

WMGF News

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May 5, 2006

Season Review

by Mark Russo

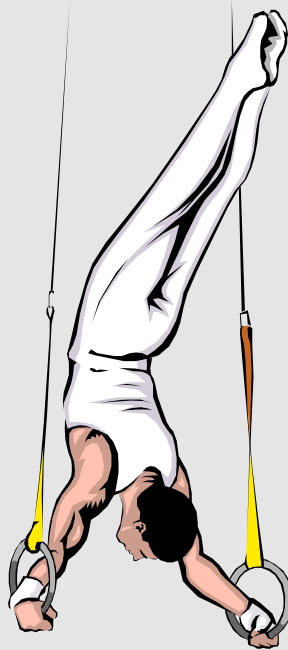
We left off at the end of February with the great news of being the Number One Collegiate Club in the country, headed into big competitions at the Peter Vidmar Invite in Los Angeles, the Southwest Cup at ASU, our home meet duel with ASU, and Collegiate Nationals at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

The even better news is that we excelled further during the second half of the season. This season was amazing in the amount of victories we posted: 16 victories, 11 total losses – all of which all were against University funded programs. We were 9-0 versus other clubs like ourselves. It truly was our year and the main reason was our team depth. Each team fields six gymnasts per event. Of those six scores, only four count for the team score. Most years we've had two strong scores and two weak scores per event count toward our team score. With so much depth this year, we had four strong scores on every event. In the past we've often not been able to field a full team of four on each event. Pommel horse and rings have notoriously been our weak spots. Amazingly, at this year's Peter Vidmar Invite, pommel horse was actually our highest-scoring event! That was the first time that has ever happened in my years coaching the team. It was a memorable season and I'd like to share some of the outstanding moments with you.

At the Vidmar Invite, we started on pommel horse... which made me a little nervous, but everything fell

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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.



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into place due to Señor Graham Gordon. Graham was amazing as he totally nailed his pommels routine, and then continued on to hit all six routines to have the best meet of his life! It was awesome to see Graham "in the zone." His performances propelled the team to a second place finish in the meet behind Cal-Berkeley. We topped ASU, Air Force, and collegiate newcomer UCLA which is seeking reincarnation as a club team like us, since their varsity program was dropped some years ago. We hope they survive.

That same weekend, we flew to Tempe, Arizona, to compete at ASU in the Southwest Cup. Of course, we wanted to take it to them on their home court where many nightmares have filtered into the Husky mind. This meet was closer than the score indicates, as the Huskies trailed the entire meet until the last rotation. Before the last rotation, ASU led by two full points as we headed to parallel bars and they to high bar. We had to hit and they had to have at least two routines with falls for us to make up that difference. What happened to them used to happen to us. We went six for six on p-bars, while they had several misses on high bar. A two-point deficit was now a four-point victory! We took home the prestigious Southwest Cup (a highly-valued Native American art piece) for the first time! Not only that, this was the first meet where we beat all other teams present: ASU, Air Force, and Utah. It was another extremely satisfying victory led by

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Season Review

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strong performances from Sophomore Kevin Perkins (9.4 rings, 8.85 vault, 7.55 p-bars, 7.6 floor) and Senior Jeff Crockett, who easily won the All-Around.

The final regular season competition was our dramatic home meet against ASU, which was run in conjunction with the Region II Championships for the junior-level boys of Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, and Alaska. The event was one of the most exhilarating competitions I've ever been involved with. Why? The crowd of 1500 loud Husky fans!! This was the largest crowd we competed in front of all year! Though we were very nervous on our first two events, I had this feeling that there was no way we were going to lose in front of that crowd. The meet hit its climax on our second to last event, parallel bars, when again we hit six for six with each routine building on the next! The team hit its peak performance of the season with this, our best event of the night. With that great crowd behind us, we easily defeated ASU. It was a special night for me for many reasons: the pre-meet Big W Club social event where I got a chance to meet and greet former great Huskies of several sports and predict that we would beat ASU, hearing the crowd clap in unison before Kevin Perkins' ring routine

which he could feel, and watching the team hit its peak on p-bars. Our years of hard work, years of humbling losses, it all was gone. We finally had our season of victory!

The season was topped off rather anticlimactically with our first place showing at Collegiate Nationals. We defeated ASU by ten points with solid performances from Freshman Joe Lawrence, Junior Sean Liner and Senior Jeff Crockett. The team finished the season as the 16th best NCAA team in the country! Jeff Crockett wrapped up a stellar collegiate career with his first All-Around title beating every gymnast (both NCAA and Club) at the meet! We hope that someday individuals like Jeff will be allowed to compete at the NCAA Division I Nationals. Until that time, we have much to be thankful for. The long dry spell of defeat is over. This season, the victories came down like the rain we are so accustomed to. Hopefully, the climate of winning will remain here in Huskyville!

Win - Loss Record

16	-	11	Overall
7	-	10	vs. NCAA funded Universities
0	-	1	vs. International Universities
9	-	0	vs. Collegiate Clubs



Your 2005-2006 Husky Men's Gymnastics Team

Left - right: Coach Mark Russo, Jeff Crockett, Joe Lawrence, Christian Stefonesku, Sean Liner, Graham Gordon, Denis Berry, Alex Paek, Brian James, Kevin Perkins.

2006 New Skills Competition

by Senior Jeff Crockett

I never in my wildest dreams thought that I would be able to do something that no one else in the world could do. Catching the double-twisting Jaeger in practice was exciting, but it didn't have a lot of meaning to me at the time. I wanted to show the world.

The video of that catch in practice got into circulation via e-mail. Once I learned that some judges got a copy of the video I became very anxious. "Now people know what I've done," I thought to myself. I knew then that I was in it for the long run. I now had to back up the video, and prove to everyone that it was not just a fluke. I had this very opportunity at the "New Skills Competition" on February 4, 2006, after the Winter Cup Challenge in Las Vegas.

The first time people saw an attempt at the double-twisting Jaeger was in warm-ups for finals at Winter Cup. Even though I didn't catch one at that time I was given some very nice compliments. The anticipation grew as finals came to a close. There were gymnasts asking me if I was going to catch it. "Of course," I replied without any doubt. Even though I hadn't caught one in over two weeks, I was confident that I was going to catch it. I had to. This was my chance, the chance I was waiting for.

The finals came to a close and I was ready. My mind went into an autopilot that took control of my nerves. I'm glad that happened, if it hadn't I think I would have buckled under the pressure. They gave us a chance to warm up, and then they let us know the way this skills contest would play out. They gathered the four gymnasts together and gave the order. I almost couldn't believe it when they told me

I was to go last. This would have put me under if my brain weren't on autopilot at the time, but I took it as a compliment and a challenge. I really had to catch it now!

I watched as the other competitors completed their skills on their very first tries. I was especially impressed with Jonathon Horton's full twisting triple back off of high bar. He received a 9.95 for his amazing skill. Then it was my turn. I don't remember much of what I was thinking until I was in the air doing my skill. I believe the thoughts went something like this: "Oh no, you let go a little early...no, no, you can still grab it... THERE IT IS!!!!!" The next thing I know, I'm preparing for a dismount and the crowd is going wild! The sheer excitement of it all forced me to lose control of myself as I ran out onto the competition floor and jumped into the air screaming at the top of my lungs. It felt so surreal. I was signing kid's shirts, programs, even their shoes. Gymnasts were coming up to me and congratulating me. Even the ones I admired so much were so excited for me. I won a leather jacket that night, a memento that represents all the hard work and dedication I have given to this sport. I finally had my chance to show what I'm made of, that I'm not just another average gymnast. However, I do not take all the credit myself; I attribute this wonderful opportunity to my Father in Heaven, who has blessed my life tremendously. I would not be the person I am today without His help.

*A video of Jeff performing "the Crockett" is on our website:
<http://wmgf.us/?index=galleries/videos/index.xml>*



Jeff Crockett performing his double-twisting Jaeger release move at the New Skills Competition in Las Vegas.

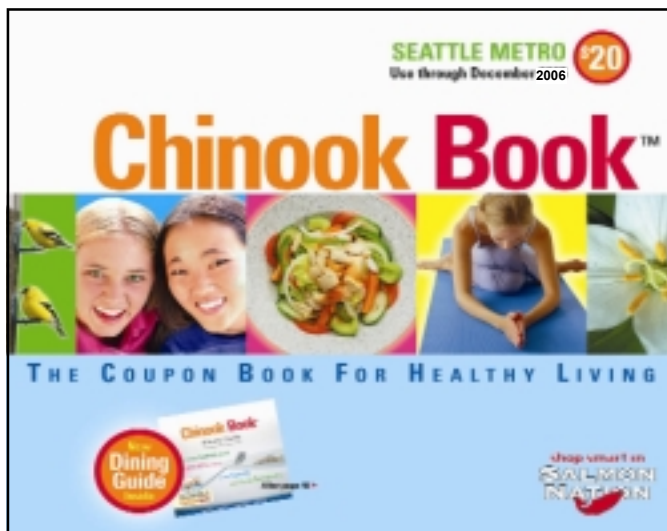
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We would like to increase the size of our Board of Directors. The Board's main purpose is to help raise funds to support the team. We also provide the coach with a sounding board for major decision-making and approve the expenditure of funds. We meet the second Tuesday of each month. If any of you receiving this newsletter are interested in contributing in this way, please phone Coach Hughes, 206-632-2151, or Coach Russo, 206-524-9480.

Anyone with an interest in helping the team is welcome!



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For every book sold up to 50% is donated to the Washington Men's Gymnastics Foundation. Please order yours today for just \$20 (plus \$3 S&H) and help raise funds for our gymnasts!

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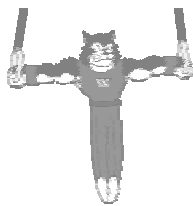
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**Please join us for the 2006
Washington Men's Gymnastics
Team Banquet**

Season re-cap! Slide Show! Dinner! Dessert!

*A chance to get together with friends
from many eras of Husky Gymnastics*

HOLD THE DATE!

Date: Sunday, 5/21/2006

Time: 2:00pm

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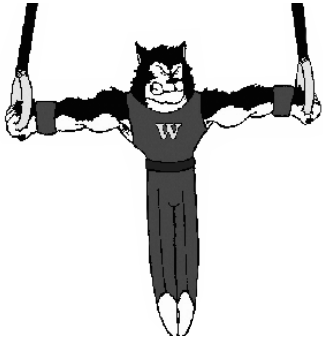
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Contact person: Mark Russo

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In This Issue...

Season Review, New Skills Competition, and more...

May 5, 2006



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