

Games in sight for girl who lost her way

By Youth Affairs Reporter
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TRAMPOLINIST

Cassie Farmer has fought back from the depths of addiction and despair – and now has the 2008 Olympics in her sights.

The 19-year-old from Para Hills, who began competing nationally in trampolining aged 10, dropped out of the sport two years ago when she fell into a life on the streets and developed an addiction to drugs and paint sniffing.

"I got into the wrong crowd at school," Cassie said. "They stopped (paint sniffing) and I kept going."

"I was also into speed, trips, alcohol and dope."

The teenager blamed it on a need to rebel and "past hurts and rejection".

"I just felt like it was something that would numb the pain. I was just depressed," she said.

"I'd been rejected a lot (by friends) and it was kind of a way to deal with it."

In between staying with

family and friends, Cassie would run away to sleep in parks and schools around Para Hills, finding shelter in sheds and playgrounds.

"I wasn't really scared, because I was always off my head," she said.

"I didn't really need to eat (either) because I was high on drugs all the time."

Cassie found paint a cheaper option to other drugs available.

"Before I was 18, I used to stand outside the shops and ask customers for paint for my skateboard or something and they would buy it for me because I looked so innocent," she said.

"As soon as I turned 18, I'd buy it myself."

She scrounged money from friends and family when staying with them and hid the cans in spots around town where she slept.

The lifestyle was a far cry from when Cassie and her identical twin sister, Tammie, became Australian Synchronised Trampoline Champions for their



PERFECT TENS: Cassie with her medals and, inset, in action yesterday.

Pictures: MARK BRAKE

age group in Queensland in 1995. "We got perfect 10s," Cassie remembered. "Every year, we would compete in the nationals. Me and my sister would always be first or second but we were always in the top three."

At age 15 they were both selected for the exclusive Australian junior international training squad.

The former champion has re-entered the sport – training with Tea Tree Gully Youth Club – after signing

up for a rehabilitation program with Christian youth organisation Teen Challenge five months ago.

The decision was prompted by continual health problems, including migraines, the flu and nose bleeds, and concern from family and friends, particularly Tammie. "We knew what each other was thinking and feeling," Cassie said. "It was really hard."

Last month, the 19-year-



old stepped back into the sporting spotlight when she won the double-mini trampoline and the synchronised trampoline with Tammie at the state titles at Blackwood Recreation Centre.

"Now (my family) has seen how much I've changed and I'm happy again," she said.

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