

WMGF News

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December 5, 2014

Season Preview

by Mark Russo

The 2014 - 15 gymnastics season is quickly approaching now that we have finished our 31st season of ushering Husky football games. With great anticipation, I am also crossing my fingers that it will be one of our best gymnastics years ever. My optimism stems from having our strongest recruiting class ever, adding to last year's much-improved team. There is an honest belief among the team that we will be able to contend with Arizona State and NCAA programs ranked 12 through 16. This will require a very significant 25-point improvement over last year's high score and will no doubt surprise many of our competitors.

Training this fall has been spirited, with some of the gymnasts performing skills that our team and the gym where we train have never seen before. The resulting energy created between teammates has raised practice to a new level. More than ever, the guys are encouraging each other to get better and perform with more attention to detail. From this motivation, team dynamics are better than ever and this is spilling into our fundraising events as well. We recently added set-up and tear-down of a new volleyball floor for the Husky Volleyball team to our list of fundraising activities. As with our equipment moves for the UW Women's Gymnastics team, our close coordination and focus make this an efficient fundraiser for us. Overall, I see our team and how it runs as an example to our gymnastics community. With the ever-changing tide of NCAA athletics about to shift toward the big three sports of football, basketball, and baseball, Olympic sports

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.



Brandon Waller at Nationals

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will no doubt be squeezed in the coming years. I believe our model of self-sustainability will become the norm for Olympic sports. It feels incredibly fortunate to be impervious to fears of whether our funding will be sacrificed to give to another sport.

This year's recruiting class comes primarily from California. Two of these young men are good friends of current team member and fellow Californian Justin Rowen. Carl Meader was a teammate of Justin's in Sacramento. Nathan Tsuji is a good friend from a gym in Santa Cruz. Carl and Nathan are very good gymnasts that will contend for top spots on many events. Individually, Carl has a unique skillset of quickness, flexibility, and strength enabling him to perform some very original skills. So far this fall, Carl has established himself as the gymnast to beat on this team. Nathan brings exceptional form and technical execution with his gymnastics. He has very straight lines and is enjoyable to watch. The third team member recruited from California is Nick Kano from Los Angeles. Nick - this year's Dr. Hughes Scholarship award winner - is a good all-arounder with explosive vaulting and tremendous strength on rings. He is majoring in Aeronautical Engineering and will be a great asset to the team. Rounding out this outstanding freshman class is Chris Ramsey from Montana. Chris has a tremendous work ethic and is extremely coachable. Chris will compete for the team this year on floor, pommels, vault and maybe parallel bars. He is training to be an all-arounder and I have no doubt that

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Season Preview

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he will have good routines to perform shortly.

Adding these four recruits to last year's top three all-arounders Brandon Waller, Justin Rowen, and Aaron Moss gives the team a solid base upon which specialists Max Soifer (sophomore) and Franklin Stutevoss (senior) can help the team attain its goals. Wyatt Zmrzel, also in his second year, looks to specialize on parallel bars and pommel horse this season, giving us good depth on those difficult events. All five of these returners can lead the team in different ways giving us a good mix of leadership by way of energy, example, work ethic, and humor. It is a very good group of young men that want to win.

There are two additional team members, Alex Maybruck and Danny Gove. Alex got his first taste of

competition last season, doing well on floor exercise and vault at our meet in Germany. Danny has real potential on pommel horse and will look to break into the lineup by season's end.

All in all, it is an exciting year ahead as we look to surprise some teams and improve to the next level. It has been some years since we were at this level; now, thanks to improved recruiting outside of our region, it is here again and we look to take advantage of it and continue to improve.

Please come to one of our competitions, either home or away! Check out our schedule on the back cover. Traveling to Arizona or California in February or March can be just what the doctor ordered for us Washingtonians and Oregonians!

*Happy Holidays from your 2014-2015
Husky Gymnastics Team*



Left-right: Wyatt Zmrzel, Nathan Tsuji, Franklin Stutevoss, Alex Maybruck, Aaron Moss, Nick Kano, Max Soifer, Justin Rowen, Brandon Waller, Chris Ramsey, Carl Meader, Coach Mark Russo

Meet the Team

by Peter Sawyer

Alex Maybruck

You wouldn't guess from his quiet demeanor, but Alex Maybruck keeps his teammates laughing with his jokes and sharp wit. He started gymnastics at age 14, so sees himself as a late-starter, but he says he's learned a lot under Mark. He particularly likes Vault and Pommel Horse, as well as Mark's "serious" coaching style. Although he's been with the team since 2011, he only started competing for the team recently, such as at last year's meet in Germany, where he performed on Vault and Floor.

Outside of the gym, he's studying Mechanical Engineering at Shoreline Community College, and hopes to transfer to the University of Washington within the next two years. I asked Alex why he chose engineering, and he told me, "because I like building things and I like math." He enjoys nature, and in his quiet, quirky style told me, "I dig trees." He's also a self-taught unicyclist and plays piano.



Nick Kano

Nick Kano is a confident Freshman from the Los Angeles area, and although he is definitely a ring man (competing both an inverted and a Maltese cross), he's hoping Mark has him compete All-Around. He enjoys the humor of his teammates as well as Mark's encouraging, laid-back style, which contrasts starkly with his previous coach. "Stubborn" is how he thinks his teammates might describe him, because if he's close to a skill, he'll doggedly pursue it until he succeeds.

A number of factors contributed to Nick's decision to join our program, such as previous recruiting conversations with Mark, our gymnastics team, the academic offerings, his grandparents' experience at the University of Washington, as well as an award from the WMGF's Alumni Scholarship Program. He's currently living on campus, and plans to study Aerospace and Aeronautics Engineering, a field inspired by yearly trips with his father to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. He told me so far his classes "haven't been too bad," but he admits Calculus is "a bit challenging."

Outside the gym, Nick enjoys hanging out with his friends, listening to music, snowboarding, and scuba diving.



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Remembering Ricky

by Gordy Bylin, Husky gymnast 1977-1980

I was in the group of lucky guys to get a chance to train and compete with Ricky Mah as Husky gymnasts from 1977 until the end of the varsity, University-sponsored team in 1980. We lost Ricky last summer after a battle with cancer he could not beat. The memories I have, and have collected from others, tell a story of a great, fun, loving, kind, and truly inspirational man.

Ricky walked on to the team with a front handspring vault and a round-off back handspring on the floor. Two years later, he was at Nationals on vault and ranked high on the floor exercise. Ricky was a very powerful athlete. He was Pac10 vault champion the first year he made Nationals. He made Nationals again the following year; although he had a hamstring pull the week before the meet, he still ended up in the top 15. Coach Foxal tells me Ricky's Cuervo vault was the first to be competed by a college athlete in the US. A Cuervo is a handspring with a half twist and then a back flip out. We used to say he had legs like tree trunks. When I was a

freshman I was the skinny, weak guy who could swing like a monkey but could not do one handstand push-up. Ricky, by the last year we trained together, could clap his hands when he pushed up! Ricky was one of those guys that would never attack me with negative energy, he would lift me up and push me harder with positive words to get that strength training done right. When he was first learning tumbling skills, he had some back handsprings that would kind of move sideways in his series. Coach Foxal had a challenge, but they got them straight and Ricky's tumbling became excellent. He performed a back $1\frac{3}{4}$ rollout with the half twist on the second back flip (back in, Arabian dive out). That was a big trick for the times, definitely dangerous. We had a meet against the Oregon Ducks, I believe, and Ricky was on the floor. He was a bit sluggish that day. His first pass was the $1\frac{3}{4}$ roll out skill. Keep in mind we tumbled on wrestling mats with a carpet over it in those days! Ricky looked to be in slow motion as he turned to the dive roll, but was short. I don't even think his hands got to the floor before his head. I really thought it was all over for him. He tried to get up and fell to his knees. I thought he was broken for sure and would be paralyzed, so we asked Howard, the trainer to get him off the floor. Ricky was trying to finish the routine. That was the most I have ever feared for a teammate in a crash situation. Howard got him off the floor and the next day Ricky says he thinks he pulled a muscle in his back or neck. That fall would have been the end of me, but he had

such an intense muscle structure in his neck, such great strength that it saved his life.

We lived very different lives in college. Ricky was helping with the family restaurant when needed and playing basketball on the weekends, while I was pursuing the party life at the "Mars Hotel" the gymnast house. My brother, Bert and I were reminiscing about the great team banquets at his family's restaurant and how great the food was. I remember Ricky could eat like nobody's business. Coach Foxal tells me Ricky tried out for the



Ricky on one of his many fishing trips

Husky football team after our sport was dropped, made the scout team, and trained with them the rest of that year. I spoke with Gary Kath, another teammate, and he remembers going on some houseboat trips with Ricky. Gary says Ricky was awesome at the high dive off the top of the boat but would come up with a doggie paddle. He was not a very strong swimmer. Ricky was an airline attendant for Alaska Airlines and really loved to

fish.

I got the call in May 2014 that there was celebration of Ricky's life, as his family was informed that he would not win his fight with cancer. The Bylin brothers picked up Dr. Hughes and made it to the event in Renton. We did not know what to expect when we arrived. It was amazing to see how his core group of co-workers from Alaska Airlines and family had put together such a special event. Those of us that did not have contact with Ricky for many years were a bit taken aback by the scope of Ricky's friends and loved ones. The love for that man in that room was pure and intense. His family was there and met with all of us before Ricky arrived. When he got there you knew he was in a lot of pain. The disease and the treatment had begun to take their toll. We waited for a chance to meet him and say our good-byes. There were a bunch of us from the old team and we got a team picture with Coach Hughes, Coach Foxal, and Ricky. When I got to see Ricky he kissed my face and gave me a hug and I could see and feel the love and memories flooding his brain. He was doing the hardest thing ever in life, learning to let go. I feel very lucky to have that moment with him as our eyes connected and we said goodbye. Ricky led a great and fulfilled life, and the amount of people that showed up that day are a testament to that. Thanks for the stories and the times we all trained together. Ricky's life seems to leave us all with the same thing, a huge smile when we picture his face.



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Mark K. Oliver

President & Founder - Senior Investment Advisor

Where Are They Now? What ever happened to **Pat Ruckert**

by Pat Ruckert

Many, many years after having been a member of the University of Washington Gymnastics team for the 1966 and 1967 season, I came to regret that I had never really been a gymnast. What, you may be saying to yourself, is he talking about? How could a member of the team not be a gymnast? The answer is simply that I was a trampolinist. Back in those days the trampoline was the seventh event in our sport. But even before my time at the University of Washington, tumbling, the rope climb, and the flying rings had already been discontinued.

But, I jump ahead of the story, so I'll go back to the beginning. Well, maybe not quite that far, but to my childhood. I grew up in the suburbs of North Seattle (today the City of Shoreline). Despite always being the smallest guy in my class, I would nevertheless attempt to compete with the big kids in all the sports generally played in the 1950s; that is the ones we knew about. I did not know about track and field until the ninth grade, and had never even heard of something called gymnastics until my sophomore year at Shoreline High School.

By then it was clear to me that I could no longer try out for football or basketball, and though I had an interest in distance running, track season was a long way off that fall of 1959. Then one day in Physical Education class we were led into the gymnastics room. I looked at that trampoline, and without a word jumped up on it. That first experience included an attempted front somersault, which did not go so well. The PE teacher noticed my interest and suggested that I join the gymnastics team, which I did.

Unfortunately, I cannot remember the name of the coach of the Shoreline team. Though he was a likeable man, he knew virtually nothing about gymnastics – just a teacher who took on the task to earn a little extra money.

The real coach of the team was one of the team members, a junior at the time, Brian Sternberg. Brian I will always admire, for he not only had the patience for us beginners, but always would be challenging us “to learn something new today.” I remember the first time I saw him do a giant on the high bar. I probably stood there, frozen in place, with, I'm sure, a shocked look on my face. Brian had become a proficient gymnast through his training with George Lewis at the YMCA, and if I am guessing right, he also had worked with Coach Hughes.

Brian went on to the University of Washington and was on the gymnastics team, earning a letter in 1963. But his real love was pole vaulting. In the spring and early summer of 1963, Brian had set the world pole vault record, and then broken it twice more. He was a favorite to win the gold medal in the vault in the '64 Olympics. Tragically, that summer, Brian was working

out on the trampoline in Hec Edmundson Pavillion, got lost in a fliffus, and landed on his neck. Brian suffered a paralyzing injury and was never to walk again. He died in 2013. Here is an obituary of Brian that can give those who never knew him, a very good picture of this brave, tough, and inspiring man.

<http://sportspressnw.com/2152412/2013/huskies-vault-legend-brian-sternberg-1943-13>

During my senior year in high school the gymnastics program was canceled, so I focused on distance running, which was for me, not too serious. In the fall of 1962, I entered Everett Junior College. The college had no gymnastics program, so I stayed with running, lettering two years in the two-mile. But Everett did have a gym and an enthusiastic Hungarian PE teacher named George Georgifalvy, who loved gymnastics. I worked with him off and on, along with Dick Foyal, who later was coach for the UW gymnastics team, and then moved on to be the long-time coach of women's gymnastics at Oregon State.

I entered the University of Washington in the fall of 1965. The university's gymnastic program had fascinated me since high school. I remember attending a meet at Hec Edmundson in 1960, and seeing more than one real gymnast. So, I talked to Coach Hughes and joined the team. For two years, gymnastics, or rather, the trampoline, was virtually my only activity besides studying. Rick Fonseca, Jan Hardin, and myself generally were the three varsity competitors for those two years, and we did a lot of exhibitions at schools and other venues. If you look on the webpage “Washington State Gymnastics History,” and just above the subtitle, “Yearly Overview,” you will see a picture of the three of us practicing for an exhibition, with myself and Rick Fonseca on the trampoline and Jan Hardin watching.

<http://www.bjelladesign.com/HISTORY/historyuwmn.html>

I never talked to Coach Hughes about it, but I imagine that the day we had a meet at the University of Oregon in 1967, was a day that he relived the nightmare of Brian Sternberg's accident. That day the freshman team had a meet at the University of British Columbia. He apparently received a phone call from the freshman coach informing him that one of our trampolinists had landed on his neck and broken it. Coach did not inform us of the accident until after our meet had been completed, but he did talk to Rick, Jan, and I before our event, cautioning us to be careful.

The year I graduated, 1967, was a year of turmoil in the nation as the Vietnam War exploded, both in military terms, and the growing opposition to it. For the next three years I worked to end that war, and in 1970, I joined the Lyndon LaRouche-led political movement.

(Continued on page 7)

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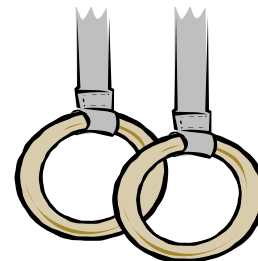
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Where Are They Now: Pat Ruckert

(Continued from page 6)

Today, I am proud to say, I am still an organizer for this same political movement.

I married in 1972 and my wife Carol is also an organizer. We have no children, early on deciding that the future of the world's children was more important to us than our own ambitions.

In the course of my political life I have become something of an historian, lecturing and writing articles on a wide range of topics. These include the history of Chinese philosophy, the American Revolution, the U.S. Civil War, the Presidencies of Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt, FDR's infrastructure building program, and many more. I have authored extended reports on The Grand Coulee Dam, the History of Portland Oregon, the California Water Management System, and the Los Angeles Aqueduct. In addition to a lengthy article published by Executive Intelligence Review on

James Fenimore Cooper, I am currently writing a book on this remarkable man. If any would like some of my writings, I can be reached at patruckert@hotmail.com

For the past ten years we have lived in Los Angeles, having spent most of our lives in Seattle. We have traveled to Europe twice and spent two months in Australia.

As one ages, wisdom begins to temper enthusiasm, but not dreams, within which the regrets begin to intrude. As I said at the beginning I was never really a gymnast. As I have watched the Olympic gymnasts in recent years, it has led me to regret that I did not develop the strength and concentration that a real gymnast requires, if he or she is to join this really unique and remarkable group of human beings.

Be that as it may, I shall end this with thanks to Coach Hughes and the teammates of 50 years ago who made my university experience something much more than just getting an education.



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December 5, 2014

Washington Men's Gymnastics

2014-2015 Meet Schedule

(local meets in bold)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Competition</i>	<i>Location</i>
<i>January 4</i>	<i>2:30pm</i>	<i>Washington Open</i> 	<i>Marv Harshman Court Seattle, WA</i>
<i>January 17</i>	<i>7:00pm</i>	<i>Stanford Open</i>	<i>Ford Center Palo Alto, CA</i>
<i>January 30</i>	<i>7:00pm</i>	<i>Metroplex Challenge</i>	<i>Fort Worth Convention Center Fort Worth, TX</i>
<i>February 6</i>	<i>7:00pm</i>	<i>vs. Cal, ASU</i> 	<i>Tacoma Convention Center Tacoma, WA</i>
<i>February 21</i>	<i>7:00pm</i>	<i>vs. ASU</i>	<i>Rawhide at Wild Horse Pass Chandler, AZ</i>
<i>March 7</i>	<i>4:00pm</i>	<i>vs. Air Force</i>	<i>US Air Force Academy Colorado Springs, CO</i>
<i>March 13</i>	<i>7:00pm</i>	<i>vs. Cal</i>	<i>UC Berkeley Berkeley, CA</i>
<i>March 20,21</i>	<i>4:00pm</i>	<i>Collegiate Nationals</i>	<i>US Air Force Academy Colorado Springs, CO</i>

Please contact Mark Russo for updates: 206-524-9480 or team@wmgf.us