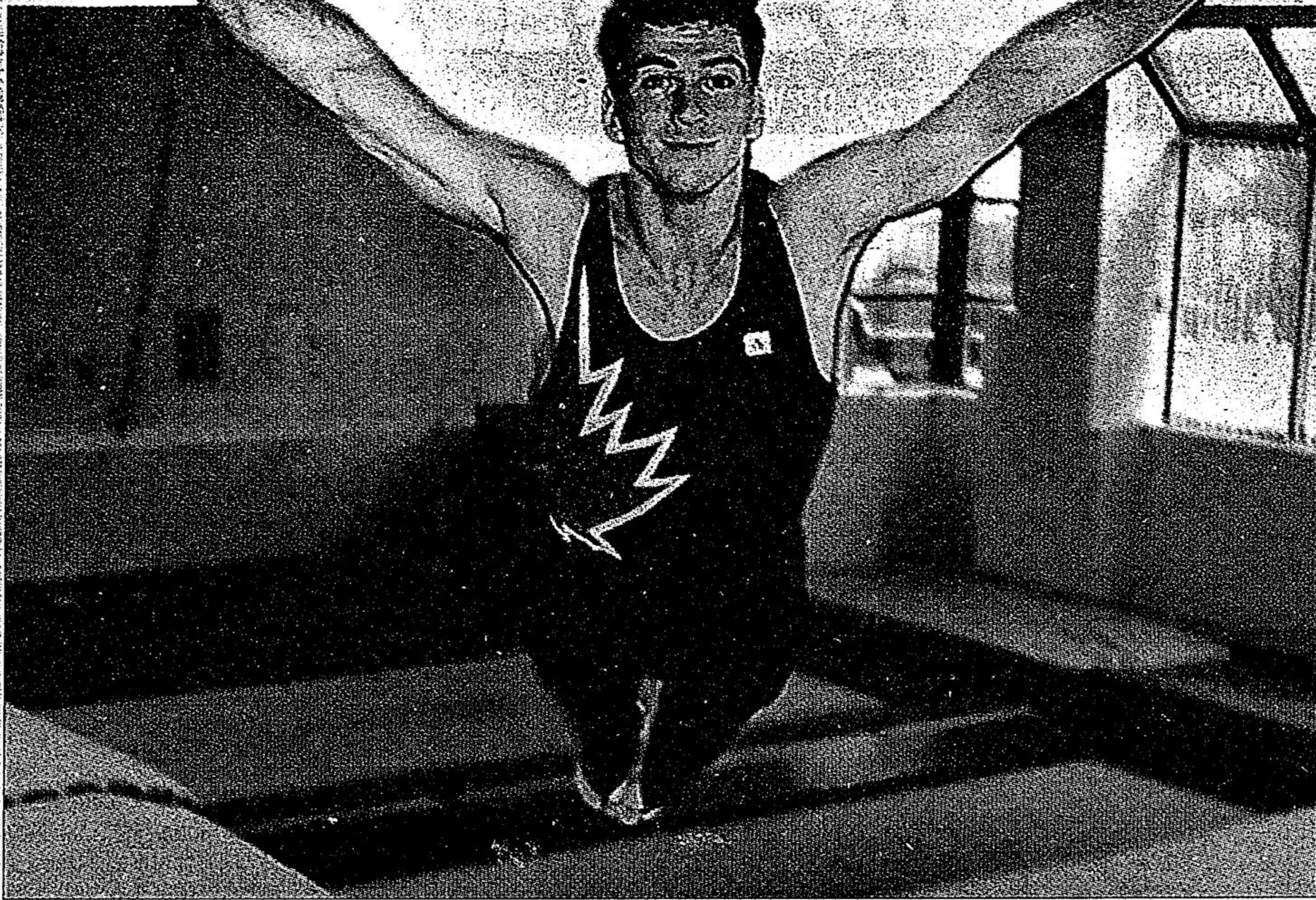


OLYMPIANS



'It's the biggest sporting event in the world ... I'm confident I will do well.'

— Mathieu Turgeon, competing in trampoline

STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Olympic dreams take flight

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

Ten routines in 20 seconds. That's the number of manoeuvres Mathieu Turgeon will have to perform within a prescribed time when he gets on the trampoline in the pursuit of a gold medal at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia. Finishing 11th out of 12 entrants in last year's Olympic qualifier, the 21-year-old Markham resident is optimistic he can improve on that ranking. In addition to capturing this year's Canadian individual title and owning

an unofficial world record for degree of difficulty in a routine, Turgeon went overseas in June and July to compete in two World Cup events. At the first in London, Turgeon finished third in synchro. He followed that result with a seventh-place finish in Vienna, Austria.

But of that result, the second-year York University student was quick to point out he finished third among the participating Olympic qualifiers.

"I think that I've improved a lot since that time," said Turgeon.

In Olympic competition Sept. 23, Turgeon feels Alexander Moskalenko, the four-time World Cup champion

from Russia, and Dimitri Poliaroush from Belarus, the 1996 World Cup champion, will be favoured for the gold and silver medals. After that though, he feels third place and on are up for grabs.

Noting he will be the youngest of the 12 entrants in the qualifying round, Turgeon prefers the role of underdog.

"It'll be interesting. Everyone has on and off days. The track to make the finals is the top eight. Then it's a fresh start into the finals," he said.

"So, for example, if I finish eighth in the qualifier, I've really got nothing to lose going into the final."

Training at the Skyriders Trampoline Club in Thornhill prior to departing for Sydney, Turgeon said he's in the process of fine-tuning his routine under the tutelage of his Skyriders coach, Dave Ross.

Having coached Turgeon since he first entered the club Feb. 1, 1990, Ross feels his student has made plenty of positive inroads.

"He's doing amazing. He's just 21 years old. The top two performers in the world (Moskalenko and Poliaroush) are in their 30s.

See COMPUTER, page 21.

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