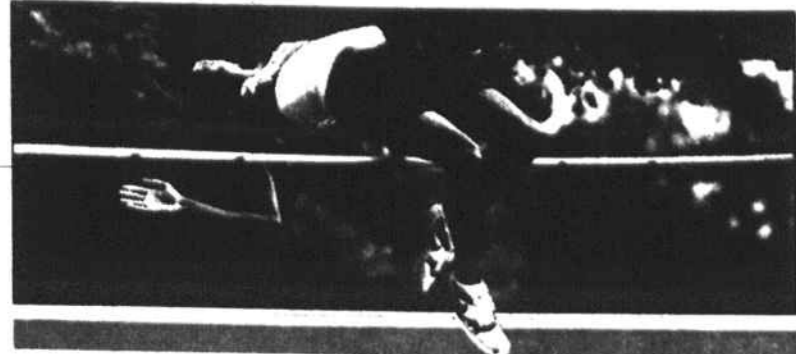


Sports

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Jowers honored as Coach Of The Year

By Chronicle Staff

John Jowers is one of three people who were honored as Coaches Of The Year in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County by the Winston-Salem Sports Commission last Wednesday at the Stratford Rotary Club monthly luncheon.

Jowers, the honoree in the youth/volunteer category, was joined by Jesse Haddock of Wake Forest (college division) and Dale Ijames of Glenn High School (prep school division).

The Sports Commission annually honors individuals who have made a positive contribution to the young people in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County community. Each winner received a statue which was sculpted by Winston native Butter Fisher.

Jowers, a familiar figure in the youth sports arena in Winston, has enjoyed a very successful year as a basketball coach and the season isn't over yet. His 13 and Under AAU basketball team at the Winston Lake YMCA won this year's state tournament and qualified for the AAU nationals which will

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**-John Jowers
Winston Lake 13s coach**



be played in August in San Antonio, Tex. Jowers has worked with Winston Lake's YBA and AAU programs for the last three years.

The Winston Lake coach doesn't limit his involvement with youth to only one sport. For the past 12 years, he has served as the league representative

for the Tiny Vikings of the Northwest Midget Football League. He has also been active in the Twin City Little League in baseball during that time period.

"It was really an honor just to be nominated," Jowers said, "but I never expected something like this from such

a well-known organization like the Sports Commission. But while I'm very pleased to receive the award, I'm even more pleased that the commission recognizes volunteers. There are so many men and women all over the city who work with youth and they don't get paid to do it. And there are times when you could even call it a thankless job."

For Jowers, however, working with young people has its own rewards - the kind of reward that makes it very worthwhile. "I like to win just anybody else and I'm just as competitive as anybody else,"

he said. "Winning and losing isn't the most important thing. It's about providing kids with some positive avenues. Sports is one avenue that gives you a better chance of relating to young people."

"What I try to do is instill some

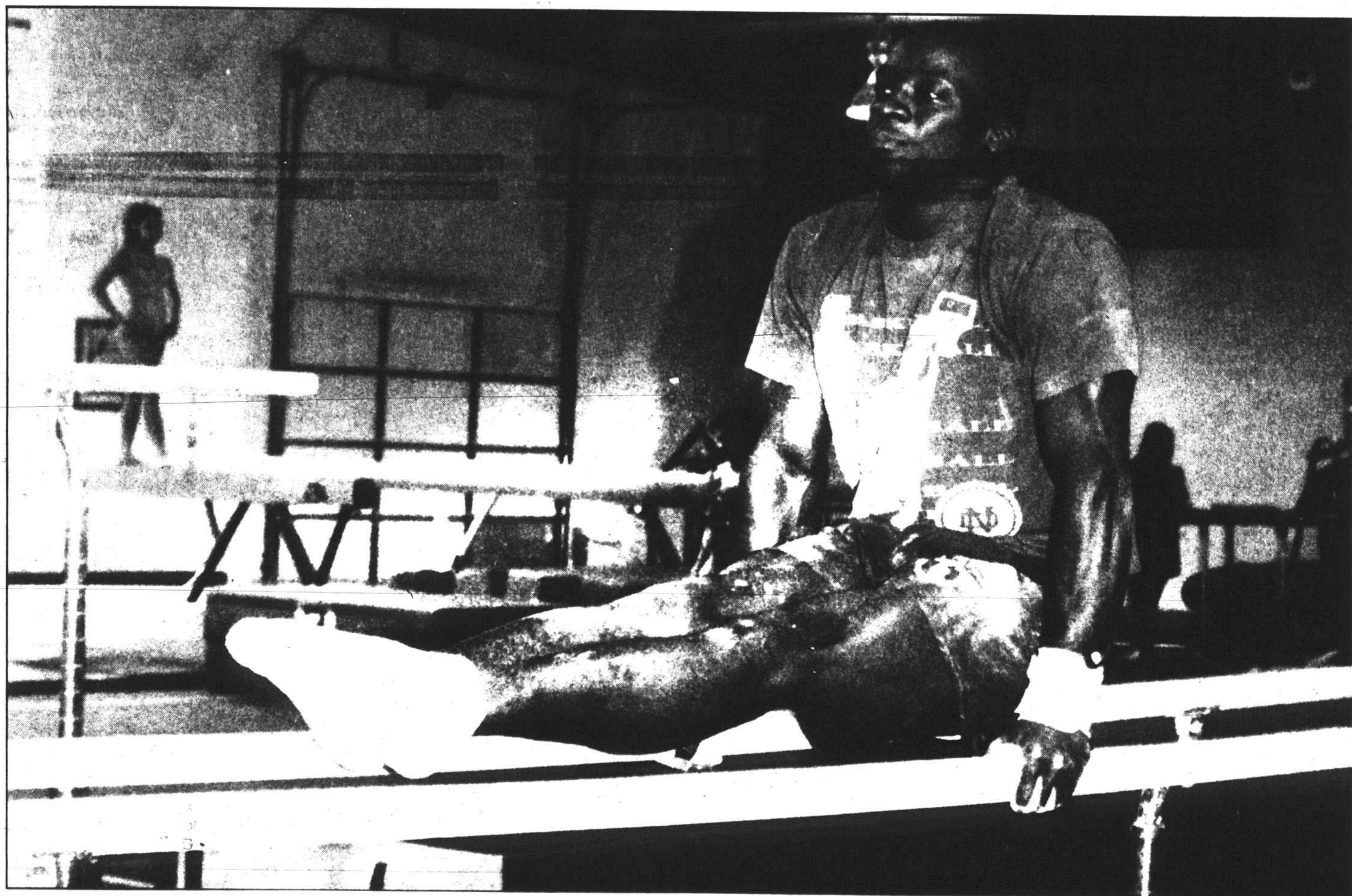
kind of values and character in our youngsters. Hopefully, they'll pick up those things and be better off because of that. If I'm able to stop someone from going astray, then it's worth it."

As a youth coach, Jowers has encountered a varied sampling of youngsters who come from vastly different backgrounds. In dealing with youngsters, he often finds himself assuming multiple roles - as a father image, big brother, friend and confidant.

In Jowers' mind, being straightforward about what he believes is proper, enables him to better relate to the youth that he comes in contact with.

"My religious beliefs and spiritual experience is what I try to relate to youngsters," he said. "I tell them that you have to commit yourself to God because there are problems in the world that are much bigger than all of us. You'll always go as far as you can when you make God a priority in your life."

Young makes his dream come true



Young's talents were discovered by Ron Brown, a volunteer with Big Brothers/Big Sisters Inc. Brown was so impressed with Chris' back yard tumbling that he decided to take the then, nine-year old to a gym in order to expose him to gymnastics. Young, a two-time national vault champion, has been a regular at the Salem Gymnastics Center ever since.

Photo by Craig T. Greenlee

By CRAIG T. GREENLEE
Chronicle Sports Editor

You'll have to excuse Chris Young for giving himself a couple of stiff smacks to the face. After systematically honing his considerable gymnastics skills for nearly a decade, Young's fantasy is now reality.

The real deal begins tonight when the 18-year old flips his tassle as a member of West Forsyth High School's 1992 graduating class. In two more weeks, he's headed north

to attend school on a gymnastics scholarship at the University of Minnesota.

Young's rise to prominence has been almost missile-like. Fact is, there are times when he still wonders if everything that's happened to him is for real.

Nine years ago, Young wouldn't have bet a rusty nickel that he'd be a major force in junior gymnastics at the national level, or that he would be viewed as a potential Olympian in the coming years. But success has

a way of changing one's mindset. For example:

- Won the vault and placed second overall at the '92 USGF nationals, in spite of having his training temporarily derailed because of serious knee ligament damage which required surgery. Missed the overall gold by .05 points.

After a dismal showing in the first round of competition, he returned the next day and recorded an eye-popping 55.6 out 60 points in the optional routines, which

proved to be the best mark of the meet. Entering this year's nationals, he was ranked No. 1 in the country in the Class I, 16-18s division.

- At the '91 nationals, captured the vault and placed second in the floor exercise. Also finished fifth in the pommel horse and sixth in the parallel bars. Young's finish earned him a spot on the U.S. junior team.

Those feats were enough to convince the low-keyed Young that he can go far in this sport. Just how far remains to be seen.

"When I first started, I never thought I'd be in it this long," he admitted. "But after my first nationals [in '90 as a 15-year old], I figured I could do very well ... well enough to get a college scholarship."

In terms of pure athleticism, Young has few peers at his level. And yet it's ironic that because of his athleticism, he came perilously close to not being in the position he's in now.

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