

# WMGF News

www.wmgf.us

December 11, 2020

## Season Preview

by Head Coach Giancarlo Mora

I hope that you and your families are all well during these unprecedented times. Since the pandemic started, the team has been battling with cold gyms, reduced practice time at the facilities to allow for social distancing and other new requirements, and even gym closures all together. But above all, we have been confronted with a lot of uncertainty as far as what the coming season will look like.

As you can imagine, these circumstances are very challenging for any competitive team out there. But if you thought that this team was going to fall down on its knee, you might have thought wrong. These new circumstances are doing nothing but bringing out the character of these athletes to shine. I am humbled to coach this group of strong athletes who bring with them so much energy and positivity every day.

When there are gym closures, we meet online and have an awesome strength workout through the magic of today's technology. If the gym temperature feels cold, their level of energy and enthusiasm makes it feel warm pretty soon again. Reduced gym time is being met with high-intensity practices to avoid down time to the max.

What a fantastic group of guys! They are: Team Captains Ben Bloom from Mill Valley CA and Alex May from Highlands Ranch CO. Completing the senior class are Alex Forcos from Snohomish WA and Zak Kuest from Marysville WA. Juniors Kyle

### 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.



Perry Lightfoot

Photo credit: Cameron Oliva

Hendren from Battle Ground WA, Perry Lightfoot from Huntington Beach CA, Oscar Hemmert from Seattle WA, Connor Pattison from Melbourne Australia, and sophomores Adam Kerwin from Renton WA, Parker Calomiris from Petaluma CA, Brody Lusk from Spokane WA, Jameel Ali from Burlington, Ontario – Canada, Joseph Mischke from Minneapolis MN, and Luka Sisauri from Fox River Grove IL complete our returning team (14 athletes) for the season.

They are joined by our freshmen class: Andrew Layman from Wasilla AK, David Roane from Shakopee MN, Sebastian Barquero from Austin TX, Riley Sutton from Petaluma CA, and Michael James from Woodinville WA.

This season we also welcomed to our team physical trainer Michael Sloat, who has been doing a phenomenal job working in injury prevention with the guys. Although Michael has taken a volunteer position with the team, his work and dedication to these guys goes beyond expectation.

What the competitive season will look like in 2021 is still to be determined by the College Gymnastics Association (CGA) at this point due to the many unknowns. CGA had been considering everything from fewer required meets to qualify to Nationals, to even virtual competitions. Several long-planned college meets we were going to attend, like the West Point Open in January,

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### Season Preview

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have been canceled. Even USAG Collegiate National Championships is looking for a last-minute venue right now. Our own college session in the Washington Open is exploring at the moment different possibilities to meet health and social-distancing requirements.

Yes, so many unknowns; but what I know is that it will take a lot more to bend the spirit of these young athletes, who are determined to keep working hard to be ready for whatever the season brings.

On October 30th, 2020 Arizona State University (ASU) and Washington got virtually together to test a head-to-head challenge format in a stick-landing contest

through a video conference call. It was a lot of fun to see the guys in the “competitive modus” in a challenge that was not for the faint of heart. But the best part was that regardless of all the difficulties our team is going through right now, we won fair and square against an ASU team that has been practicing nonstop since the beginning of August. So please, stay tuned to this unprecedented season because no matter what the season might end up looking like, I know it won’t be short of exciting matches and team competition.

Please, visit our website [www.wmgf.us](http://www.wmgf.us) and social media for updates and other news on the season.



*Happy Holidays from your  
2020 - 2021*



*Husky Gymnastics Team*



Left-right: Michael Sloat, Ben Bloom, Jameel Ali, Alex May, Andrew Layman, David Roane, Zak Kuest, Riley Sutton, Brody Lusk, Luka Sisauri, Parker Calomiris, Adam Kerwin, Connor Pattison, Michael James, Sebas Barquero, Perry Lightfoot, Oscar Hemmert, Alex Forcos, Joseph Mischke, Kyle Hendren, Head Coach Giancarlo Mora, Assistant Coach Jeff Crockett

### Meet the Freshmen: Andrew Layman, David Roane, Sebastian Barquero, Riley Sutton, Michael James

by Perry Lightfoot



**Andrew Layman**  
Wasilla, AK  
Seattle Pacific University



**David Roane**  
Shakopee, MN  
Shoreline Community College



**Sebastian Barquero**  
Austin, TX  
Shoreline Community College



**Riley Sutton**  
Petaluma, CA  
University of Washington



**Michael James**  
Woodinville, WA  
Lake Washington Institute of Technology

#### What are you interested in studying?

**David** I am interested in studying general biology so that I can move on to chiropractic school!

**Andrew** I intend to major in business finance.

**Michael** Computer engineering and sciences.

**Riley** I am interested in studying business.

**Sebas** I am majoring in Electrical Engineering.

#### What is your favorite part of being on the Washington team?

**David** I would say that my favorite part about the team would be the camaraderie. This team is so close-knit and kind, so it was really easy to make friends.

**Andrew** My favorite part of being on the team is how close I am to all my teammates in and out of practice.

**Michael** My favorite part is that everyone is treated like we are one big family.

**Riley** My favorite part about being on the Washington team is the amazing team atmosphere we have here. Everyone supports each other and I love the energy the team brings.

**Sebas** My favorite part of being with the team is the atmosphere and it feels like a family.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Meet the Freshmen

(Continued from page 3)

### What's your best gymnastics memory?

**David** My favorite gymnastics memory would probably have to be placing on floor at the BlackJack Men's Championship my senior year!

**Andrew** My favorite gymnastics memory is the very first time I qualified for JO Nationals.

**Michael** Getting to compete in all six events for the first time after my shoulder surgery.

**Riley** My best gymnastics memories are doing the weekly release challenges with the team because it is when the energy is high and when I have the most fun.

**Sebas** One of my best memories is that at a very young age I was able to compete in different countries and make friends with other teams who I competed against.

### Although this season might be different than normal, what're you looking forward to?

**David** I'm looking forward to getting stronger and more consistent in general.

**Andrew** I am looking forward to building my relationship with the team.

**Michael** I am looking forward to all of the upcoming competitions, no matter how different they are.

**Riley** I am looking forward to getting back in the gym with the team and working hard for whatever comes next.

**Sebas** I know this season isn't normal. I want to be able to accomplish my goals that I set up for this year such as recover from my injury, be able to hit my routines with good form, and contribute to my team in any way.

### What's a fun fact about you that most people don't know?

**David** A fun fact about me is that I lived in India for 4 years!

**Andrew** A fun fact people might not know about me is my Patella never fused, so my kneecap is in two pieces.

**Michael** One fact that most people don't know about me is that I'm an avid car enthusiast and like to work on cars.

**Riley** A fun fact about me is that I love to travel and visit new places.

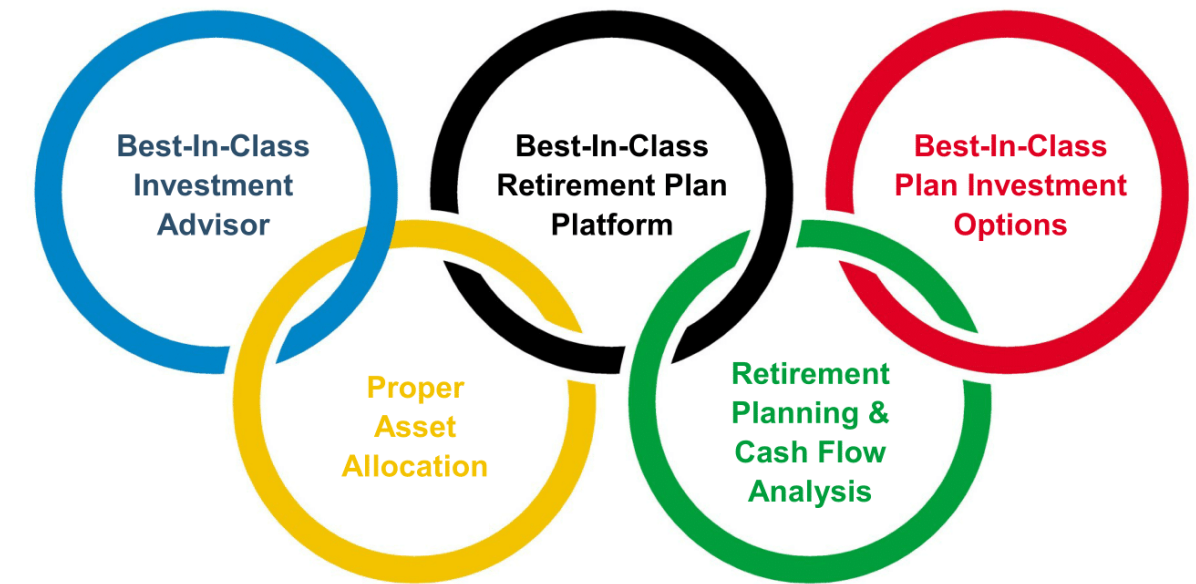
**Sebas** I was on the Costa Rican National Team.

# W



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# Where Are They Now? An Update on Husky Alum James Caldwell

by Mark Russo

I recently had lunch with former Husky gymnast James Caldwell (1980-84), whom I was teammates with during those first years when we began self-funding the team after being dropped by the UW athletic department. James was a rings specialist and consistently had the highest-scoring ring routine for our team then. The team nicknamed him Jammin' James, and as an integral part of our team many experiences were etched into his character. His place in the lore of those early teams will never be forgotten. Here is a small interview I did with James, another class act from our past!

earnestly encouraged us, even though many (or most?) of us were walk-ons who hadn't started gymnastics until high school. They thought that what we were doing was great for men's gymnastics, which was facing funding cuts at many state universities.

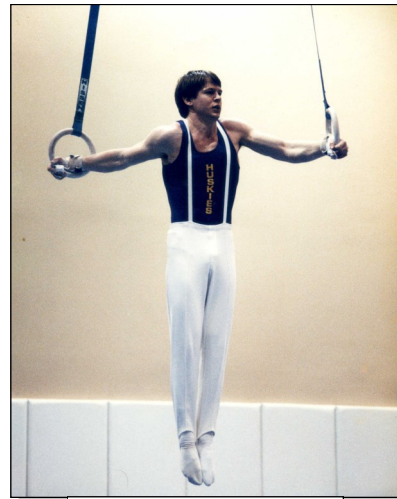
I hope someone has catalogued all those photos. They would make a sweet album. As for me, I kept my uniform (I wouldn't be caught dead in it now!) and grips as keepsakes, and also because I imagined I might do an alumni meet someday. That day is past—even forward rolls leave me disoriented now.

### Tell us about your family and where you live.

I've been married to my wife Marlo since 2007. We have a 12-year-old daughter who enjoys friends at school and hopes COVID-19 isolation will end soon! We moved from Seattle to Maple Valley in June and love the surrounding woods and hiking trails.

### How has your life been influenced by your time on the team?

It was formative for me, and I can't imagine my life without it. I was very fortunate to have been part of the first generation of unfunded gymnasts (since the early 60's?) at Washington, where it was possible for someone like me to compete regularly without having a lot of natural talent. (That's not to say that there weren't naturally talented men on the Husky team; we just didn't have the depth of the other Western Division teams.) That era was just a small interval of opportunity, open to the hungry guy who wanted it. It made all the difference in being able to find camaraderie in doing something that we knew wasn't satisfying for us only—not just for developing skills in self-discipline and team-building—but in being path-finders in the new budgetary



James competing at Hec Ed

### Current job? How long you have been doing it?

After nearly 32 years at Boeing, an opportunity came in 2017 to work at Jeff Bezos' private rocket company, Blue Origin. I'm employed there now as a Principal Navigation Engineer.

### What are your hobbies?

I enjoy running and biking on Maple Valley's surrounding trails, and in the winter, skate skiing at Snoqualmie Pass or in North Central Washington.

### Tell us about some memorable moments from your time on the team.

I'm having a hard time isolating just one or two, but the road trips stand out. Coach Jim Holt used to refer to our generation of Huskies (the first generation after school funding was eliminated) as "vagabond gymnasts," and you could see that was an apt description in the photos that team members took and wrapped around the periphery of the gym. Those snapshots showed it all. We slept everywhere: on the floorboards of vans with mouths agape, on the ground in the Arizona desert amidst venomous snakes and spiders, in telephone booths, on the floor of a fraternity house we squatted in, in Matt Lyum's cousin's best friend's house, on crash pads in the Port Alberni gym. The photos revealed the first sight of the van in the dawn after a long trip through the night, streaked with chewing tobacco on the driver's side. Or after a 720-degree spin out on black ice in Montana. And they recorded the meets. The van rides were often 14 to 25 uninterrupted hours long, and this didn't always help performance. Yet the other teams always

world that men's collegiate gymnastics had found itself in. Now, of those teams that were in the PAC-10 in the early 80's, only Berkeley and Stanford still have funded programs, and sadly, only Arizona State and Washington carry on (and thrive) as clubs. But there are a number of other clubs in the US, and they have no doubt drawn inspiration from Washington. This would have been entirely impossible without you who are reading this, who watered the seed and tended to its growth through all the intervening years.

### Who were the people in your gymnastics career who influenced you most, and in what way?

All of the gymnasts in the 1980-84 generation influenced me for the better. The deep-down unity of the team helped to grind down some of my rough edges and "get with the program." An example of a good influence is Mark Russo, whom I remember even in those early years talking about his vision for the team, how the team would endure and even grow in the future. At the end of the year, at the team banquet, he presented everyone with

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## Where Are They Now?

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a carabiner to remind us of how we were each empowered to help the other "climb the mountain" together, taking on various roles at different times, but all headed for the same goal. Mark has given selflessly to gymnastics in a way I could hardly have imagined that anyone could 36 years ago.

### How do you feel about the current team?

I don't know any of the current members personally, but they sound like a fun, talented, and disciplined group of guys.

### How do you see the role of alumni in helping the current team?

It depends on your passions, abilities, and availability. You can give financially, and no one judges you by the amount. You can attend meets and cry "Gamba!" from the stands. If your talent is administrative or promotional work, there's a place for you. If you are a networking-kind-of-guy with a high Emotional Quotient (ask your wife or partner if you aren't sure), reach out to your friends and colleagues and grow the support network. Maybe you have a mansion in the San Juan Islands and want to host a dinner. Help tutor gymnasts in their

studies if it's your field and you are good at tutoring.

### Why do you consistently give to the team?

It's about renewing a sense of connection with my teammates.

### What is your hope for the team?

I hope they will seize their moment to leave a unique imprint, their own folklore, on team history. Their unfinished stories, told in the Gymnastics Newsletter, are inspiring. They are incredibly talented.

### Any other things you feel are important and want the Husky Gymnastics audience to know?

You never can leave it behind you. Even when you are pushing 60 and haven't done a giant in years, you will still have pipe dreams!



## In Memoriam Remembering Husky Alumni

*This past year saw the loss of two of our great Huskies. Please follow the links at the end for more information and to sign their online guest books.*

### Ron Wallace UW 1962-66



Ronald Glenn Wallace, 76, a resident of Fort Myers, FL, passed away at home on June 24, 2020. Born in 1943 in Puyallup, WA, Ron grew up in Richland, WA, a town built on the

Columbia River by the US government to house the scientists, engineers, and support personnel for the Hanford plutonium enrichment site's role in the Manhattan Project's atomic bomb production.

In Richland, Ron attended Marcus Whitman K-6, Chief Joseph Junior High, and Columbia High School, whose sports teams were called the Bombers. Committed to scouting, Ron rose to the Order of the Arrow, adopting the name of Kum Tux Pike Tilicum. Surrounded by the scientists and engineers from Hanford, Ron's interest in all things electronic began very early, both in ham radio and in building all manner of electronic gizmos, something he continued doing throughout his life. Ron told wonderful stories of his father's support for his projects and of the disruptive efforts to participate by his two younger brothers.

Ron got his BSEE and MSEE at the University of Washington, with his undergraduate studies funded by a gymnastics scholarship (he was a successful competitive trampolinist) and Air Force ROTC, the latter of which also funded his graduate work. Serving for four years in the Viet Nam era's Air Force Electronic Systems Command, Ron designed, installed, and troubleshooted satellite communications networks, often TDY from his base at Hanscome Field, near Boston, MA, and he was Captain Wallace when honorably discharged. It was while serving in the Air Force that Ron met his future wife, Naomi Bloom, then completing her MBA at Boston University. With his discharge in hand and Naomi's new degree, Ron and Naomi were married in Boston before spending their honeymoon tent camping across the US, with myriad stops along the way to visit first Naomi's

East Coast and then Ron's West Coast family and friends. Their shared love of travel, as well as visits with far flung family and friends, was a passion in which they indulged throughout their married life.

Ron and Naomi settled in what's now called Silicon Valley for a few years before heading to the Washington, DC area in 1977. Having developed an interest in American Indian pottery, weaving, and kachina during their honeymoon's foray into the southwest, they spent much of their limited vacation time while living in California in and around historical Indian lands, collecting as they went.

Settling in Fairfax, VA, Ron began his full-time work for ORI, often under contract to NASA, and his part-time PhD studies in satellite communications theory at George Washington University from which he earned his Engineer Degree, a non-thesis alternative to the PhD. By then Ron had joined NASA, where he became the mission manager for terrestrial search and rescue as well as an American delegate to COSPAS/SARSAT. This international program for terrestrial search and rescue relied on satellite signal processing to locate vessels lost at sea, downed planes, and lost back country travelers. While based in Northern VA, Ron and Naomi expanded greatly their travels, with both of them traveling for business and pleasure at every opportunity. They also took up sailing on the Chesapeake Bay, starting with their Catalina 27, "La Princesa," and then moving up to a Caliber '40, "Mar-Lin Nights." Gunkholing on the Chesapeake, taking full advantages of DC's cultural riches, and seeing as much of the world as possible while working very long hours, Ron and Naomi packed two years of living into every calendar year while still spending as much time as possible with a growing circle of friends, family, colleagues, fellow boaters and travelers.

Ron and Naomi moved to Fort Myers, FL in 1999 for Naomi's health, designing and building their dream home, "Casa de Ranas." Ron took early retirement from NASA to make the move possible, and he then took charge of home, boat, and so much more while Naomi continued her career in enterprise software. Getting involved with the Sanibel-Captiva Power Squadron, to include teaching both marine electronics and communications, and driving cancer patients to their treatments for the "Road to Recovery" program were just two of the many ways in which Ron put down roots in and contributed to his adopted hometown. When handling a blue water sailboat became too much for Naomi, they had

## In Memoriam

built and commissioned in 2010 an American Tug '34, "SmartyPants," so that they could continue much loved evenings at anchor.

Together with his wife, and often accompanied by family and friends, Ron traveled the world, from Uluru in Australia, Petra in Jordan, and Machu Pichu in Peru, to the great capital cities of Europe and South America. He enjoyed weeks of London theater and museums and all the other cultural riches of major cities, but he also enjoyed taking the road less traveled, going right off the map to see what those dotted line roads might offer. In terms of philanthropy, Ron and Naomi put their money where their hearts were, supporting the arts, education, public TV/radio, investigative journalism, and much more.

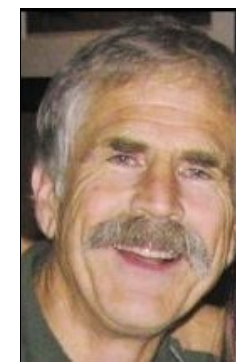
When cancer struck in 2005, Ron beat it and was able to enjoy a long period of great health and full remission. When a different, very aggressive and treatment-resistant cancer struck in 2018, Ron tackled it with his

trademark optimism, taking each failed treatment with equanimity and moving on to the next.

Ron is survived by his beloved wife of 48 years, Naomi Lee Bloom; his sister Arlene Anne (Wallace) Towne of Yuma, AZ; his brothers Chester Dee (known as "Dee") Wallace of Sierra City, CA; Dennis Earl (Sandy) Wallace of Redmond, OR; and Randolph Lee (known as "Randy") (Deeannamarie) Wallace; his brother-in-law and sister-in-law Irwin Isaac Weitz and Marsha Bloom Weitz; and a great many, much-loved nieces/nephews and great nieces/nephews. Ron was predeceased by his wonderful parents, Chester Stollard Wallace and Grace Tallman Wallace, his brother-in-law Carl T (known as "Ted") Towne, and his nieces Vicki Lea Towne and Rebekah Wallace.

<https://mullinsmemorial.com/obituaries/ronald-glenn-wallace/>

### Mark Buckingham UW 1963-67



Mark Buckingham passed away peacefully September 11, 2020, at home in Enumclaw, surrounded by family and friends after a long battle with metastatic prostate cancer and inflammatory cerebral amyloid angiopathy. Born in 1945 in Seattle to Ward and Doris Buckingham, the family soon moved to England where he attended Papplewick

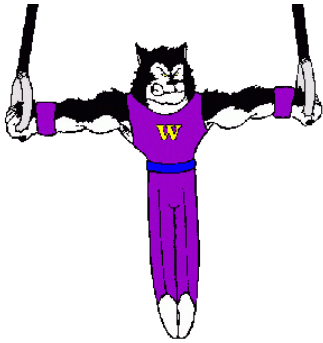
Boarding School while his father flew for Pan Am Airlines. While still in grade school the family returned to the US. Some of Mark's favorite childhood memories included the times he spent at the family cabin in Bitterroot Lake, Montana, and skiing Crystal Mountain. Mark graduated from Highline High school where he led the boys' gymnastics team to a state championship. He continued his gymnastics career at the University of Washington where he was a four-year letterman and placed fifth in the NCAA championships. After graduating with a degree in geography and German, he began teaching history and coaching gymnastics at Issaquah High School. In 1971, Mark decided to follow his dream to be a pilot and moved to Germany where he completed his final flight lessons in German and towed targets for NATO. In 1972 he returned to the US and began teach-

ing history and coaching gymnastics at Cedar Heights Junior High while he built a home in Port Orchard. After this brief teaching stint Mark returned once again to flying. During his prestigious career he was a pilot for Columbia Pacific, Cascade, PSA and US Airways and lived in Lewiston, ID, Des Moines, and Enumclaw, where he restored/built each of his homes in his free time. In retirement, Mark was able to realize another dream with his Mount Rainier Nobles Christmas Tree Farm. During his illness his final goal was to restore his 356 Porsche Roadster which he affectionately named "Bettina." He took great pride showing off his labor of love. Mark was an active member in his community, Wabash church, and sang in the men's choir. He was a kindhearted, charismatic person who made friends everywhere he went. His main love was his family, wife, kids, and grandchildren.

Mark was preceded in death by brother, State Trooper Michael Buckingham. He is survived by his wife Lorraine, daughters Heather Libman (Warren), Brittany, son David, stepdaughters Nicole Vela (Phil Giammarino), Michelle Vela-Murphy (Dan) and Alisha Medina (Jarrod) and his brother Ward (Cherie). He is also survived by his seven grandchildren Taylor, Ethan, Raquel, Rumi, Roy, Sophia, Evan, and many nieces and nephews.

<https://legcy.co/3i9tJT4>

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Season Preview, Meet the Freshmen, and more...

December 11, 2020

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