

Spurred on by Olympic dream

Gymnastics

THE prospect of competing in the Olympics makes the 160-kilometre round trip from Korobeit to Prahran each day worthwhile for budding gymnast Svetlana Sanders.

The 15-year-old has been making the journey from her family's farm outside of Korobeit for nine years to train with the Victorian Women's High Performance Centre.

Svetlana trains about 32 hours a week across six days, mixing it with her year 9 studies at Melbourne Girls' College.

More regular pastimes for teenage girls have taken a backseat for Svetlana, with school, training and travel dominating her weekly schedule.

But she says it is a sacrifice well worthwhile if she can achieve her dream.

"I have been doing it for such a long time now and it has just been a part of my life," Svetlana said.

"I just love it."

She said her main priority was working towards winning Olympic selection.

"I definitely want to make it to the Olympics one day," Svetlana said.

Her first target will be trying to break into the Aust-



ralian team for the world gymnastics championships next year.

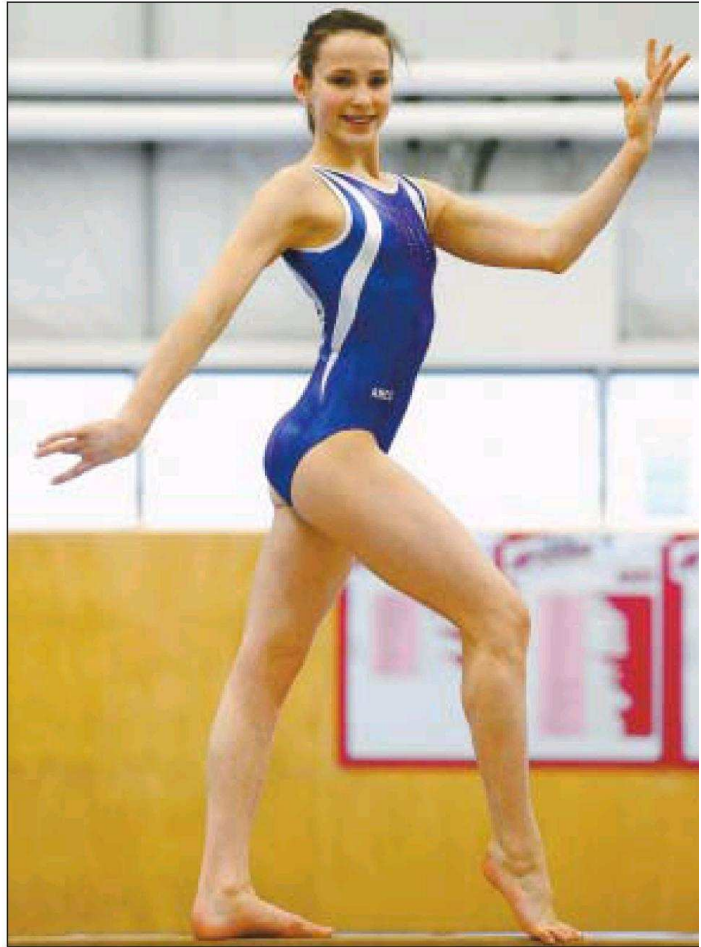
"I will need to get all my skills up and keep competing well at the nationals," she said.

Svetlana took up the sport when she was six after her mother, Tatiana, took her to Kindergym in Bacchus Marsh before she joined the Moorabool Gymnastics Club.

She was invited to the Victorian Institute of Sport program and made the Gymnastics Australia-Australian Institute of Sport Junior Olympic Squad.

In July, Svetlana competed in national championships in Perth, claiming gold with Victorian teammates in a teams' event.

"I was very pleased considering last year I was in no competitions because of a back injury, so it was good to get back into it," she said of her performance at the nationals.



BY PATRICK O'MEARA

Svetlana Sanders, 15, at the Victorian Women's High Performance Centre. S13MT97