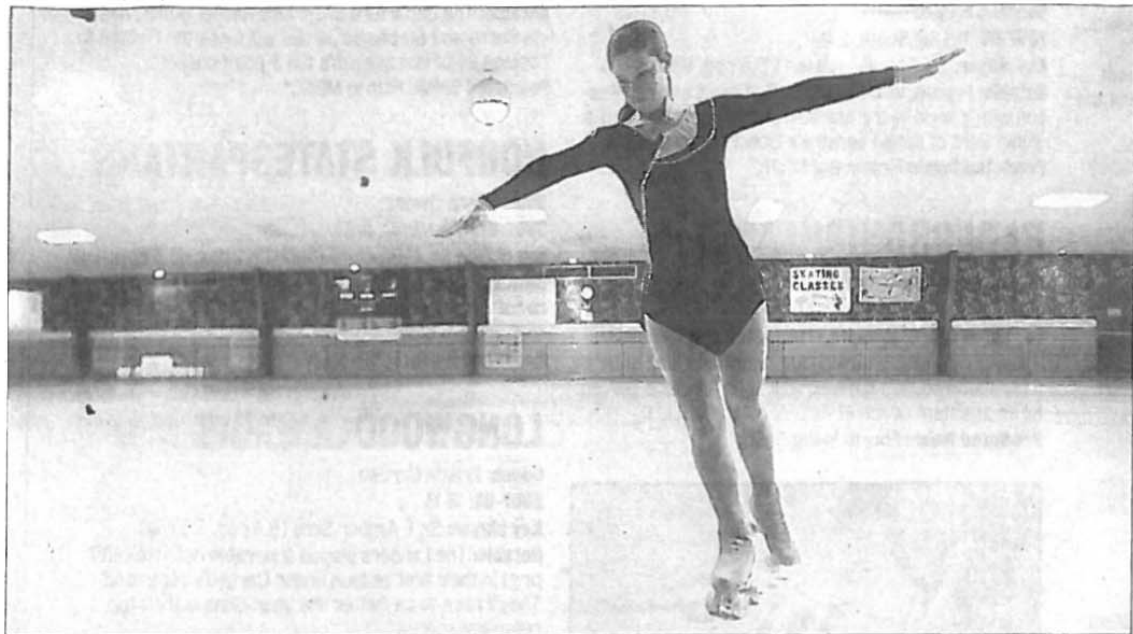


Laura Wright, a Mills Godwin High School graduate and J. Sargeant Reynolds College nursing student, is no newcomer to skating. The 20-year-old has competed at nationals every year since 1998.



EVA RUSSO/TIMES-DISPATCH

# On a roll . . . to Taiwan

## Wright takes skating skills to world championships

BY FRED JETER  
Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

**L**aura Wright has proven, again and again, she can roller skate with the best on this side of the world. Now, she's hoping to hold form on the other side of the globe.

The Mills Godwin High School graduate and J. Sargeant Reynolds College nursing student normally polishes her spins and jumps at Chester and Ashland skatelands.

Her next performance — which happens to be the biggest of her life — will be in Taepai, Taiwan, a staggering 9,463 miles and 13 time zones to the faraway east.

The island off mainland China is the site of the World Artistic Roller-Skating Championships. It's an event Wright qualified for through the U.S. nationals in Lincoln, Neb., and Southeast regionals in Greensboro, N.C.

"I do like Chinese food," Wright said, "but I am worried about adjusting to the travel, sleep and all of it."

Wright, 20, her mother Debbie, and coach Cindy Schrader left Richmond International on Tuesday. They had a one-night layover in Los Angeles to catch their bearings.

Then, it was another 6,776 miles across the Pacific Ocean to Taepai, a city of 2.6 million on the isle's northern tip.

**Culture shock?** Wright will spin onto the floor in world-class compulsory figures Tuesday against an array of international athletes.

"Laura will be fine," Schrader said. "She's been doing this all her life. She's got a great attitude."

Wright will be joined by two Ashland team members: Cassandra Miller from Woodbridge and Natalie Motley from Alexandria.

In Taiwan, Wright will perform in a costume designed by seamstress Patra Dayney of Ashland.

In Lincoln, Wright was second in world-class compulsories and fourth in freestyle. She will be the United States' first alternate in freestyle.

Schrader, a long-time international

performer, individually and with pairs partner Mark Howard, is a former U.S. team coach.

"The U.S. is as strong as any," she said. "Laura has just as good a chance as anyone, although the Germans and Italians are always up there."

**Like on wheels:** Wright can't remember when she wasn't on a roll.

"About as soon as I was old enough to walk, I was on skates," she said. "I practically lived at the rink."

Mother Debbie Wright is a veteran coach, although Laura lists the late Dink Hopson as her first instructor at Golden Skateworld in western Henrico.

To complement her skating, Wright took dance at Latin Ballet and gymnastics at Richmond Olympiad.

"This has been Laura's life, and she's very good at it," Schrader said.

Wright has been to nationals every year since 1998. In 2003, she was named Southeastern skater of the year.

Now, she has graduated to the world stage on the far side of the planet.



EVA RUSSO/TIMES-DISPATCH

Wright was second at Nationals in world-class Compulsories