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## Rough and Tumble

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### **Athlete blends martial arts with power tumbling**

Round-house kicks and barrel rolls don't necessarily win any points on the spring-loaded runways of power tumbling, but they are a part of what helped power tumbler Jeff Diamond make it to the Trampoline and Tumbling World Age Group Championships as a member of Team USA.

Diamond, 15, is the only athlete from Utah on the team, which draws only four athletes from around the nation in each age group. Halli Russell, Diamond's coach at Edge Sports in Pleasant View, said that Diamond qualified as the second pick for the team by placing third at the U.S. Challenge and third at the Stars and Stripes Cup.

To qualify, athletes had to compete in both events and meet minimum scores. Athletes were awarded points for their places at each event, which led to their selection.

Diamond began his journey to the championships in Quebec by practicing martial arts moves. For six and a half years he worked on splits and free style moves, which he said are similar to skills needed in tumbling.

Power tumblers sprint down a spring-loaded 6-by-88 foot platform and throw a series of eight elements.

"It (tumbling) was different but I got the hang of it easy because I did lots of tricks and stuff in karate," said Diamond.

Diamond has only been tumbling for three years and is already a Level 10 tumbler with aspirations to move up to the elite levels. Level 10 is the highest age group level before moving to elite.

Diamond's mom, Randi Diamond, said that Jeff wanted to switch over to tumbling earlier, but they had put so much time and effort into martial arts that he had to finish that up before moving on to a new sport.

"For quite a while he wanted to do power tumbling, but we told him he had to get his black belt first. Almost the minute after he got his black belt he decided he wanted to do power tumbling," she said.

Russell said that it's not too unusual to get kids with different sports backgrounds who tumble.

"Tumbling kind of flows into everything -- martial arts, dance, cheer. It's kind of becoming an overall background to have," she said.

But she did say it's unusual to get someone who has advanced as far as Jeff in just three years.

"I had to work with him and stretch him out, but he caught on fast and he already had a lot of strength, which helped him out a lot," said Russell.

"He's really easy to coach. He's self-disciplined and self-motivated," she added. "I just think he loves the sport, and you've got to love the sport to go all the way to the top."

Russell said that if he wants to, Jeff can go all the way to senior elite, which is the highest competing level in power tumbling.

Diamond said he's excited to meet other tumblers from different countries, since 850 athletes from 32 different countries will be competing there.

"I'm excited to be able to compete at a meet that big, but I'm also excited to meet new people that have the same interests from different countries," said Jeff.

The championships started Oct. 31, with Diamond's age group, the 15- and 16-year-olds, competing on Nov. 9.