

WMGF News

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May 1, 2017

Season Review

by Mark Russo

We began the second half of our 2017 season at Arizona State for what is evolving into an annual Collegiate Club Invitational. All of the highest-ranking collegiate gymnastics clubs come together to see who is the best. We had our highest-scoring meet of the season here, but it wasn't enough to get the win. Instead we came in second, but with strong individual performances like Garrett Dee's clean landings on floor for a team-high score of 13.75. Max Soifer scored 13.0 on pommel horse, leading our team on this difficult event. Max has put a lot of time into his routine, and it was great seeing him get to this score level. On rings – no surprise – Nick Kano scored 14.55 to defeat all other competitors. Nick is striving to get his routine to a 16.0 start value, and at this meet he started at 15.7. Justin Rowen again demonstrated his status as our best vaulter by scoring a team-high 14.35. Carl Meader won parallel bars with his airborne routine featuring several flight skills. This routine is full-on action and very enjoyable to watch. It was good to see him get the score he deserves, 14.35, to win this event. High bar on the other hand, did not go well for our team. Two falls cost us several points. Justin did a pretty good routine and scored highest for us, but we'll need more improvement here if we are going to win.

Team Scores

Arizona State	395.50
Washington	391.00
Temple	382.75
So. Cal United	345.65

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.



Nick Kano at UW

Photo credit: Jeff Crockett

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All-Around

1 st Nathan Tsuji	77.40
3 rd Jacob Jarrett	76.45
5 th Ben Bloom	75.25

This concluded our traveling for the season, which we ended with two home meets in March for the first time ever. On Saturday March 11, we hosted Cal Berkeley for the first time since the 1970s! It was a combined men's and women's meet with the UW women going up against Seattle Pacific. What a great event it turned out to be with nearly 3000 fans in attendance, our largest crowd of the season. Our attitude going into this meet was to up our start values to try and take a chance at defeating Cal who was better than us all season. The team responded well and the meet was highly energized by the large crowd. We started great on floor, again led by sophomore Garrett Dee – who nearly broke 14 but scored 13.95 to get us going on our first event. Pommel horse was next, and the team really came together as every gymnast hit their routine. Phil Chantler started the hit parade and was key to getting us going in the right direction. Max Soifer followed with an event-leading 12.9. Then Nathan Tsuji, Conner Petelin, and Carl Meader all hit clean routines for a team score of 62.85 on this event, our highest of the season. Pommels has been our nemesis this year, and it was very satisfying to see everyone hit their routine. The high energy of the crowd continued to propel us to good performances on rings, like Michael Sibley's 13.55 and Nick Kano's 14.25. Nick and Justin led us through vault, and then on paral-

(Continued on page 2)

Season Review

(Continued from page 1)

lel bars we peaked with a beautiful routine by Nathan Tsuji scoring 14.1. Problem was, we had one more event to go: high bar. It looked to me like the high energy of the meet finally caught up to us and we looked a little tired. This played out with our team falling three times on releases, somewhat spectacularly. Cal beat us by nearly seven points on this event and it proved to be the major reason we did not win. Nevertheless, it was a great experience to compete in front of so many fans and alongside the UW women. The guys will not soon forget this one.

<u>Team Scores</u>	Cal	397.00
	Washington	387.10

<u>All-Around</u>	1 st Aaron Mah, Cal	79.40
	2 nd Nathan Tsuji, UW	79.05
	3 rd Jacob Jarrett, UW	72.80

Finally, for the first time in 20 years, our season concluded at home as we hosted USA Gymnastics Collegiate Nationals at Everett Community College on March 24 and 25. It was a large event, as we concurrently hosted the Washington State Boy's Gymnastics Championship as well. More than 500 gymnasts competed over the course of this three-day event. The event itself ran flawlessly thanks to so many from our WMGF Board.

In the collegiate competition, eight teams from around the country were present and fighting for the win. This competition is becoming more closely contested each year. It is very satisfying to see collegiate clubs getting stronger each year and now starting to overtake NCAA funded teams. Our focus was on beating our rival Arizona State, and it looked like it was going to happen; going into the last rotation, we were ahead 322.55 to 316.75. Our last event: Our nemesis, pommel horse. ASU's last event: Floor, one of their top two events. We would need all of our gymnasts to hit, and one or two of theirs to make a mistake. It did not happen our way... and again we finished second. As crushing as a close loss is to your main rival, the silver lining was how many other teams we did beat. There is tremendous improvement from the team, and again their effort and desire to win were ever-present the whole season. We are closer than ever to being champions, yet there is more we need to do to get there. I look forward to this challenge, and am finding the fun in these increasingly-close competitions with ASU.



Results:

<u>Collegiate Club</u>		
Arizona State		383.25
Washington		381.25
Temple		364.75
So. Cal United		341.50

<u>NCAA Team</u>		
Air Force		396.95
William & Mary		388.40
Navy		379.70
Springfield		373.85

<u>All-Around</u>		
2 nd Nathan Tsuji		78.20
6 th Ben Bloom		74.45
11 th Jacob Jarrett		73.25

From the team competition, individuals qualified to event finals which took place the following day. We were represented well and several of our gymnasts attained All-American status by placing in the top six. On floor, both Garrett Dee and Nathan Tsuji qualified as All-Americans as Garrett finished 6th and Nathan 3rd. Nick Kano finished 3rd on rings for the third year in a row. Next year he will get above this placing and win! Justin and Nick qualified for vault finals; each tried a more difficult vault as they went for the win but neither was successful. Nathan qualified for finals on parallel bars but missed his routine that day. Carl hit his crowd-pleasing high bar routine in the finals competition and finished 6th to attain All-American status.

Event Finals Results:

<u>Floor</u>	<u>Rings</u>	<u>Vault</u>
3 rd Nathan	3 rd Nick	7 th Nick
6 th Garrett		8 th Justin

<u>Parallel Bars</u>	<u>High Bar</u>
8 th Nathan	6 th Carl

It was an honor to host this event and we received rave reviews from the other programs in attendance. Many thanks to all WMGF Board members who made this event happen and one to remember.

The season was a fun one, vying for the championship. We worked diligently to try and overcome our weak events and get to the promised land. We came up short, but closer than ever. The work to get over this pass continues and our improvement is gaining momentum. Our future looks brighter than ever and we are extremely excited about the direction we are heading!

Huskies Hold Their Ground at Nationals

by Max Soifer and Benjamin Fisher

This year we had the opportunity to host the USAG National Championships, which was an incredible experience. It was a busy weekend, but rewarding nonetheless. On Thursday (3/23) we set up the entire meet and made sure that all the equipment was prepared for a long weekend of high-level gymnastics. That night, we had our warm-up practice in preparation for the big team event on Friday. Teams also voted on who they would like to represent them as a liaison, of sorts, between USAG and the various teams. Our very own Benjamin Fisher, a sophomore, was elected to the post of Collegiate Athlete Representative for the 2017-2018 season. Also, not having to travel anywhere was a huge positive for us; we were all able to sleep in our own beds, relax in an environment that we were all comfortable in, and we didn't have to go out to eat for every meal.

Meet day is always exhilarating, especially when that meet is a national championship, and especially with home-field advantage. We started the meet on rings, one of our best events, and had a very solid showing. The rotation was highlighted by a huge routine with a stuck dismount by Nick Kano. Next we went to vault, where we had what was most likely our best vault rotation of the year, and had the maximum number of gymnasts from our team qualify for vault finals. Both Justin Rowen and Nick Kano qualified. After vault came parallel bars, where we ran into a little bit of a rough patch. However, the rotation ended with a highlight in Nathan Tsuji's clean and consistent performance, which was also good enough to qualify him for Saturday's event finals.

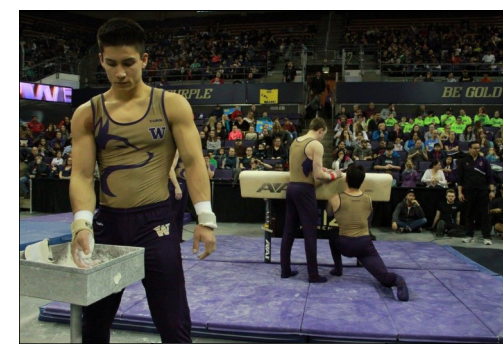
At this point we were halfway through the meet, and because there were so many teams, it was our turn to endure a bye rotation. We came out of it well-rested going into high bar. Overall, high bar was pretty clean with just a few small hiccups here and there. However, Carl Meader came through with a monster high bar set to close out the rotation, including an upgraded release move and his show-stopping triple back dismount. Carl's high bar routine was good enough to qualify him for event finals as well. Riding the energy from Carl's great set we moved on to floor. We hit four out of five routines, and managed

to qualify both Garrett Dee and Nathan Tsuji to floor finals. We had a minor slip-up midway through the rotation, but we were still in the mix going into our last event, pommel horse. Pommels was pretty solid compared to what we normally put up, although we had a few slip-ups there as well.

Overall, we had a good end to a good season. We managed to come in second to ASU by about two points, a small gap that we will work to close next season. While we didn't come in first as a team, we still claimed three of the top six all-around spots, with Jacob Jarrett coming in fifth, Ben Bloom coming in second, and Nathan Tsuji coming in first. After the meet, we had a banquet ceremony at the Future of Flight Museum in Everett. It was a really cool venue, and people from other teams even mentioned how much they enjoyed the museum.

The following day we had event finals. With teammates competing on every event except pommel horse it was a very exciting meet for everyone. On floor Garrett and Nathan both managed to place in the top six, making them All-Americans on that event. Nathan was third and Garrett was sixth. On rings, Nick came in third for the third year in a row, also making him an All-American on rings. On vault, both Justin and Nick attempted upgraded vaults in event finals. Both had slight errors pushing them just off the podium, however it was exciting to see them attempt such difficult skills. On parallel bars, Nathan had an incredible routine until his arm buckled on his dismount and he took a fall. Carl's high bar routine during finals was one of the most exciting routines of the meet, and he managed to pick up All-American honors for his performance there as well.

Although we were not able to claim the national championship this year, this is the closest we've come to winning in a decade. It was a great meet with lots of energy, and we still had plenty of titles to prove we are one of the top teams in the USAG conference. The guys are fired up and ready to work hard this offseason in order to put us in the best position possible to take home next year's National Championship.



Nathan, Max, and Carl

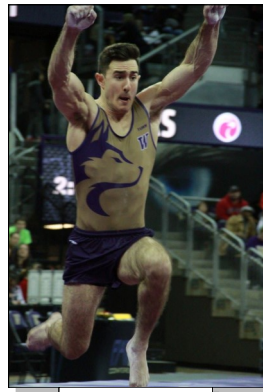


Max Soifer

Your 2016-2017 Huskies



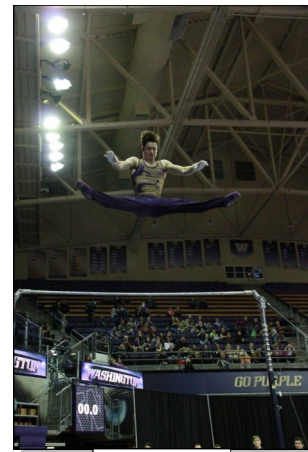
Lined up and ready to compete at Collegiate Nationals



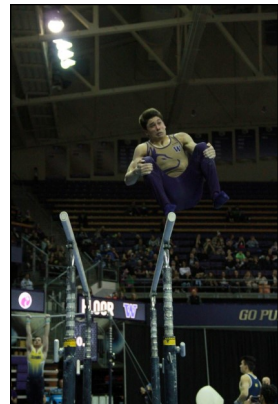
Justin Rowen



Garrett Dee



Ben Bloom



Carl Meader



Giancarlo Mora



Michael Sibley



Mark Russo



Nathan Tsuji



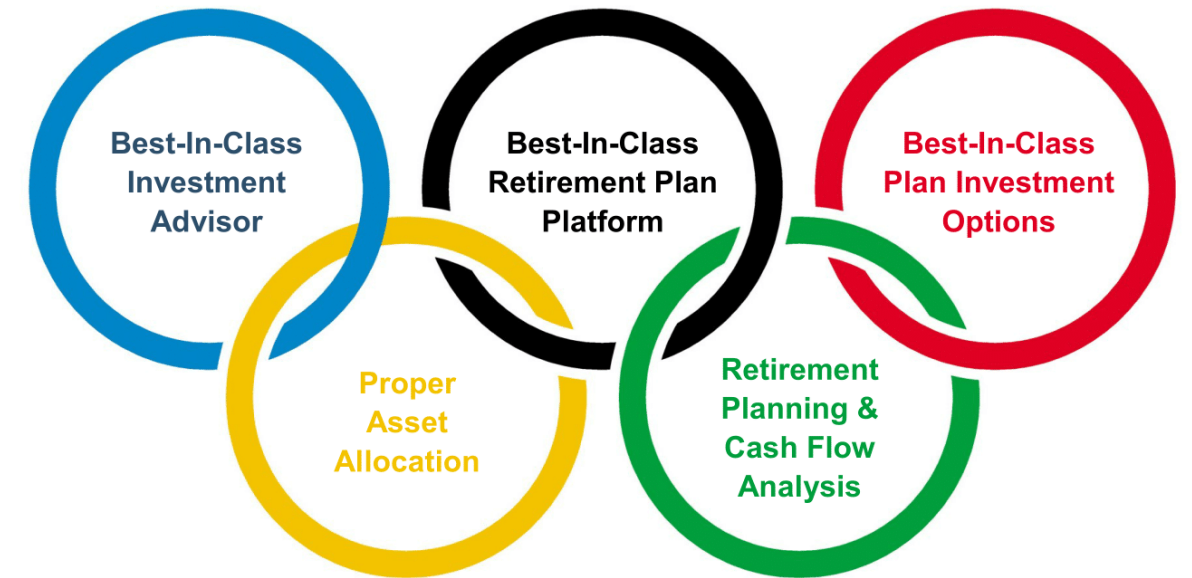
Conner Petellin

Photos by Jeff Crockett



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Where Are They Now? An Update on Husky Alum Andrew Morrison

by Peter Sawyer

Andrew Morrison didn't compete for the Huskies, yet those who were in the gym between 1989 and '91 probably remember seeing him around. Like a lot of our members, he just wanted to do gymnastics and found community with our program. Both the sport and our program made an impression on him, and because of that he remains a strong supporter. He helped us in March when we hosted Collegiate Nationals in Everett, and it was in talking to him there that I thought it would be interesting to share the story of one of our "unofficial" members.

It starts while he was attending the University of Southern California and was considering a transfer to the University of Washington in his home state in order to help reduce expenses. Back then the men's team loosely affiliated with Washington Gymnastics Academy, and they advertised adult gymnastics. This ended up being an important consideration for Andrew in contemplating UW - so much so that he called Mark and asked about joining. Despite being twenty, 6'1" and having no gymnastics background, Mark didn't say "no," which ended up being all the encouragement Andrew needed to sign up.

Soon afterwards he was learning floor exercise, strength training in the evenings with the guys, and helping move women's equipment to support the club. He told me he loved learning new skills - for example, he said how he'd half-heartedly tried to learn a handstand for years, but it always seemed akin to "learning Chinese or flying," so it was a thrill when Mark's training led to finally being able to walk on his hands. Beyond learning skills though, Andrew also stressed how the club gave

him a sense of community that had been missing from his life. That camaraderie wasn't just limited to the gym either. Andrew mentioned whitewater rafting and hiking on weekends, and he still hangs out with the current team when he can, for example joining our Costa Rica and Germany trips.

However, one day Andrew discovered he had enough credits to graduate, so he withdrew from UW mid-winter, loaded up his car, and moved to Los Angeles. He lived in someone's garage for a few weeks before working as a graveyard-shift employee at a local restaurant ("I was terrible," he says). In the meantime, he was looking for other work and eventually landed a job doing corporate sales. Later he went on to work in real estate, winding up at what became Sotheby's. In 2013, Andrew left to form his Redwood Real Estate Brokerage which he continues to run today.

Andrew visits Washington a couple of times a month to see his mom, and because of these trips he's able to catch up with the team a bit. I asked him about why he chooses to still help out. He struggled to put it into words, but told me that there is a "ripple effect" with helping - you never know how you're going to affect people, and it's "a good thing to be part of that energy." He describes our program as a collection of like-minded people - focused on something healthy and positive, which he thinks is rare in competitive sports.

In fact, when I called, I asked him what I had interrupted; he replied that Mark inspired him this year to start growing vegetables and fruit trees, so when we hung up, he was headed out to work his own garden.



The current team showing their sense of community before the meet against Cal

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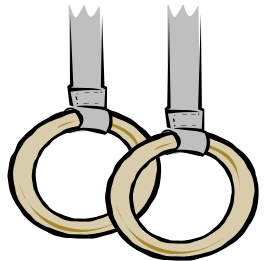
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In This Issue...

Season Review, Where Are They Now, and more...

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