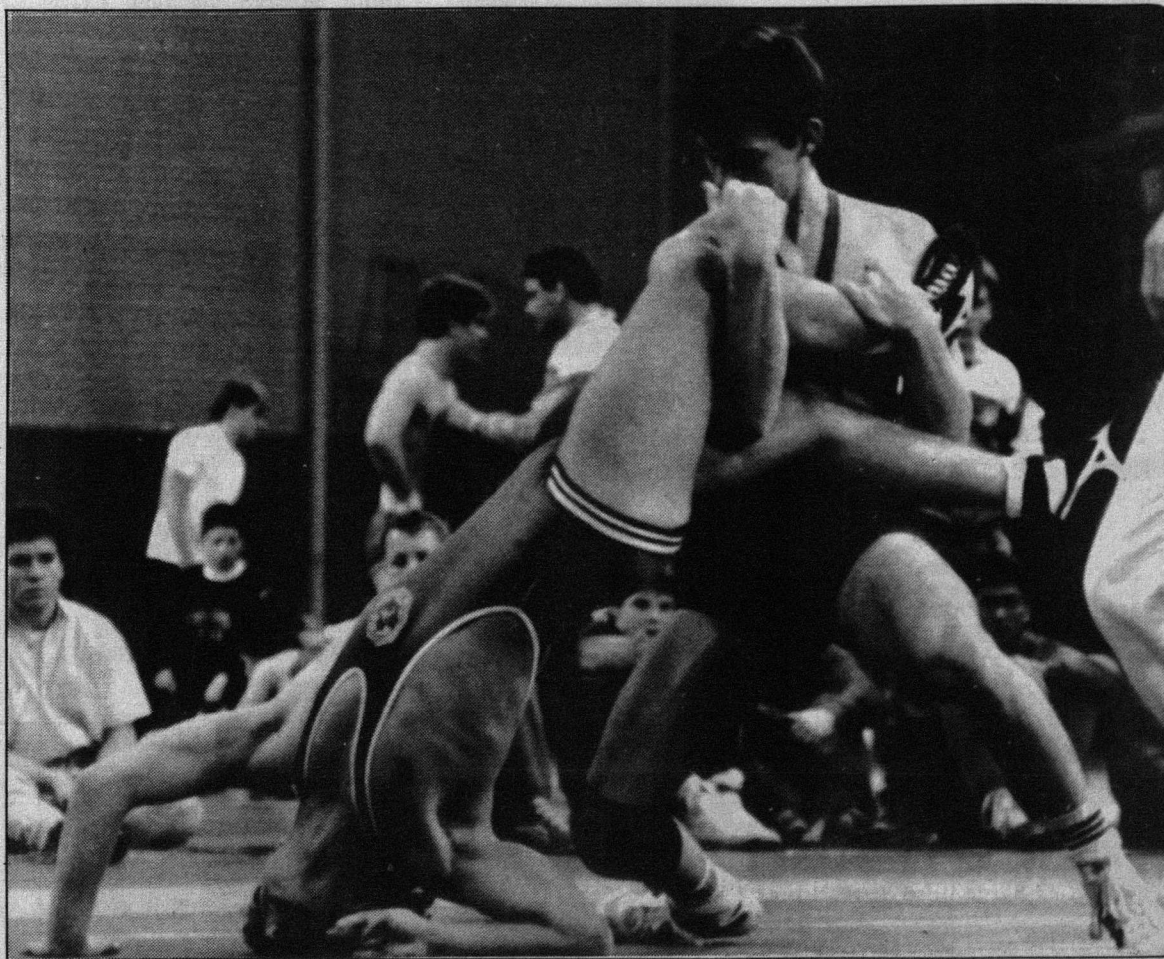
The Pandas had more praise heaped on them at the nationals, though. "After the third event, the McMaster coach came up to us and said 'you are the best team I've seen in my twelve years of coaching.' I was almost in tears," says Hannemann.

If the team stays together (rumor has it that Patterson may leave), chances are good that their 'mini dynasty' could grow into one of major proportions.

U of A hosts nation's wrestlers

by Alan Small

120 of Canada's top grapplers will converge upon Edmonton this weekend for the Canadian Senior Wrestling Championships. Both the freestyle and Greco-Roman titles will be on the line.



The country's top wrestlers maul at the Butterdome Friday and Saturday.