
◊ WMGF News ◊

December 10, 2002

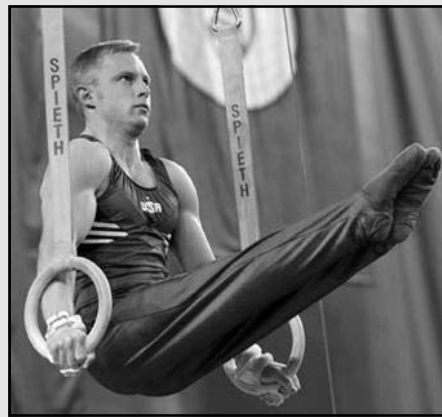
Season Preview

by Mark Russo

Normally at this time of year, I report on the season ahead. This will take place, but I must first divert your attention temporarily to the most unbelievable news: Our program reached new heights this November as UW graduate Jeff Johnson ('99) qualified to and competed at the 36th World Gymnastics Championships in Debrecen, Hungary!! Jeff is the first gymnast from the UW to compete for the USA at a World Gymnastics Championships, and most amazingly finished 8th on the still rings. There were several hurdles to get over along the way just to qualify for the USA team to this meet. As a specialist, Jeff needed to finish in the top two on rings in the two qualifying competitions leading up to a World Team Selection Camp. At this camp, his performance was evaluated and then a committee of coaches and judges selected the team. Then there was the incredible pressure of performing solo in front of the largest gymnastics crowd we had seen. Eight thousand screaming, whistle-blowing, cow bell-pounding Hungarian fans cheering for their country's own ring man, Szilveszter Csollany. Jeff performed his best gymnastics under this intense pressure which says a heckuva lot about the character of this hombre. With a Michael Jordan-like coolness, Jeff nailed consecutive routines to place him into finals... where he belonged! With the eight best ring men in the world, Jeff held his own and only his slightest error placed him 8th. Many observers felt that the ring competition was by far the stiffest of all the events and the results agreed with them. Jeff's 9.550 placed him 8th

WMGF

The Washington Men's Gymnastics Foundation is a non-profit organization that exists to assist the Men's Gymnastics Team at the University of Washington.



**Jeff Johnson on Still Rings,
2002 World Championships,
Debrecen, Hungary**

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while first place Szilveszter Csollany scored 9.725.

Though Individual Event Worlds happens sporadically, when it does you truly can observe the greatest routines on any one event. My mind was blown seeing so many great athletic routines that were very pleasing to watch (good form). As an example: on vault, the 2nd place vaulter performed two extremely difficult vaults, #1: handspring, piked double-front with a small step and #2: Tsukahara, double-pike, small step! Second Place!!! Wow! I'm very thankful I did gymnastics when I did! The next Individual Event Worlds is in 2005 and Jeff plans to make another run at the ring title then.

The barrier has been broken! Washington's gymnastics program has stepped into the next level. Jeff's accomplishment is truly remarkable considering the history of our program and the battles we have survived and won to keep gymnastics growing here in the Northwest. I am extremely thankful for Jeff's perseverance when many times he received scores that made no sense. I am also thankful for the positive encouragement and support from all our friends and alumni. Jeff's performance shows the world that gymnastics is very much alive and thriving here at Washington!

The season has already been energized by Jeff Johnson's stunning performance at Worlds. The team has seen Jeff practice and from his success they have committed to performing their best as well. Freshmen Graham Gordon (Albuquerque, NM), Jeff Fausz (Tri-Cities, WA), and 2002 Eric Hughes Scholarship recipient Scott Provence (Seattle, WA) bring new life to this year's team as

(Continued on page 2)

Husky Senior Ben MacColl

by Ben MacColl

In my last four years on this team, I have traveled to over a dozen different cities, seen the Grand Canyon, seen New York City from the top of the Empire State Building, basked in the sun at Venice Beach, ridden the Big Shot at the top of the Stratosphere in Las Vegas, and even competed in Mexico. That was certainly the most memorable trip for me; I had never been to Mexico before, and it was nothing like I expected. My most memorable meet, however, would have to be our home meet against ASU last March. We had a large, energetic crowd, we were pumped up, and just had a lot of fun. This year we hope to draw an even larger crowd.

Another thing I have always enjoyed is bridge jumping and doing other summertime activities with the team. However, I chose to miss out on some of those summer activities the last two years when I decided to work at a wilderness lodge deep inside Denali National Park in Alaska. Before, I never would have considered taking three months off of gymnastics, but when I asked Mark if I should go, he encouraged me not to miss out on such an experience, and I'm glad he did.

Part of what got me that job in Alaska was my excellent work ethic, which I attribute to being on this team. The work I have done in order to raise money for this team has been some of the hardest

work I have ever done, which in turn has made me a hard worker with a good work ethic when it has come to getting a real job. Working for the team has also made me appreciate more our ability to travel around the country every year.

For the next couple of years, I will still be in school getting majors in Forest Management and Conservation of Wildland Resources. Thus I still plan on being part of the team, working with them to raise money, and working for them, helping out with some of the administrative work having to do with the University of Washington. I will miss competing, though – mostly the traveling that comes with it.

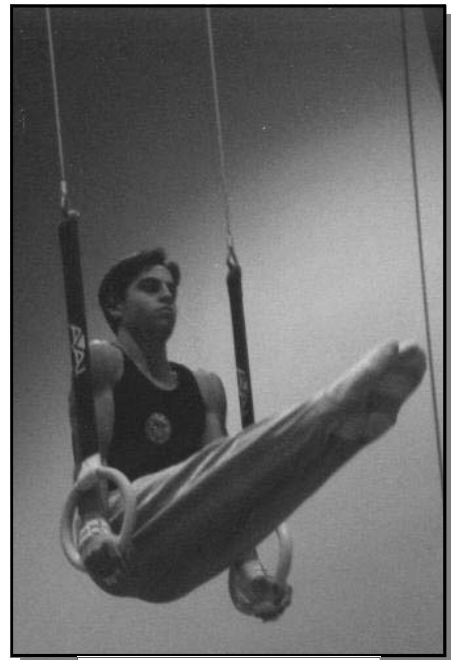
This team has been a way of life for me for the past four years, and it has made me who I am today. None of that could have been possible if not for all our supporters out there, the WMGF, and most of all Mark Russo, the most dedicated coach in the nation. Mark alone has taught me more about gymnastics, life, and myself than I ever could have imagined, and I want to thank him for that. Now, with one more season remaining, I wish to make it the best of all, by defeating the Arizona State team.

Season Preview

(Continued from page 1)

well as improved pommel horse ability. Seniors Aaron Cole (Kettle Falls, WA) and Ben MacColl (Seattle, WA) will be the meat of the line-up performing all-around throughout the season. Junior Jeff Crockett will look to lead the Huskies as he did last season. This is a close-knit team that feeds off each other's energy very well. It will be paramount that we start our competitions with a good first two events to get the momentum going.

Our travel plans include meets at the regular stops (Colorado Springs, Las Vegas, Phoenix, Los Angeles) and several new ones (Stanford, Dallas). Please come to our home meet and if you have travel plans that coincide with ours, please drop us a line and I would be happy to give you locations and times of our away competitions.



Senior Ben MacColl

Husky History, In Memoriam: Bob Hall, 1943—2002

by Dr. Eric Hughes

Bob died August 16, 2002 from complications of leukemia treatment. He was 59. Bob was born in Chicago and came to the UW on a gymnastic scholarship in 1961. He finished high in several events at NAAs (2nd in pommel horse and 4th in all-around) and led the team to a second place finish. Bob was a two-time All-American. In his senior year he was Captain, Most Inspirational, and Most Valuable. After graduation he competed for the US National Team. In 1988 he was inducted into the Husky Hall of Fame.

Bob leaves behind his wife of 36 years, Lynn, and three grown sons: Keith, Brian, and Eric. They have lived for many years in Beaux Arts Village in



Bob while competing for UW

Bellevue. After graduation from UW Dental School in 1969 he had his dental practice in Renton until his retirement on July 1, 2002.

Bob did not want a funeral or formal memorial service so Lynn decided to hold a gathering of his friends to celebrate his life. This gathering was held on August 22 in the Don James Center in Husky Stadium. Over 400 people attended. Lynn requested that memorial gifts be sent to the Washington Men's Gymnastics Foundation. Bob had been very generous as the top contributor to the foundation for many years.

Husky Senior Aaron Cole

by Aaron Cole

One more competitive collegiate year. One more year of fun with the guys. One more year of moving equipment, of late-night delicious dinners, of silly road trips with wacky talent discoveries, and of course the funny sounds and faces to go with the awesome personalities on the team. The trips and the bonding that we've experienced as a team have definitely been highlights of my UW Gymnastics experience.

Mark Russo took me under his wing when I was still wet behind the ears. I had just finished my first competitive year in Spokane as a Class 4 gymnast when I moved to Seattle to do gymnastics. Four years later I reached the highlight of my gymnastics career thus far by becoming an All-American on vault, rings, and All-Around at the 2002 Collegiate Nationals in Massachusetts.

After this year I plan to continue my gymnastics training with the team, but will only be competing as an individual at national meets such as Winter Cup and USA Championships. Basically the same thing Jeff Johnson does who just got back from the World Championships in Hungary. I also plan to attend Bible College in the next few years, and to marry my girlfriend Melanie the summer after next.

I would like to give thanks first to Jesus Christ my Savior; without the strength he has given me, I would never have made it this far. Also to my par-

ents who encouraged me to follow my Olympic dreams and move away from home and all those who have not given up on me. To Mark for his great coaching and two of the three part-time jobs I have. Finally, to those of you who have supported UW Gymnastics financially or with your time and muscle. Thank you doesn't say enough, but *thank you!* Hope to see you at our home meets.



Senior Aaron Cole

Husky Team Banquet – 2002

Remarks on Award to Mark Russo for Western Region NCAA Coach of the Year

by Gary Ackerman

I am Gary Ackerman, father of Graham Ackerman - who was coached by Mark Russo from age 7, when he started in gymnastics, until age 18, when he went, with Mark's blessing, encouragement and help, to the University of California at Berkeley - where he is now a member of their gymnastics team. Mark's endorsement of Graham to Cal Coach Barry Weiner made the difference. Most of you know that Graham worked out with the Huskies during his high school years.

In April our family went to Norman, Oklahoma – University of Oklahoma – to watch the NCAA Championships. At the banquet the evening before the competition began, they gave out a number of awards. Among the last to be given were the Coach of the Year awards. I cannot tell you how thrilled and excited we were when it was announced the University of Washington's coach Mark Russo was this year's winner for the Western Region. It was given in recognition of Mark's efforts to keep men's gymnastics alive at the University of Washington in spite of the lack of University funding or support. They commented on how well-coached Mark's teams were and how hard they competed.

It was all I could do to keep from leaping up from my seat and accepting the award for Mark on the spot. Instead, I asked for his plaque after dinner saying that I wanted to give it to him personally. I have known Mark as Graham's gymnastics coach and as coach of the Huskies for over ten years. In many ways Mark has been like a second father to Graham, helping him to grow up, mature and take responsibility for his own actions and development. I am sure he has had similar influences on many of the young men he has coached.

I would like to say a few more words, if I may, about what Bart Conner said as keynote speaker at the banquet. He spoke eloquently and movingly about his experiences on the University of Oklahoma team. He said that in many ways he remembered his years on his college team as being more

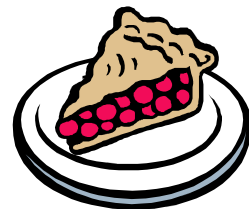
meaningful to him than his participation on the National Team in the Olympics and in other international competitions. He contrasted being on the National Team with being on the Oklahoma team. He said he got together only a few weeks a year with the National Team, while he worked out year round for four years with the Oklahoma team. He said the friendships and bonds formed with his Oklahoma teammates have been among his most enduring. He spoke of working through the injuries and the challenges of the sport and of participating in close competitions. In fact, he spoke the most about an NCAA Championship meet in which he finished second – and about how good he felt about that competition even though he did not win. It was a very inspirational speech.

I spoke with Bart briefly after dinner and told him of my connection to Mark and that I would be carrying Mark's award back to him in Seattle. He said to pass along his congratulations and to thank Mark for help Mark had given him in the past. Which is just like Mark – always willing to help the sport he loves so much.

I asked Graham if he wanted me to say anything for him today. He told me to say that Mark was a great coach and that he would not be where he is today without Mark's help.

I want to say one more thing about the Husky Team. I was talking with someone last week in front of Graham. I said how great it was for Graham to be on a team for the first time. Graham quickly corrected me and said that he had been on a team before – the Husky team.

Thank you Mark and thank you Huskies!



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

From your 2002-2003
Husky Men's Gymnastics Team



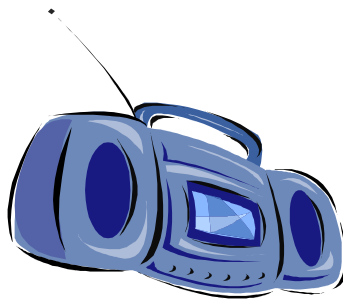
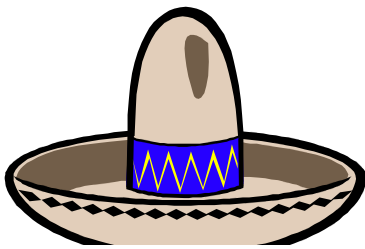
*Back row, left to right: Graham Gordon, Jeff Fausz, Ben MacColl, Jeff Crockett, Scott Provence
Front: Aaron Cole*

TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE!

Please take part in our first-ever WMGF raffle! The drawing date is coming up soon, and there are still a few tickets left.

The drawing will be held on **Tuesday, December 31, 2002.**

First Prize:	One-week stay at Coral Baja Resort, Mexico
Second Prize:	Audiologic CD audio system
Third Prize:	Skyway Luggage



Tickets are \$5 each – all proceeds directly benefit Washington Men's Gymnastics.

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For tickets contact **Rod Minaker** at **800-722-3487 ext. 2686.**

Remember Washington Men's Gymnastics In Your Will

by Dr. Eric Hughes

We recently completed our annual drive for funds. Many of you were very generous and we thank you. This money goes into our operating account.

There is another way in which you may wish to help and that is to include the WMGF in your will.

Kevin Beder, one of our managers, has left the WMGF a percent of his worth at death. (My wish for you Kevin is that you become very wealthy before you expire!) I personally have left a lump sum to the Foundation. As far as I know, Kevin and I are the only ones, thus far, who have donated in this way. Remember you can't take it with you.

In addition to our operating account, we have a

scholarship account which functions as an endowment and may only be used for scholarships. Awards are based on 1) Need, 2) Academics, and 3) Gymnastic ability.

We welcome a gift in your will to either the operating account or the Scholarship Endowment Fund. Remember that appreciated stock may be given in this way, also. Please contact me if you are interested in giving stock.

Coach Hughes
206-632-2151

THANK YOU!

If you'd like to contribute, please clip and send this portion of the newsletter to:

WMGF
5529 27th Ave. N.E.
Seattle, WA 98105

Enclosed is my contribution* to WMGF in the amount of:

\$100 ___ \$200 ___ \$500 ___ \$1,000 ___ \$1,000,000 ___ other _____

*Remember: if you wish to donate a stock or other security, please contact Dr. Hughes at (206) 632-2151 for details.

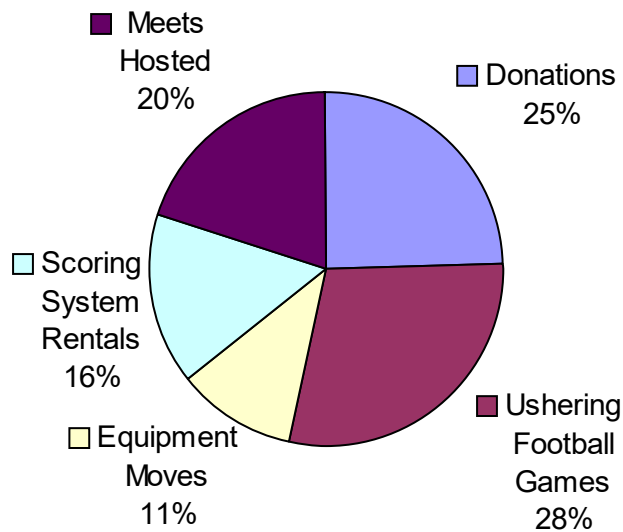
Name and Address:
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e-mail: _____ Phone: _____

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WMGF 2001-2002 INCOME SOURCES



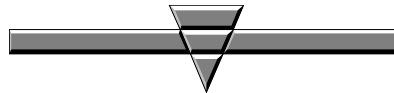
Shown above is the distribution of our income sources for the 2001-2002 season. As you can see, the majority (75%) of our funds came from the hard work of team members and supporters (cold days ushering, late nights equipment-moving, long days meet-hosting, and running our scoring system at local meets). Although donations only comprised 25% of the total, they are a significant fraction—please keep them coming!

WMGF
5529 27th Ave. N.E.
Seattle, WA 98105



In This Issue...

Season Preview, Husky Seniors, Husky History, Last-Chance Raffle Info, and more.



Washington Men's Gymnastics

2003 Meet Schedule*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Competition</i>	<i>Location</i>
<i>January 4,5</i>	<i>Washington Open</i>	<i>UW—Seattle, WA</i>
<i>January 24,25</i>	<i>Rocky Mountain Open</i>	<i>US Air Force Academy, CO</i>
<i>February 6-8</i>	<i>Winter Cup/Blackjack Invitational</i>	<i>Las Vegas, NV</i>
<i>February 22</i>	<i>Arizona State University</i>	<i>ASU—Tempe, AZ</i>
<i>March 6</i>	<i>Peter Vidmar Invitational</i>	<i>Los Angeles, CA</i>
<i>March 15 or 22</i>	<i>Arizona State University</i>	<i>UW—Seattle, WA</i>
<i>April 16-19</i>	<i>US Collegiate Nationals</i>	<i>Denton, TX</i>

*Tentative! Please contact Mark Russo for any updates: 206-524-9480 or ossurkram@hotmail.com