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INTERVIEW WITH ALICIA SACRAMONE

Q&A with Olympic Gymnast Alicia Sacramone

We talked with the two-time world gymnastics champ--and found out all about her Olympic-sized goals, the crazy training schedule she follows, and why she always has perfect hair

Amy Van Deusen

NEW: WH Interview with Alicia post-Olympics

Alicia Sacramone has been the go-to girl for U.S. gymnastics for the past four years. After just missing the '04 squad, she became a world champion on floor at the 2005 Worlds. Last year, she helped the team win its second-ever world gold with a [clutch performance](#) on the same event. Now it's finally an Olympic year again and she's looking for even more hardware in Beijing.

What's your schedule like right now?

During the week I have workout every day from 9 to noon, then I get to rest, then back to the gym from 4:30 P.M. to 8:30 P.M. On Saturday I have one workout from 9:30 to 12:30. I took a year off of school (Brown University) to train for the Olympics, so my schedule is flexible. I'll go back to Brown next year.

I do extra cardio and stretching sometimes, but do most of my conditioning at practice. I do probably 3 hours of cardio a week, and about an hour every day of [strength training for gymnastics](#).

Do you have eating rules that you follow when you're training?

We always try to eat pretty healthy and get proteins and veggies--a balanced diet. I try not to deprive myself of anything. I don't do the low-carb thing or anything like that.

Tell us the five foods that you couldn't live without.

Pineapples, strawberries, frozen yogurt (any kind!), Clif Bars, and chicken. Are those boring?

Do you have any guilty food pleasures?

I love chocolate. I like milk and dark, but definitely not white.

You must feel under the gun a lot. How do you handle stress?

[My iPod is my best friend](#). I don't leave home without it, and I listen to a lot of John Mayer and other mellow R&B stuff. When I'm home, just relaxing with my family (parents Gail and Fred, and older bro Jonathan) gets my mind off things.

You came close to making the 2004 team, but didn't quite. This year you were practically a lock. What's changed in the last four years?

I'm in a lot better place this time. I have a lot more experience. I've been on the last three Worlds teams, and that's been a big confidence boost. It's helped me learn to compete with so much pressure. I had the skills in 2004, but it was all a maturity thing. Now I'm ready.

What kept you going after the disappointment of 2004?

It was really hard, and hard to watch the Games knowing I could have been there. I took some time off and evaluated what I really wanted to do. I realized I still



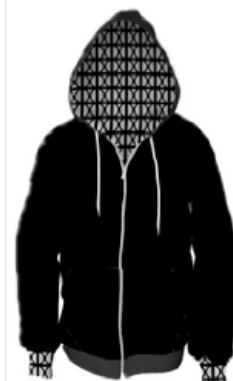
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wanted to do gymnastics, and I still had the talent. The year after, 2005, was my best year ever. I won a world title on floor. So that was definitely incentive to keep going!

The U.S. team won the World Championships in 2007. What does the team need to do to win in Beijing?

I think we have to go in there with a positive mindset. We have a really talented group of girls who have worked really hard. We did it once, so we can do it again. We have the skills to win, we just need the right frame of mind.

What are your personal goals for the Olympics?

My main goal is to be a team captain, and lead them to a team gold medal. Individually I would like to come home with some medals too. I would love to win vault and/or floor!

Will you continue after 2008?

It depends how my body is holding up. If I'm healthy, maybe I will. I really want to go back to school and finish up my sociology degree.

What's your favorite part of being a gymnast?

I love being able to go out and compete in other countries. It's so cool to meet new people and represent your country. It's an opportunity I know I won't have forever.

Your least favorite part?

That's a no-brainer: the long training hours!

How do you keep pushing yourself on tough days at the gym?

I remind myself that I've been working for this so long, that it'd be silly to give it up after so many years of hard work. Also, that this tough part here is temporary, and that the Olympics are so close, I can make it through anything now.

If you could do any other Olympic sport, which would it be?

I would do water polo, because it's so different from gymnastics. Even though I think it would be very hard for me to play, I still think it looks like a lot of fun.

Your mom owns a salon. Do you always have perfect hair?

I don't think my hair is perfect all the time—but I can get it done whenever I need it!

If you could go to dinner with any celebrity, who would it be?

I'd die if I went on a date with Justin Timberlake or Steven Strait.

What's the one piece of clothing you live in?

I'm a jeans person. Any jeans, though they have to have some stretch because of my leg muscles. It's really hard finding a good-fitting pair of jeans for a gymnast. I'm only 5'1" so I almost always have to get them altered.

[Alicia's workout](#)

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