REPRESENTING ARMENIA AT GYMNASTICS GAMES

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Khatchatur Nahabedian, Boston, 3 October 2011

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Lone and behold, the Massachusetts Gymnastics Center (MGC) was right behind their home. Houry started training there. Head Coach Patrick Palmer and coach Shixin Mao, an Olympian herself, took Houry immediately under their wings and put her in the competitive gymnastics group. Dr. Joe Massimo, exercise psychologist at MGC, enhanced Houry's resilience throughout the years at MGC. At Grade 8 Houry had to make the choice of either training for the Olympics or going to college, as gymnastics is a costly sport, with no financial returns. There was no way Houry would give up gymnastics; she chose education first and then the possibility of going to the Olympics to represent Armenia, the birthplace of her grandparents. As luck would have it, Houri learned that Paul Varadian, the father of a couple of gymnasts training with Houry at MGC, was Armenia's liaison for the Olympics. Houri's mother called Varadian for information, and was told of the possibility that Houry might represent Armenia.

During her last year in high school, after visiting a number of universities with her mother, Houry chose University of Iowa (UI). She says that as soon as she stepped into the university's gym, she knew it would be the right place for her; it felt like home. Knowing Houry's determination, her parents consented to her choice of faraway Iowa, trusting her judgment. Now in her last semester of her undergraduate studies, Houry is being trained by Larissa Lowing Libby and Linus Gavieka, her coaches at UI. This week Houry will represent Armenia at the World Gymnastics Championship in Tokyo, a prerequisite for going to the Summer 2012 Olympics in London.

Houry Gebeshian to represent Armenia at 2011 World Gymnastics Championship

PanARMENIAN.Net 29 September 2011- Former University of Iowa women's gymnast Houry

Gebeshian has advanced her gymnastics career to a level aspiring gymnasts dream. She'll take the next step Oct. 7 at the 2011 World Gymnastics Championship in Japan.

Gebeshian began competing at the age of seven. She was a state champion and national competitor as a prep before becoming a three-time All-Big Ten selection, both academically and athletically, for the Hawkeyes. Although her eligibility has expired, Gebeshian isn't putting an end to her career. The Newton MA native will represent Armenia at the 2011 World Gymnastics Championship.

Gebeshian will not only be representing an entire country, the birthplace of her grandparents, she will be competing for Armenia by herself - a one person team. Armenia possesses a wealth of talented female athletes but lacks the funding needed to recruit, train and showcase such talent. Personal success will remain high on Gebeshian's priority list - it always has been - but she understands her role for the country, gymnastics and women's athletics in general, an article on kcrg.com says.

"My job for Armenia is not only to compete, but to show female athletes in Armenia that it is possible to compete on an elite, international level," said Gebeshian. "The talent is there. I want to encourage them to pursue their goals and hopefully inspire them to advance to that next level, similar to what I'm doing."

Gebeshian's family has connections with a liaison to the Armenian Olympic Committee. After a successful Big Ten season and an invitation to compete as an individual in the all-around competition at the 2011 NCAA Championships, Gebeshian clearly displayed the talent to compete at a higher level. The invitation was extended, with a mutual understanding of the broader objective, and Gebeshian quickly accepted.

"I knew that I wanted to continue to compete so this was an easy decision for me," said Gebeshian. "I was born and raised in the United States, but my family is from Armenia. This will be a great honor."