GYMNAST SOARS FOR ARMENIA

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Molly Irene Olmstead, The Daily Iowan, 14 December 2010

Houry Gebeshian will travel 6,153 miles from Iowa City to Armenia over winter break. But that's not the only place the senior Iowa gymnast is going. With a possible opportunity to compete for Armenia in the 2011 World Gymnastics Championships in October, the senior has an incredible future ahead of her.

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Houry Gebeshian will travel 6,153 miles from Iowa City to Armenia over winter break. But that's not the only place the senior Iowa gymnast is going. With a possible opportunity to compete for Armenia in the 2011 World Gymnastics Championships in October, the senior has an incredible future ahead of her.

Gymnastics is reputed to be a sport meant only for the young, but Gebeshian is breaking the mold by entering the elite gymnastics circuit after her collegiate career. By visiting Armenia, the birthplace of her parents, during winter break, the athletics-training major will begin the next phase of a gymnastics career she's followed since she was 7 years old.
Gymnasts are usually small and extremely thin, with tiny arms and legs, but Gebeshian is a muscular and broad-shouldered athlete without the "beautiful body type of a typical gymnast," she said. Her childhood gymnastics coach never predicted her to compete at the level she's at now, to win the 2010 Big Ten beam championship, or to appear at the world-championship level.
Head coach Larissa Libby knows otherwise.

"To be able to return to the elite gymnastics after collegiate gymnastics is rare, and it's a remarkable statement," Libby said. "She has an incredible opportunity for herself, and we all know she's going to succeed."

It's also uncommon for college athletes to balance their training schedules with a major as intensive as athletics training.

"I have absolutely no free time," said Gebeshian, who begins her day with strength and cardio conditioning, then goes to her team practice, then attends a full day of classes before going to the wrestling room and athletics-training room for the rest of the evening.

"The schedule that this young lady submits herself to is absolutely insane," Libby said. "But she's learned to balance her life. She's learned that once you figure out all of the things that you want to do with life, you have to figure out how to manage the work it takes to make them happen." Gebeshian has lofty goals, and these goals, paired with a strong work ethic, have molded her into a successful student, athlete, and leader.

"Houry is probably one of the most tenacious, hardworking people I have ever met," assistant coach Caleb Phillips said. "She's goal-oriented, determined, and she's relentless in everything she does."

Although not usually vocal, she leads by setting an example in the gym in the way she trains and competes. Her ability to set goals for herself and her unremitting pursuit of them sets a high standard for the rest of the team to follow.

Being a leader of the GymHawks has further motivated Gebeshian to chase down the goals she has set for herself in college gymnastics, elite gymnastics, and in the rest of her life.

"Because I encourage everyone to set goals and work hard, it has made me really work hard and come into the gym every day thinking about these huge aspirations and huge goals I have with the national championships, world championships, and my career," Gebeshian said. "There are bigger things out there for me."

When Gebeshian travels to Armenia over winter break, there will be no doubt that she's on track to achieve all of her goals. She'll work on getting Armenian citizenship and meeting with the Armenian gymnastics team, but she'll also set up the initial stages of her next great success.

Gebeshian plans to graduate in May. Following the World Championships in October, she will begin her career as an athletics trainer. Her goals are in front of her — ones she started nursing when she was 7, competing in club gymnastics with a tenacious work ethic and an unrelenting determination.

"I think Houry will be successful at whatever she wants to do, because she doesn't know any other way but to be a winner," Libby said.