

# Comeback *Victory*

A gymnast's injury threatens to derail her MISS TEEN AMERICA 2006 chances, until her new talent routine saves the day



**STYLE AND SUBSTANCE:** Miss Teen America 2006 Brittany Monico poses for an official portrait — one of 5,000 photos she's to appear in. Her ultimate purpose was due as much to her fitness in Belmont and her brave final Talent performance after injuring her hand during preliminaries.



**D**éjà vu (da zhä voo) n. 1. Psychology. The illusion of having already experienced something actually being experienced for the first time. The date was July 8, 2006, but in the mind's eye of Brittany Monico, it could have been September 14, 2003. As she stood in the spotlight holding hands with the lovely Ilsa Levine, Miss Texas Teen America, she glanced up and saw Meghan Whitney Bryan, the then-reigning Miss Teen America, waiting to see which of the two girls would receive the national crown that she was holding.

Brittany's mind flashed back three years earlier when she had been crowned Miss Jr. Teen America by none other than Meghan Bryan. Brittany held her breath until the announcement came for the first alternate, and then the full impact of the moment hit her. She had done it. She had returned and Meghan had crowned her once again. It was definitely a déjà vu moment. This was the big crown, the one that she had been eyeing since she was 12 years old and entered her first Teen America state pageant. Now, at 16, she was a seasoned pro.

Winning wasn't as easy as it seemed. The 44 young women were the most accomplished group of girls that this pageant system has seen. The point spread at the top was in the single digits.

The field had arrived on a Saturday and spent a part of every day making appearances in Nashville. The remainder of the days and evenings were spent in rehearsals. By the end of the week, fatigue was setting in, but the delegates rallied for the two preliminary shows. By Saturday, the preliminary judges had rendered their decision for the Top 10: Lindsay Hanson (OH), Hope Wiseman (Chesapeake), Sarah Dale Simpkins (MS), Brittany Monico (RI), Katie Meadowcroft (DE), Chrissy Caporuscio (CT), Ilsa Levine (TX), Alexis Wagner (AZ), Courtney Cheatham (NV), and Sarah DeBruhl (Palmetto State).

The semifinalists competed again in Swimsuit, Evening Wear, Talent and On-