

WMGF News

www.wmgf.us

June 3, 2016

Season Review

by Mark Russo

The 2015-16 competitive season has officially ended, and with heavy hearts we move on to a future without our founder, our leader, our mentor: Coach Eric Hughes. He has been such a tremendous leader and friend of our teams. We are so lucky to be a product of all his work, and so very grateful to him for everything he has done for gymnastics to grow and thrive here at the University of Washington. We can only hope to run a successful program that he would be proud to be a part of. It is with that spirit that we finished our season, improving, giving our 100% to bring Washington up to new competitive levels.

The second half of our season began with a tri-meet in Phoenix, against ASU and Southern California United, a conglomeration of student gymnasts from colleges and universities in Los Angeles. We were again led by Nathan Tsuji as he has been Mr. Dependable this season, leading the team with consistent routines and improved performances. Nathan posted the highest all-around total of his career so far, an 82.05 at ASU. And he received a lot of help from the likes of Brandon Waller on floor (14.0), Max Soifer on pommels (13.1), Michael Sibley on rings (13.95), Justin Rowen on vault (14.45), and Carl Meader on high bar (13.55). Though we produced our best meet of the season, we had one too many mistakes and our valiant comeback attempt (down nearly ten points after the first event) came up 1.10 short. It was good to put some fear into ASU, but still our own mistakes are keeping us from victory.

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.



Jacob Jarrett at UW

Photo credit: Steve Moss

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Team Results		UW All-around
ASU	405.35	1 st Tsuji 82.05
UW	404.35	(personal best)
SCU	332.60	

Our last regular season meet was at Cal Berkeley, against Cal and Army. We flew down early in the morning, competed at noon, ate dinner, then flew home the very same day. Amazing when I remember back when I was on the team and we would pile into a van and drive 11 hours through the night to get there, have the meet, then get back in the van and drive 11 hours back home. Now it's all done in half a day. We had a pretty good meet, even though we finished third. Some of the team members returning from injury were rusty and nervous. I was hoping they would be what they were last season, but this was not to be the case. Some of the highlight performances were given by Aaron Moss on floor (14.15), Phil Chantler on pommels (12.9), Nick Kano on rings (14.55) and vault (14.45), and Carl Meader on high bar (13.5). Nathan Tsuji improved his all-around personal best score to 82.30 with good routines on floor, pommels, rings, and vault. He is continually improving and working to get new difficulty into his routines.

As a team we were better able to see where we are, as this meet had a good cross section of team ability. Cal represents the top of the mountain. Army is the next pass above us. We are closing in on that pass.

(Continued on page 2)

Season Review

(Continued from page 1)

Team Results	UW All-around
Cal 442.15	5 th Tsuji 82.30 (personal best)
Army 415.90	
UW 403.05	

Two weeks later we traveled to Springfield, Massachusetts for our championship meet and last competition of the season – our last shot at ASU. This year there were five collegiate club teams run similarly to ours. Besides us and ASU, there were teams from Temple University in Philadelphia, So. Cal United, and the newly-formed New York Alliance which brings the best gymnasts from New York colleges and universities together to form a team. All teams are at different stages of being a collegiate club. Together, we represent a model for future gymnastics at universities around the country.

The competition was close throughout the meet. We did our best routines of the season, hitting 27 of 30 routines performed. As a tribute to our founder, each guy wore a tattoo of “EH” on his shoulder. We all believed he was with us, on our shoulder, leading us on to our best. We had only three major mistakes. We hit 90% of our routines; in most sports, if you are doing that well, you win. Not in gymnastics. However – surprisingly, at the conclusion of the meet, when they were announcing the team placings, some ‘Miss Universe’ drama occurred. It went something like this: “In 3rd place, scoring 402.25... Temple University! In 2nd place, scoring 403.65...the team from Arizona State! (At that moment, our team began to celebrate...) And the 2016 Collegiate Club Champions, scoring 405.1... the University of Washington!!!”

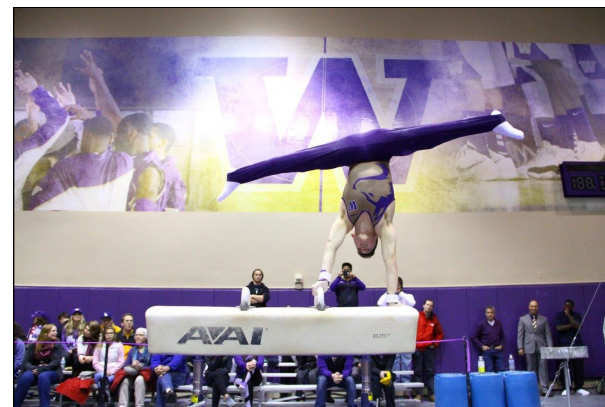
We had done it, finally! We were victorious over ASU at the championship. It has been ten years since that occurred. Many hugs and handshakes of joy and respect were exchanged amongst the team. Then, two hours later, at the end of the awards banquet, we were informed there had been a scoring error and in fact we had scored 400.65, not 405.1, making us fall from 1st to 3rd. Regretfully, I informed the guys and literally you could feel the resulting deflation of spirit. What happened was the announcer had read the wrong scoresheet, announcing a team score for Washington that was in fact William and Mary’s (NCAA team division, not collegiate club) team score. In this stunning turn of events, the joy we found in those two hours we thought we were champions would actually be one of the best things that happened to us. It gave us the taste of what winning is, what being the champion of our division feels like. That moment will be called upon many times during the upcoming season to motivate us beyond where we are. We tasted winning and liked it. Now this group is hungry for authentic victory. And as crazy as it was, we came away instantly motivated to prove a new reality next season. There also was positive energy and understanding. Mistakes happen. We’re all human. Now, we must use this emotion to become even better.

This offseason, we are already recruiting new, talented gymnasts to bolster our lineup. We are practicing new, difficult moves to improve our start values. We are coming together to have a championship offseason. The planning has begun and I can honestly say I have never looked more forward to an upcoming season. We are going to make it happen!

Your 2015-2016 Huskies



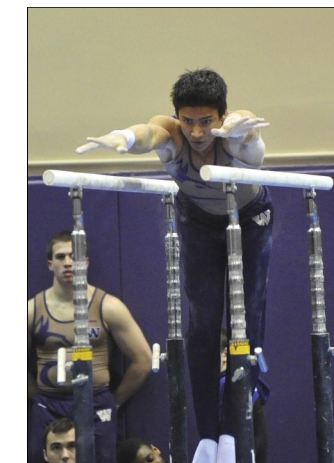
Front-back: Michael Sibley, Jacob Jarrett, Brandon Waller, Garrett Dee, Phil Chantler, Carl Meader, Ben Fisher, Max Soifer (Not pictured: Nick Kano, Aaron Moss, Nathan Tsuji, Justin Rowen)



Aaron Moss at UW

Photo credit: Jeff Crockett

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Nathan Tsuji at UW

Photo credit: Steve Moss

Washington Men's Gymnastics Isn't just Gymnastics Practice

by Paul Roggenkamp

Coach Mark Russo is dedicated to developing the best gymnasts and also determined to develop young athletes of character. I was honored to be asked by Mark to spend time working with the team on the principles of leadership and team building which are part of my LEAD with COURAGE program. Over the past several months we have been meeting every other Saturday for up to two hours to learn and practice leadership and team building.

Initially, the ideals of achieving athletic excellence were presented.

Athletes must first be committed to their sport/team and to the idea that they will strive to be the best they can be as an athlete, as a teammate and as a person. Secondly, each athlete must be willing to undergo preparation which encompasses all aspects of gymnastics practice, mastery of skills, incorporating a sound regimen of proper diet, exercise, rest, and study in complete accord with the coaches' and the team's standards. The final stage and the result of the athletes' commitment is winning; realizing the fruits of their labors... “The proof is in the pudding.” When athletes commit themselves and prepare appropriately, they will perform at their maximum level and win.

In addition to this framework, team-building exercises involving all members of the team have been conducted. These included small group participation in such activities as blindfolded obstacle courses, brainteasers, self-control exercises, the trust circle, the human knot, and others designed to leave a lasting impression while requiring teamwork, effective communication, trust, attention to detail, following instructions, cooperation, and idea sharing. Over the past few months and continu-

ing indefinitely, we have been working on the John Wooden Pyramid of Success (created by the legendary basketball coach of UCLA whose teams won an unprecedented 10 NCAA national basketball championships and recorded an 87-game win streak in addition to four undefeated seasons). This program is designed to give the athletes the framework and foundation upon which to build their character, learn to make the best choices, and follow through to their goals.

Team members can develop and apply essential aspects of outstanding character in school, in sports, and in everyday life for the rest of their lives to help make the right choices, build lasting relationships, and develop the confidence and capabilities to overcome challenges. In addition to helping others to live out the values and principles which lead to a successful life of achievement and contribution, the lessons learned by the gymnasts give them the capability to help others and set a standard to live by for themselves and their future families. A few examples of the building blocks of the Pyramid are: enthusiasm, loyalty, self-control, initiative, and cooperation. Active group exercises help to reinforce and demonstrate the necessity for and the application of these character traits in team activities and in personal life.

The entire process over the last several months has been inspiring and very rewarding as we see the gymnasts grasp the concepts and begin to apply the lessons learned to their workouts and other activities in their lives. As this is a never-ending process, we look forward to many wonderful times of learning, practicing, and growing as capable, confident athletes of great character and leadership.

Athlete Profile: Brandon Waller

By Mark Russo

How is your health this season?

My health hasn't been peak, but I have very little to complain about considering the condition of many of the other team members. The most I had to deal with were a couple bruised wrists and a strained ankle, but through the whole team we had a torn labrum, torn bicep, sprained ankles, and countless shoulder and back injuries. I'd place myself in the top half of the team as far as health goes.

Having overcome two serious knee injuries, explain how you dealt with that challenge?

Though it was quite a task to physically deal with the injuries themselves, accompanying them were a lot of doubts about whether I should continue to pursue gymnastics. I recall after my most recent tear, I asked a few of the team members as well as friends and family what they thought I should do: stay with the team through my senior year, or take my knee's hint and move on. The answers were pretty unanimous that it was my decision, but they thought I would miss gym more than I realized. About halfway through the season I found they were right, and I couldn't stand having to miss so much gym time. I didn't want to end my gymnastics career with regrets about how it ended, so the decision to stay with the sport became more a personal responsibility to myself to honor the time and effort I've already put into gymnastics. And looking back at this season, I am very happy and content with my decision.



Photo credit: Steve Moss

What has been most memorable about your time on the team?

This is a difficult one. The single greatest experience I have had was the week we spent in Civitavecchia, just enjoying a relaxed week with good company, training with new teams, and eating indescribably good food (possibly the highlight). Though my favorite from this year has been the trip to ASU, where we were able to get the competition out of the way early and enjoy a much-needed vacation to Slide Rock and The Grand Canyon. It was during that trip that everyone could feel no pressure of time or work and just enjoy the surroundings. Plus doing a little impromptu rock climbing was all too fun.

As the Strongest Man I've Ever Known, do you foresee yourself using that ability as a cause for good in the world or does the dark side run strong in you?

I doubt that I will be able to get physical strength to solve all of my future problems, but I do promise to use what influence it may have for good. For whatever reason, the team has told me they think The Force runs strong in me, and that is an honor I do not take lightly.

Where do you see yourself in ten years? What will you be doing primarily and where?

No matter the year, I can never see myself leaving the Pacific Northwest. In every vacation I've been on, I have not seen anything that compared to the natural beauty that I see in the nature of the area, and I feel like I've become too accustomed to it to leave. I would like my work to fit within the parameters of my field of study, environmental science, so that I can work to improve and save the landscape I love so much. I will likely be married, and know that I will have at least one dog (Labrador, Australian Shepard, or Sheltie), and intend to assist the UW Men's Gymnastics Team whenever possible.

As captain of this year's team, how has being a leader, the most experienced one, impacted you or changed your perspective of the team and what the WMGF board does?

Being in the position of authority that I held for the season has been a huge perspective shift for me, particularly in how and why we do our teamwork. It is not hard to come across complaints during an equipment move or other fundraising opportunity, as they are very taxing both physically and mentally. But being a part of the decision-making for the team as well as the one that people look up to, I began to see more clearly how lucky we all are to

(Continued on page 5)

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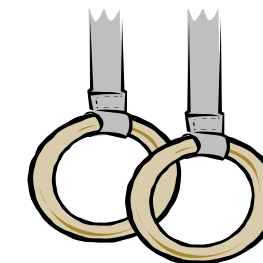
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(Continued from page 4)

have these fundraising opportunities. Yeah, it might be unpleasant having to stay at Pacific Rim for 17 hours at the beck and call of random coordinators, but all of that work is translating into the trips and competitions and practices that the team values so much.

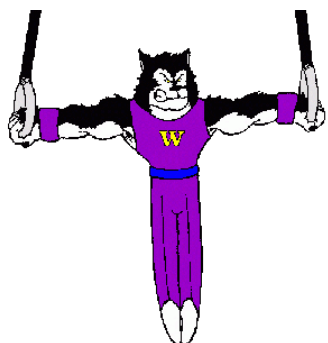
What would you say to a potential recruit about our team, positive and negative?

I know that the idea of moving to a club team may seem "second tier." Why put so much time into a sport if you feel like you aren't going to be properly utilized? That is a common misconception, shared by far too many people. In a varsity program, there are more people and more competition, so even the best of the best will only be used for two or three events, and the rest will be turned away. At a club program like ours there is an infinitely greater opportunity to show the collegiate gymnastics society what you can do, and there is not a chance of being rejected. This team is closer than any group could be, and we welcome you to join us.

Any parting words to the Husky Gymnastics Nation (smaller than Luxembourg)?

Don't tie your self-worth as a gymnast to your success at a competition. This year, with the fiasco that occurred with the scoring and awards at nationals, there were a lot of us that felt better than we ever have at a competition. Along with a few other people, I cried out of happiness. Every piece of hard work and determination that had been exerted over the season, and even the entirety of our gymnastics careers, seemed to culminate into the achievement of a single goal that we had all strived for. And then it was taken out from under us. Being down on ourselves was easy at that point, but the success of another team should not dictate the pride that we feel about our own efforts. All that matters is that you are able to finish each season, competition, routine, or even individual turn with the feeling that you have done as much as you are capable of. That is how you end a career without regret.

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In This Issue...

Season Review, Athlete Profile, and more...

June 3, 2016