

Practicing key for baton twirler

By Tammy Batey
Emerald Associate Editor

When Jill Westover was four years old, her older sister took a baton twirling class. Westover was a year too young to enter the class but she watched and learned — imitating her sister and creating her own moves.

At five, Westover excitedly took her first baton twirling class and practiced, practiced, practiced. Her hands grew calloused as she'd repeat a move 100 times in her backyard until her mother would urge her to come inside and rest.

"I was a pretty odd kid," Westover said. "I was pretty intense at what I did."

Westover is now a 22-year-old University senior who twirls with the University Marching Band. She is a certified coach who teaches a baton class at Ridgeview Elementary School in Springfield.

But in the 17 years since Westover began twirling, she continues to practice, practice, practice. She can now twirl four batons and is working on five.

"When I have goals I'm trying to reach, I'm not going to let anything get in my way of giving it my best effort," she said.

Westover grew up in California where baton twirling was a more visible sport. Her family's move to Oregon when she was 12 was tough.

"Here in Eugene, I was on my own," she said. "I would practice on tennis courts."

Westover's mother, Joyce, said her daughter is self-motivated to try new things because she enjoys the challenge. Jill recently took up juggling for the challenge. With all of her activities, Jill practices again and again.

"She attacks everything full speed ahead," Joyce said. "She was the opposite of most kids who you have to encourage to practice. With her, we had to tell her to stop practicing."

Westover's years of practicing the baton are not without their rewards or their injuries.

Westover began competing at age 10. A year later, she and four other girls won the National

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Juvenile Twirling Team award.

At 12, Westover beat the undefeated champion in the two-baton at the U.S. Open Baton Twirling Championships.

When Westover was 14, she pulled her left hamstring and changed all her routines so she could compete in the state competition.

"I was injured, but I wanted to compete," she said. "I wasn't about to not compete."

At 16 and 19, Westover won the U.S. Open in the three-baton. The second time she won the award, she had 46 stitches in her right knee.

"I'm a stubborn person," she said.

This past summer, Westover decided to compete for the last time in the U.S. Open. Washington twirling coach Kathy Forsythe worked with Westover for six months choreographing her routine for the competition.

"She had some miraculous ability to handle multiple batons," Forsythe said. "She's probably the best baton twirler in the country at this time. Some kids will cop out and want to go for the easiest route. She always wanted to challenge herself."

Westover picked up prizes in the collegiate category for the two-baton and the three-baton. Ironically, she almost didn't make it to her last competition.

"We had to sell old costumes and old batons for money," she said.

Westover said she dreams of opening a baton-twirling school — and she will continue to practice the sport she has mastered.

"I'll keep doing it so I don't get rusty," she said. "I don't ever want to lose my abilities."



Jill Westover, senior, practices twirling her baton. She performs with the University Marching Band and can twirl four batons at once.

HARASSMENT

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records law, the victim is only allowed to know if the perpetrator was or wasn't disciplined, but the victim cannot know the nature of the discipline.

A federal compliance auditor who recently completed an on-site review of the University's affirmative action programs found, among other things, that the investigation process takes too long and that those directly involved receive too little information about the out-

comes of these processes.

"I think there's a big problem with sexual harassment in most universities, and this university is no different," Drescher said. "Other universities have found better ways of dealing with the issue, and we have not."

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