

Gym Rats: Basic Training

Mary Reiss

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"I'm gonna land on my head," worries Morgan, the young female gymnast and storyteller in the book, *Gym Rats: Basic Training*. Morgan loves gymnastics at the Gym Club and is working her way up to competition level along with her best friend, Madison. The two are so close that their coach, Deb, call them "Gym"—Madison, and "Rat"—Morgan. The girls don't mind the teasing because they know it's all in fun.

The first book in a series about the sport, *Gym Rats* is written for children and pre-teens interested in gymnastics. While the story revolves around Morgan and Madison, who practice hard three and four days a week, encourage each other and fellow class members, and write notes to each other in the notebook the two 'gym rats' share, author Mary Reiss also provides coaching tips and instructions to readers about one of the most demanding of sports. In this story Morgan is afraid of doing a round-off back handspring without being spotted (helped) by the coach. As the book progresses, so does Morgan, as she conquers her fear.

The story is followed by sections called "Coaches Corner" and "Drills to Skills," helpful tips for understanding the sport, plus a glossary of gymnastics terms.

For boys and girls in the elementary years who are already avid gymnasts or who would like to be, this book is bound to please. Written in simple, understandable language, this is a good resource for gymnastics centers and libraries as well. This is an uncomplicated book, with simple plot and characters. A third-grader gymnast who whipped right through the book offered equally uncomplicated praise: she pronounced it "good."

Mary Reiss is a former NCAA Division I competitive gymnast, who also coaches. She is writing this series to "give young gymnasts an opportunity to read books that mirror the excitement they feel for the sport."

PENNY HASTINGS (September 4, 2010)

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