

**KARRISSA MARIE WIMBERLEY- Candidate for the James E. Sullivan Award
Nomination made and bio written by Karen Cammer**

Karrissa Marie Wimberley hails from Tallahassee, Florida. She is 24 years old, born on March 16, 1986, and graduated Magna Cum Laude from Florida State University in Graphic Design. Currently Karrissa is attending Graduate School for Math and Social Studies Education at the University of Georgia at Athens, Georgia. She is also the feature twirler for the University.

Karrissa began twirling at age six and has dedicated a great portion of her life to the sport of baton twirling. She is not only one of the greatest living twirling legends but she is also extremely humble. She knows how to keep her competition victories in line. If one would follow Karrissa on a game day performance, they would not only see her in action on the field but also on the side lines. After the games she takes pictures and signs autographs for the children. She loves to stop and interact with these kids and teaches them a little baton trick so they can feel the excitement and accomplishment of trying something new.

To add to Karrissa's busy schedule, she also volunteers for afterschool programs which are dedicated to keeping children in positive activities and focused on positive life choices. She helps with special needs children in her mother's school program. Karrissa serves as both an ambassador and a role model for the sport of baton. She is constantly providing guidance and positive inspiration to all children. She started a youth directional group which helps young people make positive life choices. Karrissa is active in both her school and community. She volunteers and does community performances. Karrissa holds well over one thousand volunteer hours for performances and clinics.

Karrissa's talents have her in high demand as a role model for young and old baton twirlers alike worldwide. She racks up as many frequent flier miles as a diplomat, and in some ways it is as if she is an ambassador of twirlers. "You learn so much firsthand. I've gotten to go to Japan, Australia, Italy and Holland," she said. "When you spend a week or so in a different country and live among the people who invited you, you start to learn a couple sentences from their language and experience things in their daily lives like their traditions at breakfast etc."

Karrissa, is constantly reinforcing the power of sports and good sportsmanship. In 2010 she was the first American woman to be placed over her Japanese competitors. In the true spirit of competition, she remained gracious and humble as always. A USA coach observed Karrissa calling over a Japanese competitor, after the two had just tied in a speed drill competition; Karrissa was presented with a victory shirt; instead of just taking one, she called her competitor over and asked her to pick the shirt she wanted first.

Karrissa competes internationally as well as here at home in the United States of America. She has collectively won 15 World Championships in twirling. Some of her major accomplishments in competition in 2010 were:

In the United State of America

United States Twirling Association: Adult Solo One Baton, Two Baton and Dance Twirl individual and overall Grand Champion. **She was also** awarded the most outstanding and inspiring performance for her Grand Champion solo finals performance.

National Baton Twirling Association: Senior Grand National Solo Champion, Collegiate Women's Champion, Overall National Collegiate Champion

Internationally

World Baton Twirling Federation: Australia-International Cup Championships: Adult Solo winner. Norway-World Championships: Woman's World Freestyle Champion overall silver medalist marking the first time in 30 years that an American woman has done that well.

International Baton Twirling of the NBTA: Belgium World Championships: Senior Solo One Baton, Two Baton, Rhythmic Champion, and Duet Champion

Karrissa comes from a "twirling" family. Her mom Cheryl is a coach and judge and her brother Sean is a former national champion in baton. Karrissa has twirled fire since her high school days. "At first I was afraid of it, and then my brother twirled with me in high school and he was a pyro," she said. "He was a senior and I was a freshman. He did three fire batons and all the crowds starting looking at him. That's when I said 'throw me the third one!'"

Karrissa was invited to perform for Cirque du Soleil and asked by a former world championship baton twirler to be a part of a Broadway production. "I think it would be so much fun and really exciting to do, but I want to make sure I have my degree first," she said. Athletes are training and competing to an older age now due to international and world cup championship level competition in the sport of baton twirling and are realizing they are just starting to peak at the previous common cut-off age of about eighteen.

Karrissa Marie Wimberley, a strong, creative and active community service leader, a solid and positive role model for athletes and non athletes alike, a true champion in baton twirling who clearly understands the power and importance of good sportsmanship, an outstanding academic student, and a highly qualified candidate for the James E. Sullivan Award as AAU's Athlete of the Year.