

CU Colorado Springs graduate focused on gold ^[1]

May 27, 2014

By **Tom Hutton** | CU Colorado Springs

Austin Cook spent his first year out of high school in a strange city where he worked at a fast food restaurant by day and was pummeled every night.



For the then 17-year-old Cook, at right in blue, the transition from high school to training as a world class athlete was abrupt. The former junior national judo champion would eventually

become the 2013 National Judo Champion in the 66 kilogram weight class, a leader at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs, and be accepted to one of the nation's top medical school.

"On one particular night, I was taking a beating so ruthless that my eye was cut open and my front tooth was knocked out," Cook recently wrote. "I held back tears until the end of practice when I walked back to my car and wept. I wanted to drive back home to North Carolina to drink tea with my mom, walk dogs with my dad and sleep in my own bed."

Cook, whose hometown is Chapel Hill, N.C., swapped the fast food job for studies at CU Colorado Springs where he majored in biology and minored in chemistry. As a student, he worked part-time at an on-campus science learning center, part-time in a hospital emergency room, conducted research alongside a faculty member and formed a nonprofit organization with the goal of helping children become more active.

It's a track record that earned him a rare early admittance to Stanford University's School of Medicine.

On May 23, more than 1,000 spring and summer CU Colorado Springs graduates participated in commencement exercises. Cook's name was in the program as earning summa cum laude (with highest honors). But he did not walk across the stage or celebrate with classmates.

Instead, he is training full time for a June 14-15 judo world cup event in El Salvador. Cook will represent the United States in an event that is important to his next goal, participating in the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil.

"I had two dreams when I came to Colorado Springs – to get ready for the Olympics and to get ready for medical school," Cook said. "I've done one of those. Now, it's time to work on the other."

The University of Colorado Colorado Springs, located on Austin Bluffs Parkway in Colorado Springs, is one of the fastest growing universities in Colorado. The university offers 37 bachelor's degrees, 19 master's and five doctoral degrees. It enrolls about 10,500 students on campus annually and another 2,000 in online programs. For more information, visit www.uccs.edu [2].

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Intro:

Judo champ Austin Cook will represent the United States in an event that is important to his next goal, participating in the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil.

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