

# WMGF News

www.wmgf.us

March 10, 2017

## Mid-Season Update

by Mark Russo

Halfway through our six-meet season, we are steadily improving our team health and score. It is a trend we hope to continue all the way to our culminating competition, **USA Gymnastics Collegiate Nationals – which we are hosting at Everett Community College, March 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> this year.**

Our season opener, the Washington Open, was pushed back two weeks by conflicts with basketball scheduling. This did give us two additional weeks of preparation after the long Christmas break however, which showed in our performances as it was one of our better season-opening meets. All team members performed routines on events they desired to compete on. It was evident that our team will be led by third-year athlete Nathan Tsuji. Nathan has been leading our team every year since he joined and nothing will change this year. He is consistent and performs as well as he practices. He won the Washington Open easily and looked prepared to be our team's most valuable gymnast. Nathan's best events are floor, vault, and parallel bars. He performs these events with a comfort and ease that looks professional and is entertaining to watch for sure. Other noteworthy performances at the Washington Open were Max Soifer on pommel horse, Jacob Jarrett on rings, Justin Rowen on vault, and Ben Bloom on high bar. It was a good introduction to this season's competition schedule and thankfully, one without injuries.

Our first team competition of the season was against Stanford, currently ranked second in the country, and Cal, the number 10 team. We are rated 17th. The judging was difficult

## 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.



Max Soifer at UW

Photo credit: Jeff Crockett

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and especially brutal on pommel horse. Our top two all-around competitors, Nathan and Jacob, both had their lowest pommel horse scores ever, 10.1 and 9.85 respectively. Also was noticeable was how tired we were at the end of the meet. This affected us on our last two events, floor and pommel horse. We did not look good on these events. Our third-place finish was expected; our score, however, was five to seven points lower than what we had been scoring in practice. Since then, we've added more endurance to our routines in training to make sure we are not tired at the end of competitions, or at the end of routines for that matter.

### Team Scores

Stanford	423.60
Cal	398.85
Washington	375.65

Next up was a stop at Air Force to compete against the Academy and Stanford again. I felt our performance was no better than at our earlier meet with Stanford, yet our scores were higher this time. We started rough on pommel horse, but got our momentum going on rings. Then on floor, we faltered on landings big time and this carried into our next event, parallel bars. High bar got us back on track and we finished strong on vault. The guys put forth several outstanding performances. Highlights were Garrett Dee on floor, Carl Meader on pommel horse, Justin Rowen on vault, and Ben Bloom on high bar. Nathan bettered his previous best in the all-around, scoring 76.3. As a team, we scored higher but still finished solidly in third place.

(Continued on page 2)

### Mid-Season Update

(Continued from page 1)

	Stanford	420.45
<u>Team Scores</u>	Air Force	406.10
	Washington	380.30

In between our Air Force and Temple University competitions, Nathan Tsuji and I traveled to the Winter Cup Challenge in Las Vegas. Nathan qualified to this meet by placing third in the all-around at Stanford in January. At Winter Cup, Nathan did a great job hitting five of six routines. He definitely turned some heads and made our program proud. He looked comfortable and confident to be there with the best competitors in our country. From what I observed, it was his best all-around performance ever and from this competition, he will compete on a regional team at the premier invitational meet in the US, the American Cup. Congratulations, Nathan!

With no time to spare, Nathan and I caught up with the team in Philadelphia for our next competition against Temple University. Our first dual meet of the season was very competitive as Temple is similar to us in that they are a club team as well. I personally enjoy dual meets the most because of the competitive feeling you get observing the teams go back and forth, leading or trailing. Going into our last events – for us parallel bars, for them high bar – we were trailing by 0.15 points, 322.75 to 322.60. You can't get much closer than that. Seeing that we needed to rally, I asked Captain Max Soifer to bring the team together to create the momentum needed to hit our final six routines. The team partially responded: we hit three of six routines but Temple just fell apart on high bar. On this last event, we outscored them 64.85 to 56.85. It was very satisfying to get our first win of the season, but I felt that I would have been more upset with a loss than happy with the win because we were definitely the better team. We rightfully won, and really we never should have trailed. We had about the same number of mistakes as earlier competitions, just smaller in nature. We still need vast improvement on floor and high bar if

we are to contend for the national title, however. At this competition, freshman Conner Petellin made his presence known on pommels scoring a 13.0. It was great to see him make an impact with his long swing and high scissors. Nick Kano was solid on rings getting his first score in the 14's this year. Michael Sibley also did an excellent job on the three events he competed, rings, vault, and parallel bars. Mike has good form and it shows in his execution scores. He is our team leader in execution, setting the standard for others to aspire to. Nathan Tsuji improved his all-around score to 78.70 with great consistency and the ability to cover his mistakes with other skills. In general, it is evident that we are improving and that is what we shoot for.

	Washington	387.40
<u>Team Scores</u>	Temple	379.65

I am very much looking forward to the second half of our season with meets at ASU where we will compete against all the other collegiate club teams. Then we host a dual meet against Cal in conjunction with the UW women's team hosting Seattle Pacific at the Alaska Airlines Arena (Hec Ed Pavilion) at 4pm on Saturday, March 11th. Definitely a great show to watch and come let us hear your voices. We need your support!

**Finally, for the first time in 20 years, we are hosting USA Collegiate Nationals March 24th and 25th at Everett Community College. Team competition begins at 2pm on Friday the 24th. Individual event finals will be at 7pm Saturday night the 25th. If you want to see a lot of men's collegiate gymnastics, please come up to Everett because it's going to be quite a show.**

For more information about either of these competitions, please go to our website [www.wmgf.us](http://www.wmgf.us) and click on the schedule link to find info on each competition.

*Go Huskies!*

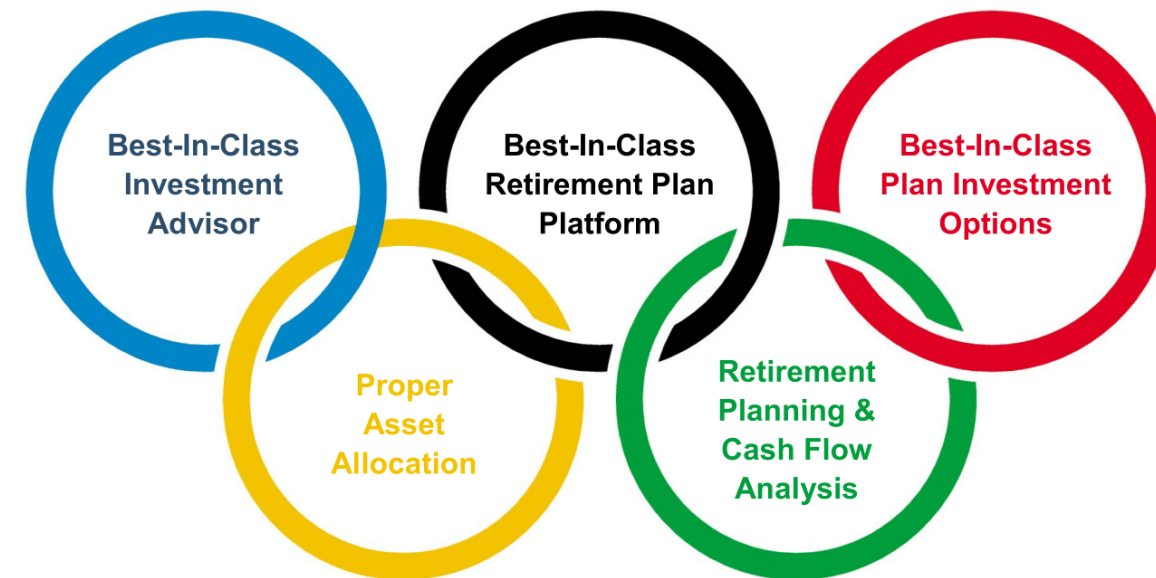


Assistant Coach Giancarlo Mora, Paul Friedman, Garrett Dee, Justin Rowen, Quinn Damon, Nathan Tsuji, Phil Chantler, Conner Petellin, Max Soifer, Nick Kano, Ben Fisher, Carl Meader, Jacob Jarrett, Ben Bloom, Michael Sibley, Daniel Gordon, Coach Mark Russo



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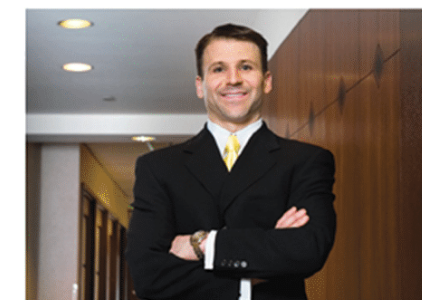
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 President & Founder - Senior Wealth Advisor

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## Junior Nathan Tsuji Competes at Winter Cup

By Nathan Tsuji

Qualifying to compete at Winter Cup has been a goal of mine ever since I first competed at the Blackjack Invitational as a junior and watched Jeff Crockett win the big skill competition. I was a mix of intimidated and excited when I first walked onto the floor. The equipment was all new, gymnasts I'd been watching represent the United States for most of my life were stretching right next to me. Four athletes from our Olympic team in Rio were there warming up, it was incredible. However, once I started doing gymnastics and warming up I was no longer intimidated, simply excited. The floor and vault were on a podium, which made them the bounciest things I've ever had the chance to tumble on. When doing my front double-full combination pass, I went to spot the ground and much to my surprise I was a foot higher than normal, which allowed for proper preparation for bounding. The combination of that floor and adrenaline made for one of the best floor routines I'd ever done.

While some people may have an inclination to thinking that the gymnasts from the NCAA schools look down on our club, I experienced the exact opposite. Each and every interaction I had with the athletes was support-



ive and encouraging. They were excited to see that the club teams are starting to put athletes into these types of competitions. The coaches I talked to were happy as well, because the club teams are growing in number and strength, which is something Men's Gymnastics sorely needs.

Something you may not notice when you look at our team is how big we are. I'm not talking about numbers, I'm talking about height. Watching the Olympics and listening to the commentators calling some guys "monsters" or "huge" paints a very different picture from reality. While they may be big compared to each other, when I stood next to Sam Mikulak or Donnell Wittenburg, I felt huge. I had never realized quite how "Gymnast-sized" those guys really are.

The first day of competition went about as well as it could have. I stuck four of the six events and managed to place high enough to be considered for second day. Unfortunately I missed the second day of competition by two places, but was happy that it allowed me to fly out to Philly to join the team and beat Temple. I'm so thankful to the team for being so supportive and helping me get to this point, and I hope to be back again next year.

## Huskies to be Represented at 2017 Maccabiah Games

By Max Soifer

In December I traveled to Norman, Oklahoma to compete in the men's gymnastics trials for the 20th World Maccabiah games. I had a very good meet, hitting all six of my routines pretty well. I managed to come in third place over all, making me one of the top Jewish gymnasts in the country! This is my greatest accomplishment in the 18 years that I've spent doing gymnastics.

The first time I heard about the Maccabiah games was just as I was starting to study for my bar mitzvah. Apparently my Rabbi and the state director for men's gymnastics lived next door to each other and had talked about the Maccabiah games. As I was starting to study for my bar mitzvah, my rabbi told me about her conversation with the state director, and that I should work toward going to the Maccabiah games. Ever since then, qualifying for the Maccabiah games has been a goal of mine.

With lots of support from my family, my teammates, my coaches, and Washington Men's Gymnastics, I was able to make it happen. As a result of qualifying to the Maccabiah games I have the honor of representing the

United States in Tel Aviv, Israel in July 2017. I am extremely honored and excited to spend a month in Israel this coming summer to compete, and to celebrate two important parts of my life, gymnastics and Judaism.



## Meet the Team: Freshmen Paul Friedman, Daniel Gordon, and Conner Petellin

by Max Soifer

Competition season is in full swing, and the whole team is working hard to accomplish our goals. Although we have been pushing hard at practice, we still managed to find some time to catch up with some of our freshmen to get to know them better.

### Paul Freidman

Paul is a freshman from Gig Harbor, Washington. He's a strong gymnast on floor and vault, and has been improving his basics on high bar and parallel bars this season. Paul qualified to Junior Olympic Nationals twice and is excited to compete for the Huskies.

### *You've lived in Washington your whole life, what made you decide to stay in Washington and continue doing gymnastics with the UW Men's Gymnastics Team?*

I have seen the UW team at the Washington Open for the past couple of years, and they always looked like they were full of energy and passion for gymnastics and the team. I then made the decision that I wanted to be a part of that energetic team.

### *When you are not at school or in the gym training, what do you enjoy doing?*

Mostly coaching gymnastics. Being a part of the team is expensive so I find that most of my off time is spent trying to raise money so I can continue with the team. I enjoy coaching a lot though; it's fun teaching children this amazing sport and watching them progress within it.

### *Why is being on the team expensive? Is it expensive in terms of the time commitment, or is it financially expensive, and why?*

Being on the team can be financially expensive and it is mostly just the cost of living. Time commitment is expensive as well but there is nothing you can do about that.

### *Over the years, the team has traveled internationally to places like Costa Rica, Germany, and Italy. If there was one place you could go with the team where would you want to go and why?*

I would like to travel to Peru. I love the culture and there are some absolutely amazing sights that I want to see like Machu Picchu.

### *As for all of the guys on the team, while gymnastics is very important to them, they're also student athletes and take academics very seriously. What are your academic interests and goals?*

I am going to finish my Business degree. Although I am not sure that I will use it directly, I believe that it will be beneficial at some point in the future.

### *On the team there is a wide variety in music preference. Who on the team do you think has the best gym playlist and why?*

I don't really pay attention to the music that much, so Mike I guess.

### *As a freshman, you have lots of time left on the team. What are your gymnastics goals, both for the team and as an individual?*

My goals for the team is I want them to be the best. Winning Collegiate Nationals says that we are the best and that's what I want. My personal goals: first off, I want to contribute to the team at any competition – even just one – where I can contribute a score to the team. My other goal is, even if it's just on one event, I want to compete at an elite gymnastics meet. I'm talking about Winter Cup, Elite Cup, or something like that. Just being there would be such an incredible feeling and honor.

### *Nutrition and diet are very important for high-level athletes. What do you like to cook for yourself after workouts?*

Chicken and rice. Protein is incredibly important for the body after a workout so I try to have grilled chicken as much as I can after workout.



## Meet the Team

(Continued from page 5)

### Daniel Gordon

A freshman from Seattle, his strongest events are rings and floor but he is solid on all events. He qualified to Junior Olympic Nationals twice as a junior gymnast and is looking forward to continuing his career with the Huskies.

#### *You've lived in Seattle your whole life, what made you decide to stay in Washington with our team?*

The main reason I chose the University of Washington was because of the relationship I had built with the team and the coaches, due to training in the same facility as the team for the last three years. The uncertainty of my other options prompted me to choose the UW Men's Gymnastics team.

#### *Are you a fan of any sports other than gymnastics?*

I'm a fan of many other sports. When I was younger I played baseball, soccer, and ultimate Frisbee along with doing gymnastics. I also enjoy watching baseball, basketball, football, hockey, and many winter and summer Olympics sports.

#### *What are you studying? What are your career goals?*

I am studying biology with an emphasis on ecology, the environment, and conservation biology. I am also minoring in marine biology and quantitative science. As for career goals, I'm not too sure. I just know that I would like to be able to have a career where I enjoy my work and I am doing something meaningful.



#### *Over the years, the team has traveled internationally to places like Costa Rica, Germany, and Italy. If there was one place you could go with the team where would you want to go and why?*

I would say Australia, because it was so much fun the last time I went and I want to go back.

#### *What is your favorite meal to eat? Would you rather cook a meal for yourself or eat out?*

Chicken Parmesan; and I definitely prefer to eat out because I am not great at cooking for myself.

#### *You also have lots of time left on the team; what are your goals, both for the team and as an individual?*

One of my main individual goals is to continually improve while on the team. More specifically, I want to compete all-around at some point during my college career. I also want to finish my career knowing that I reached my full potential and gave everything I had to improve and become the best gymnast possible. For the team, I want to win Nationals. I also want the team to beat a top-ten NCAA team or be ranked in the top ten during the season. Finally, I want the team to be a cohesive group where we all trust each other and believe in each other. I want us to work together to achieve our goals and strive for maximum effort and achievement. I believe that the closer we are as a team, the more successful we will be, and the greater potential we will have.

### Conner Petellin

A freshman from Coeur D'Alene, Idaho, his strongest event is pommel horse, but he also excels on floor and high bar. Conner qualified to Junior Olympic Nationals three times, and is looking forward to competing for the Huskies.

#### *What made you decide to join the UW Men's Gymnastics team?*

I don't know, it just felt right. I didn't want to go to ASU.

#### *Did you visit the team before you joined? And did it help you decide to join the team?*

Yes. Yes, it did help me decide to join the team because I felt accepted by the team and the practice was very enjoyable.

#### *What is your favorite event? And why?*

Pommel horse. It's a unique event, and hitting a pommel set feels a lot more rewarding than hitting other sets.

#### *How does your hometown in Idaho compare to Washington?*

It is the Pacific Northwest, so it is pretty similar. Although the girls are harder to talk to here!



# THANK YOU!

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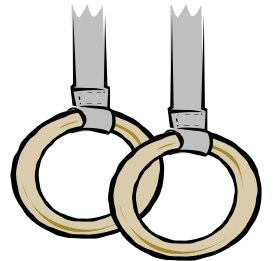
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#### *What is your favorite part of being on the team up to now?*

I really enjoy the atmosphere at practice and the chemistry that the team has. The atmosphere makes it easy to train and improve on a daily basis.

#### *At what age did you start gymnastics? And what made you start?*

I started gymnastics at the age of thirteen. I would say that I started gymnastics because I found no other sports fun.

#### *If you had to choose between Batman and Spider-Man for your next roommate, who would you choose? And why?*

Spider-Man; he is much more fun and less depressing. Batman is too serious about things. He needs to chill out.

#### *If you had to choose between being able to fly or being able to read minds, what would you choose and why?*

Ability to fly. Can you imagine the gymnastics sets I'd be able to throw? Also traffic would no longer be an issue.

#### *Do you prefer being too cold or too hot? Why?*

I would say I prefer to be too cold. You can bundle up and become warm. It's harder to escape being too warm.

#### *What is your favorite meal to cook?*

Chicken and rice.

#### *What color bell pepper would you add to your chicken and rice? Why?*

I would definitely add a red bell pepper because it looks hot but it's not. I love the deception.

#### *Explain your dream vacation destination.*

A mountain right next to a beach. That way, I could be snowboarding one minute, then surfing the next.

#### *Okay, bringing this back to gymnastics, as a freshman you have lots of time left on the team, what are your gymnastics goals, both as a team and as an individual?*

My main aim is to improve on pommels. Hopefully during my four years on the team I'll be able to make finals on pommels at Collegiate Nationals. For the team I want us to beat ASU and also be ranked higher than an NCAA team.

WMGF  
5529 27th Ave. NE  
Seattle, WA 98105



In This Issue...



Mid-Season Update, Meet the Team, and more...

March 10, 2017

# Washington Men's Gymnastics

## 2016-2017 Meet Schedule

(local meets in bold)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Competition</i>	<i>Location</i>
<b>January 15</b>	<b>7:00pm</b>	<b>Washington Open</b> 	<b>Marv Harshman Court Seattle, WA</b>
January 21	6:00pm	Stanford Open vs. Stanford, Cal, Southern California United	Burnham Pavilion, Stanford Univ. Stanford, CA
February 4	1:00pm	at Air Force, with Stanford	USAF Academy Colorado Springs, CO
February 17, 18	TBD	at Temple, with Springfield; also Winter Cup (individuals)	Temple Univ., Philadelphia, PA Westgate Resort, Las Vegas, NV
February 25	7:00pm	at ASU, with So Cal United	Rawhide at Wild Horse Pass Chandler, AZ
<b>March 11</b>	<b>7:00pm</b>	<b>vs. Cal, with UW Women</b> 	<b>Alaska Airlines Arena at Hec Ed Seattle, WA</b>
<b>March 24</b> <b>March 25</b>	<b>2:00pm</b> <b>7:00pm</b>	<b>USA Gymnastics Collegiate Nationals</b> 	<b>Everett Community College Everett, WA</b>

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