

MIZZOU

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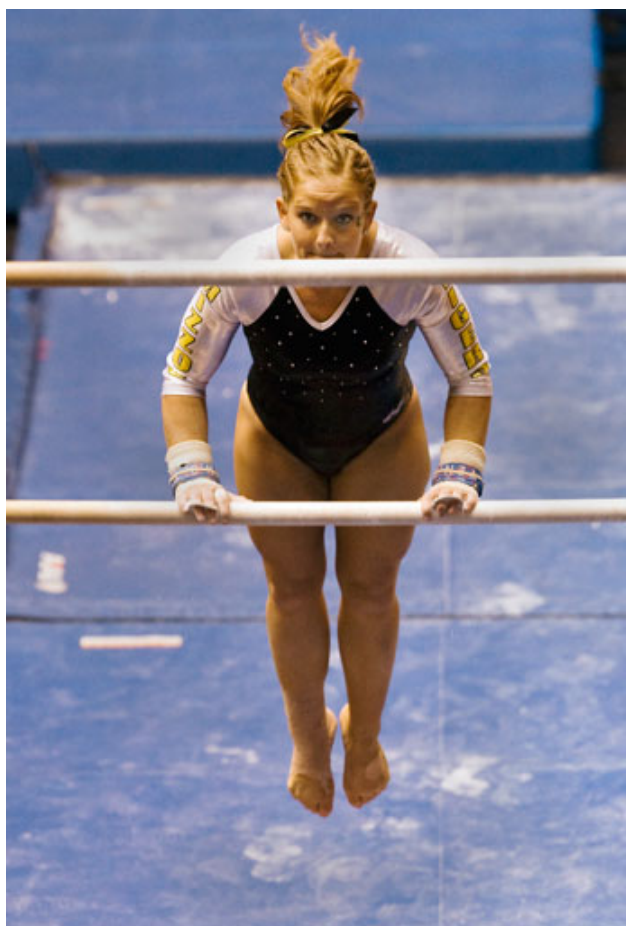
Around the Columns

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On Feb. 26, 2010, senior All-American gymnast Sarah Shire bounded from the beam, beaming. Fans at the Hearnes Center, which has housed MU Gymnastics for 31 seasons, witnessed one of the best performances in program history. Her career-high 9.950 score on the event included a perfect 10 from one judge, and at night's end, she had shattered the school all-around record with a 39.725.

At 4-foot-11, Shire is a giant in Mizzou athletics. The diminutive dynamo secured MU's first No. 1 individual all-around national ranking on March 14. During her career, she won a record 13 Big 12 Gymnast of the Week awards, back-to-back conference titles and two Big 12 Gymnast of the Year awards in 2009 and 2010 (she was co-gymnast of the year in 2009).

Although the Missouri native's career represents the high point for individual accolades, Shire has always been a spirited team leader. She led the No. 15 Tigers to upsets of No. 5 Georgia and No. 8 Oregon State in the Columbia Regional April 10 to advance to the NCAA Championships April 22 in Gainesville, Fla. Mizzou bowed out after day one, but with a new facility in the works, an annual presence in the national rankings and Shire's national






Senior Sarah Shire became the first No. 1-ranked NCAA all-around gymnast in Mizzou history, and she led the Tigers to the NCAA Championships in Gainesville, Fla., in April 2010. Photo by Rob Hill

spotlight exposure, the trajectory of MU gymnastics looks promising.

Team commitment — which has included consistent performances from sophomore Mary Burke, junior Alex Gold and senior Danielle Guider, among others — also has helped elevate Mizzou gymnastics.

“Coming back to Mizzou was the best thing I’ve ever done,” says Shire, who began her career at the University of Utah but returned to Missouri in 2008. “It’s made me a better person, athlete, friend, daughter — it’s really made me a better everything.”

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