

# WMGF News

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May 31, 2018

## Season Review

by Giancarlo Mora

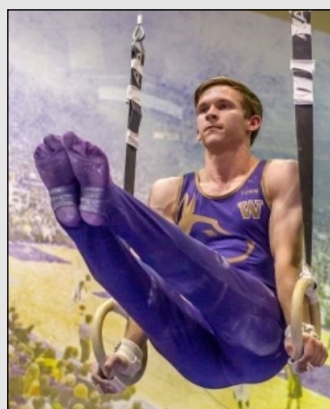
This season was a very unique one for me, which I will treasure in my heart for as long as I am alive. I just finished my first competitive season leading the Washington Huskies as Head Coach, and I feel very proud of it. I knew it would not be an easy task when I took it, especially given how great a job Mark Russo had been doing since he started as Husky Head Coach back in the 1989-90 season. In these recent months, Washington Men's Gymnastics is coming off a transformative period in order to invest and prepare for the future. In a short period of time, Washington Men's Gymnastics named me, Giancarlo Mora, and Jeff Crockett, head and assistant coaches, respectively; changed the workout schedule for the team's training times; and furthermore and most important, named Mark Russo our chief and team coordinator.

As we all know, transitions and changes are not easy, and this past season was no exception. Our scores dropped an average of 15 points compared to those of last season, however we were able to maintain the national rankings and again claimed second place at the Collegiate National Championships on March 30<sup>th</sup> behind ASU. In addition, we returned from Nationals with five All-American titles: Nathan Tsuji, Ben Bloom, and Jacob Jarrett placed third, fourth, and fifth in the in the all-around competition, respectively; Nathan took third place on p-bars, while junior Jacob Jarrett placed fifth on vault with his double-twisting Yurchenko.

Team Captain Nathan Tsuji was honored as well with the Outstanding

## 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.



Zak Kuest on Rings

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Senior Athlete of the Year award, which is an important recognition made by USA Gymnastics.

Collegiate Nationals was held this year at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Since this venue is over a mile above sea level, the Washington Huskies arrived two days prior to the Team competition to acclimatize to the high altitude and held practice at the U.S. Olympic Training Center together with National team members like Sam Mikulak, Eddie Penev, and Donnell Whittenburg. What a great experience!

Now, looking back at the last seven months, since we started the season back in September, I tell you that I cannot be any happier watching the development and commitment of this team throughout the season. I am very proud of every single one of these guys.

At the end of this season we will say goodbye to Sophomore Paul Friedman and Senior Carl Meader, wishing them well for their coming endeavors and knowing that once a Husky, always a Husky.

Looking ahead, we continue to work on the path that will lay the foundation for our long-term project of building a facility of our own, which will nurture future generations. Today we, Washington Men's Gymnastics Team, feel as strong and healthy as ever, as we are preparing for seasons to come. And while we prepare for the future, you have my commitment that I will always keep the strong work ethic that Mark Russo instilled in the team. It is helpful to know that some things will never change. **W**

# WMGF Vision: Looking to the Future

by Mark Russo

In my new role as Program Chief, I have the opportunity to create a vision of where we, the Washington Men's Gymnastics Foundation and Team, are heading. It has been an incredible road to get to where we are today, and it is with great respect that I take on this task to further shape the culture and path of our amazing gymnastics program as we head into the next chapter of our story.

Dr. Eric Hughes began the story in the mid-1950s. Soon after, his hard work secured funding from the UW and he led the team to challenge for the NCAA title in the early 70s, reaching as high as second place. His goal, his vision, was to win a National Championship. Things changed when university funding was withdrawn in 1980, but fortunately Jim Holt stepped in to fill in as coach through the troubling times. I was on Jim's teams and we worked toward his vision, to make it into the top 20 teams in the NCAA. When I became coach in 1989, my vision was to qualify Husky gymnasts for World Championship or Olympic Teams. It wasn't until the mid-1990s that I began to see how I wanted the team to continue beyond my involvement as coach. It has always been my vision to create the best possible gymnasts from the people that join our team while never sacrificing the development of the best possible person. Through my later years of coaching, I really began to realize all the benefits of our situation: The hard work inside and outside the gym, the volunteers that give so much time to our fundraising, and the family that forms when athletes train together for four or more years. Not only are we producing competitors and teams on a par

with other university-funded teams, we are producing people of incredible perseverance, work ethic, and reciprocity that understand all aspects of our program. When they are done with their time on the team, they care deeply about it and want to see it continue. This is the point where I am. This is where we take our team to the next level of development. We are graduating to the place I envisioned before, with a team that survives and thrives beyond me as coach.

The formation of the WMGF is another key chapter of our story, which has enabled us to have intelligent, great people come together to plan and organize for our future. Where would we be without this essential group? We are so strong as an organization that I constantly have to come up with new challenges to test our limits.

My vision today is directly related to the involvement of the WMGF: To have a permanent space of our own for gymnasts of all ages to train, practice, and coach our core values of integrity, truth, hard work, perseverance, and reciprocity. Within the next five years it is our goal to secure such a space, and to be making progress

toward owning the facility as a permanent home for the Team. Visions are the first step in creating future reality. The next is doing the right things toward our goal, day after day. Sticking to both, we will create the future that is only a vision today.

We are up for the challenge. It inspires me to work with and lead members of the WMGF and all the team members along the way to create the reality of our vision.



Freshman Kody Dominguez

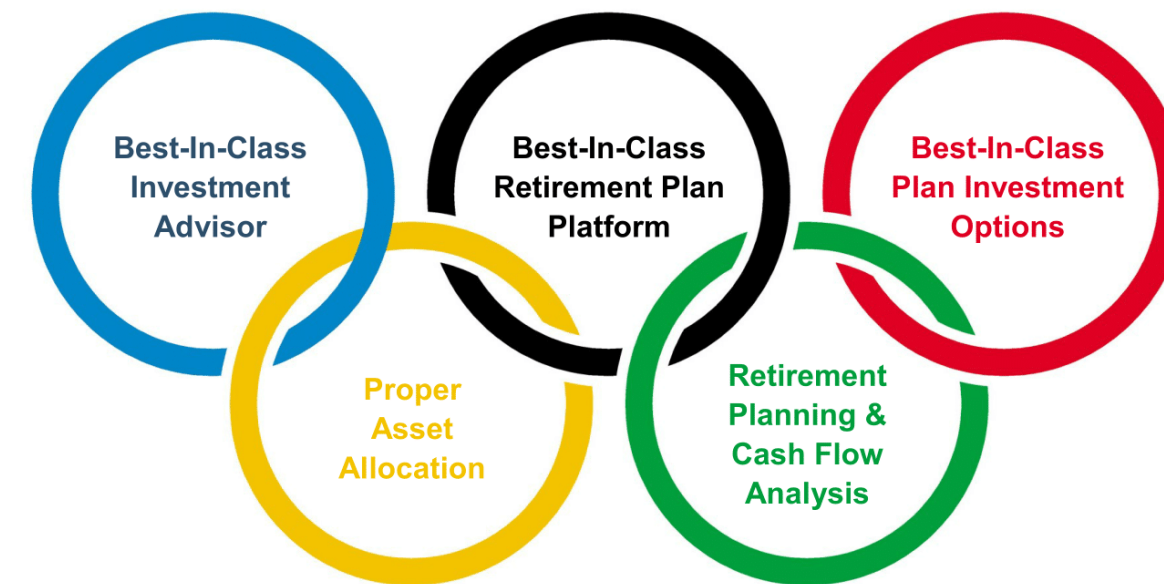


Junior Michael Sibley



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**Mark K. Oliver**  
President & Founder - Senior Wealth Advisor

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# Where Are They Now? An interview with Husky alum Sergio Luna III

by Mark Russo

I caught up with former Husky standout Sergio Luna via email recently. Sergio was on the team for two years, 1996 and 1997, and during that time he left his mark on the team showing tremendous skill ability and an air awareness second-to-none. It's been over 20 years since Sergio defeated former Olympian Steve McCain in high bar finals right here at Seattle Pacific University when we hosted USA Gymnastics Collegiate Nationals. Sergio comes from a gymnastics family as both his mom, Linda, and his dad, Sergio Sr., were excellent gymnasts in their own right. In addition to his parents being gymnasts, all his brothers and sisters did gymnastics in some form as well. I had the pleasure of coaching all the boys of the family through their gymnastics careers. Sergio's brother Daniel continues to be very involved with the WMGF and functions as a vital member of our Board.



Sergio and family

**Where have you lived as a result of being in the Marines, what have been your jobs, and what are you doing now?**

The Marines have taken me and my family to many places over the years. While attending flight school in Mississippi, I met Amanda. After completing flight school, I received orders to Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, California to fly the F/A-18 Hornet. California is where we started our family so it will always be a special place for us. While at Miramar, I deployed twice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. After five years in California, we moved to Okinawa, Japan. While in Okinawa I flew the KC-130J Hercules, deploying in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. We spent three and a half years in Japan and loved every minute. Once that tour came to an end, I received orders back to Miramar and continued flying the KC-130J. After another

**Sergio, what sticks out in your memories of that time as a junior gymnast and then being on the UW collegiate team?**

One of the things that I always thought was unique about the UW team was how much of a team it really is. Most sports have a good team aspect to them, but the UW team to me was more of a family which made working together easy and more enjoyable. Working out with the UW team while in high school provided mentors for me, and gave me a strong direction with regard to hard work and dedication. Whether the team members at the time knew it or not, it had an immense influence on me and I would not be where I am today without it (Daniel Luna and Mark Oliver to name a few; and most notably – Mark Russo).

**Tell us about your immediate family, their names and where you are living now?**

I'm currently living in Northern Virginia with my wife Amanda and our three children. Our oldest child, Olivia, 12 years old, runs track for her school and is an honors student (she must get her smarts from Amanda!). Ella, ten years old, is also an honors student, has a natural athletic ability and recently taught me how to floss (I thought this was to help my aging teeth, but little did I know it was a dance move...). Anderson (third time was a charm for me) is five years old and has an arm like Randy Johnson. I think Anderson is our retirement plan.

of Operation Enduring Freedom, we closed out our time at Miramar and moved to the National Capital Region. I spent the first year as the Marine Fellow for the US Agency for International Development (USAID), then started pushing pencils in the five-sided maze (also known as the Pentagon) at Headquarters Marine Corps' Programs and Resources Department.



Our Husky fighter pilot at Al Asad Airbase, Iraq

(Continued on page 5)

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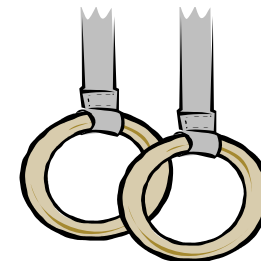
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**From your perspective now, how do you see the team?**

The team has grown immensely. From my lens, the team members are smarter and are doing extremely well – it blows my mind how well Mark has kept this team thriving. I've had no doubt about this over the years; just always amazed when I think about Mark's ability to coach, mentor, motivate, and lead a group of young college athletes. Truly a unique ability that we are all grateful and better for.

**Why do you continue to give donations to the team?**

Not having the luxury of being a funded sport at the UW, donations act somewhat as a catalyst helping to keep this program thriving the way that it is. It's great to see scholarships given too! Very unique group and sport that I am proud to have been a part of.

**Are any of your children gymnastic wonders like you were?**

Our girls have done a little gymnastics over the past few years, but we're still trying to find their sports niche. Maybe Anderson will be our gymnast – time will tell!

**Where do you hope to be in ten years with regard to your family and your career?**

Ten years from now, I hope to have the military chapter of our life closed out and move on to another

career. Although we love the military and wouldn't be where we are today without it, I would like nothing more than to provide the childhood for my kids that my parents afforded to me – stability with regard to not having to move and change schools, and the ability to keep the same friends while growing up.

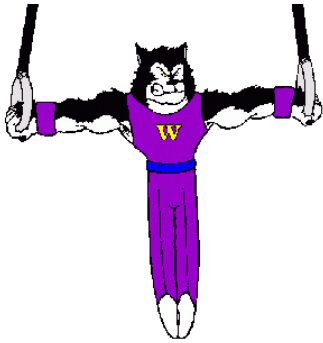
**Is "Sergio the Famous Tree Climber" going to make a Pacific Northwest showing anytime soon?**

We are actually planning a trip in June 2018! Unfortunately, we don't make it up there as much as we'd like to, but we are excited and looking forward to getting back to the Pacific Northwest for a visit!



Sergio on duty in Okinawa, Japan

WMGF  
5529 27th Ave. NE  
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May 31, 2018

*Thank you for supporting Washington Men's Gymnastics!*



*This year's Huskies at the 2018 Collegiate National Championships*