

# WMGF News

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March 16, 2007

## Mid-Season Update

by Mark Russo

We are at the midpoint of our season and I can report improvement amongst all of this year's team. Though competitively small (four gymnasts), we have a total team size of nine people (some have graduated, others are high school seniors) so practices are going well. We just can't field a team score with this small of a team, where only one competes all around.

That all-rounder is senior Sean Liner. Sean leads the team and is getting better after undergoing ankle swelling early in the season. His performance on parallel bars has been stellar in the early season and as his health improves his leg events are getting better as well. With two more competitions left in his career, look for Sean to make a big splash as he wraps it all up.

Junior Kevin Perkins has improved his consistency, usually hitting three out of the four routines he competes. He has been on the awards stand several times for his



## 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.



Kevin doing a perfect Maltese on Rings

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rings and vaulting and now should break through on floor and p-bars as well. Kevin looks to do well at Collegiate Nationals and beyond to this summer's USA Championships in August.

Senior Joe Zhou has performed only once for the Huskies due to the many demands of his schoolwork. Sophomore Mohamed Ghanem has improved significantly and now competes on the floor, rings, and vault. "Mo," as he is called in the gym, should be able to add high bar and p-bars to his routine list by Collegiate Nationals. Mo has been a pleasant surprise and will be a good gymnast in the years to come.

Competitions at Stanford against the Cardinal, Nebraska, and Cal, and also at Oklahoma versus the Sooners and the University of Texas have shown the Huskies what the best teams in the country can do. Oklahoma is ranked #1, Stanford #2. We hope to be competitive with these teams in one to two years, as we were last year.



## Where Are They Now?

### An Update on Husky Alum **Kevin Bylin**

by *Kevin Bylin*

I was born in Renton, Washington and first became involved in Gymnastics as a sophomore at Kent Meridian High School coached by Gunter Bohrmann. Gunter was an amazingly dedicated coach, and with his assistance I excelled at the High School level. My passion for the sport led me to additional classes offered through Kent Parks, summer camp at Camp Waskowitz, and the UW extension program. During my sophomore year I somehow made it to the State meet in Pullman in tumbling. I remember attending Summer Camp that and the following three summers and having the opportunity to meet many people who would later influence my life and Gymnastics Career... Coach Hughes, Bob Peavy, Sho Fukushima, Sergio "High doubles" Luna, Randy Carruthers, Rich Gaylor, Jim Holt, and Dave Jackson to name only a few. Senior year was a gas...we won the state Championship in a very close meet. I think it came down to if I stayed on the trampoline as the last performer of the meet we win, if

not we lose. I stayed on, barely. I picked up a couple of individual titles and was given offers of financial aid to both UW and WSU.

Obviously, I chose to attend the UW and the City over becoming a Cougar. I don't regret it, but there are a few Cougs out there I call friends. I do brake for them (there's already a shortage of one-legged ringmen). Anyway, the college years bring back many great memories, as well as a few sad ones. It seems like every time I got in good shape preparing for a big competition I would be injured. Those were kind of frustrating times, but through it all I had a great bunch of guys and coaches around me encouraging me to hang in there. I just happened upon an old letter of inspiration from none other than Cheem Holt encouraging me

after my Achilles rupture. Anyway, I did come back from the injury and won a couple of honors, usually on the Horizontal Bar or Floor Exercise, but true to form, my last year as a Husky team member, I blew out my ankle on a double-twist dismount on floor late in the season and was on crutches right up to the week before the Pac 8 meet, but still placed 8th on the Horizontal Bar. Mel won. It was at that time I decided to leave school, but did continue training, competing, and coaching for a few more years. I still have an abundance of memories of some of the great

people I met and the experiences I had because I was a Husky Gymnast...it's a select group.

After leaving school, I worked in the a Food and Beverage industry, most of that time managing the beverage side of what used to be the Blue Max Steakhouse at Boeing Field. In November 1987 I acquired a position as a "Customer Service" person with Lancs Industries which is a private company catering to the Nuclear Industry. We marketed and produced consumable protective products such as clothing, containments and shielding. Travels took me to trade shows and nuclear sites around the country with a highlight visit to Chernobyl. In December of 2000 I left Lancs and joined AT&T as a Network Element Specialist. Since that time I have seen the spin-off of AT&T to AT&T Wireless, the merger with Cingular and now most recently the merger with the "New AT&T"...we have come full circle. The job's basically the same, but now they call us "Platform Managers." I am currently a creature of the night working graveyard shift which allows me to support my kids' afternoon activities and avoid sitting in traffic half my life.

I married Susan Edwards in September of 1989,



*Kevin and his son Ben.*

## Where Are They Now?

and we had two Boys, Nicholas and Benjamin. On the weekends we used to love to go down to Green Lake and keep tabs on Coach Hughes at the Canoe House as we did laps with the jogger or in later years with the boys on bikes. In 2001, we purchased a house in Lake Stevens where Susan and the boys still reside. Susan and I were divorced in 2005. We remain amicable and I recently purchased a house a couple of miles away and have remained close to the boys all the while. They are both Honors students and play Select Soccer.

I am fortunate and grateful to spend the amount of time I do with the boys...I am their biggest critic and also their biggest fan, which explains what I am usually doing...work, going to the gym if they don't need a ride somewhere, then I'm their taxi service who pays the bill, but I would not have it any other way. Life is good!

*PS - BY COACH HUGHES*

*My first contact with Kevin was in U of W Extension Classes where I immediately noticed his outstanding natural ability. He came to the U in 1974 and won the Pacific NW vaulting title his freshman year. After a red shirt year in '76 he was expected to be our top all-rounder in '77 but was limited in some events by his injuries. He established the U record score on the Horizontal Bar in 1977 but then had it beaten by Mel Cooley in the same year. Both Kevin and Mel qualified for Nationals in High Bar. I have kept in touch with Kevin over the years and know how much time he spends with his boys. He is not only one of the best gymnasts I have ever coached but also one of the best fathers I have ever known.*

## *Your 2006-2007 Husky Gymnastics Team*



*Your 2006-2007 Husky Gymnastics Team*

*Left - right: Coach Mark Russo, Jon Chapman, Jeff Crockett, Eugene Burton Breazeal, Sean Liner, Mohamed Ghanem, Kevin Perkins, Jennifer Umemoto*

## Ripped Off!!

By Mark Russo

Recently in the gym, one of the team members experienced something very common while working out on the high bar yet it was unique in the location on his body where it occurred. Both the uniqueness and commonness of this experience prompted this article.

I'm sure every one of us who as a gymnast worked an apparatus (pommel horse, rings, parallel bars, high bar) at some time worked the event hard enough that the skin on our hands wore out and tore or 'ripped' as we call it in the gym. Ah, the many joys of the medical term: skin avulsion. Remember the sudden slipping feeling that felt like your grip flaked out on you and then the sharp sting when new skin gets exposed

to the air? Or the joys of stretching your hand open when the rip underneath the surface creates the feeling of your flesh separating like bunched up plastic wrap? How about the blood blisters that formed from particularly deep friction-induced craters in the middle of your

hand? We all know about these but here are some idiosyncrasies about rips I've picked up or observed from teammates and team members over the years.

Of course, back in the day... when I was a young whipper... we were told after ripping to tape it up and get back up there. It's a rip... so what? You learn to tough it out. This was taken to more extreme levels when I began coaching – to the extent that the single-day rip record is 11 rips total on two hands. I still remember the pride Erik Huntzicker had that day in his accomplishment. I've seen other interesting facets of rips, like the teammate who saved all his rips in an empty pill bottle, and then at the end of the season showed all of them to us and marveled at the memory



Your average rip

of how each one occurred. Cool!! One year we saved the largest rips and pinned them to the bulletin board to compare and see who had the largest that year. Well, we did not foresee the serious shrinkage that occurs once the skin is left out to dry. At the end of the year, they all were but a fraction of their initial size. Another time, a team member dared and bet that another would not eat a piece of skin from one particularly sweaty and odiferous gymnast. The dare was taken, the bet was won and Craig Magaret is still alive!! Amazing and hilarious!

Treatment of rips has been varied as well. Hand maintenance is a very real thing we all spent time on in

our competitive days. I remember learning to shave my parallel bar palm callous with a scalpel. It worked great. Other team members used nail clippers, sanding stones, razors or their teeth to take

away the dead layers. After ripping, techniques were very individualized. My girlfriend at the time suggested I try putting a used tea bag on the rip. The tannic acid would heal and harden the new fragile layer of skin. This worked great. Others would use moisturizers and wear gloves overnight to keep the moisture close to the skin. What we all were trying to avoid was the dreaded crack that was worse than the rip itself. The cracks would take longer to heal and the pain seems so much sharper. My own least favorite rip spot was on my wrist caused by my grip straps biting into those creases that form when you bend your wrist. Now the guys use a piece of plastic garbage bag underneath their wristbands and grips to prevent this type of rip. If I only had been so smart...

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Ripped Off!!

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But this brings me back to the beginning of this article where I mentioned the uniqueness of the rip a team member experienced recently. In all my years in the gym I have never seen a rip where this one occurred. I've seen all types of hand rips, wrist rips, rips from parallel bars under the upper arm and even a rip on your you-know-what by one guy performing a Weiler kip too close to the bar. For the first time, team member Eugene Burton-Breazeal ripped on the bottom of his foot from doing too many toe-on-toe-off drills on high bar!! It looked exactly like a hand rip right in the middle of his foot. I was amazed and struck with wonder at how after 30 years of gymnastics, new things still happen. When they happen like this, they are a constant source of laughter and good times that we have all been a part of.

Rips are one of those everyday things that happen when you train hard daily as we all did and the team does now. Even though at the time of their occurrence they seem bothersome and uncomfortable, they are signs that you are testing your limits. They also provide a mental obstacle to train through. Once you make the breakthrough and no longer feel the pain while continuing to train, you attain a higher level of focus and concentration than most ever do. This is just one of the benefits we get from our time in the gym and, I think we all agree, one of great importance and recently a source of good humor as well.

If you feel so inclined, please share with us any input or experience you have on this topic. Our website can accept your comments and we would love to hear from you.



WMGF  
5529 27th Ave. NE  
Seattle, WA 98105



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March 16, 2007

## Washington Men's Gymnastics

### 2007 Meet Schedule

| <i>Date</i>          | <i>Competition</i>                               | <i>Location</i>                                   |
|----------------------|--|---|
| <i>January 6</i>     | <i>Washington Open, University of Washington</i> | <i>Hec -Ed Pavilion Addition,<br/>Seattle, WA</i> |
| <i>January 27</i>    | <i>Stanford Invitational</i>                     | <i>Palo Alto, CA</i>                              |
| <i>February 8-10</i> | <i>Winter Cup</i>                                | <i>Las Vegas, NV</i>                              |
| <i>February 16</i>   | <i>at Oklahoma</i>                               | <i>Norman, OK</i>                                 |
| <i>March 3</i>       | <i>at Texas</i>                                  | <i>Austin, TX</i>                                 |
| <i>May 24-25</i>     | <i>Collegiate Nationals</i>                      | <i>William &amp; Mary, VA</i>                     |

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