

WMGF News

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May 1, 2011

Season Review

by Mark Russo

The 2010-11 season is in the books already as our competitive season ended March 25th with Collegiate Nationals at Springfield College in Massachusetts. All in all, it was a pretty good season with some unexpected twists and turns and new events. We improved from the previous year gymnastically and are consistently improving organizationally to keep the team poised and ready for jumping to the next level of competition.

February saw us travel to ASU and compete against the Sun Devils in Phoenix Cardinal Stadium. Amazingly, it was raining so hard outside the stadium that the roof was leaking, and therefore raining inside on the venue. Not surprisingly, we felt comfortable in such a soggy setting. Jeramie Hardi had his best meet of the season here and led the Huskies in the all-around. Also, Jon Chapman stepped up his game and competed all-around for the first time in his Husky career. Jon did a respectable job on rings and helped us get a decent qualifying score. We did pretty well at this meet, though ASU beat us with their tremendous depth – over 20 people on their team. Also noticeable was that gymnastics is not made for football stadiums. The competitors are small. The equipment takes up little space. The event gets dwarfed by the immense space needed for football. It was somewhat interesting to be part of such a spectacle, two other women's gymnastics competitions as well as a tumbling and trampoline competition

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.



Kyle Farmer at Hec Ed

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were happening simultaneously. I was curious at the cost to rent such a facility. A mere \$65,000 to rent the space for four days and that price was a very good deal. Amazing!

Thanks to UW Women's gym coach Joanne Bowers, we were invited to compete at the same time as their competition versus the women from Michigan State on March 4th. ASU provided our opposition and the stage was set. For the first time in my involvement with the men's team, we competed at home in front of a real crowd: nearly 3000 people showed up for this competition!! It was a special time for us as we were able to really show what a good, collegiate gymnastics competition is about. We had our best competition of the season, the meet ran very smoothly, and both the men's and women's competitions were done almost simultaneously. This made for a very entertaining event. Although ASU beat us, we led most of the way. Sam Softich had his best meet of the season scoring 81.15 and winning the all-around. Jon Chapman also did very well, improving his all-around to a season high 75.65 and nailing his high bar routine. The UW women performed very well, winning their meet. I feel very fortunate that the athletic department invited us to this night of gymnastics, and they ran a flawless competition. Our fans got to see high-level gymnastics in an amazing setting. It will be something that the team members and I will never for-

(Continued on page 2)

Season Review

(Continued from page 1)

get. I thank you for being part of it if you were there, and next season please come and see it again as we are planning for more, bigger, better.

Near the end of March, we traveled to the Air Force Academy for a dual meet. At this point in the season, we were banged up as Jon Chapman had hurt his foot for the 33rd time (slight exaggeration) in his career. Then to make matters worse, Jeramie Hardi peeled off the rings before his dismount and landed badly on his head taking him out of the competition half way through. So we limped to the finish line, getting a needed score but definitely needing more depth. Though he did not have a particularly good competition, Sam Softich led us in the all-around. Freshman Peter Moser had his best competition of the season, scoring 77.2 in the all-around, and it was needed. Heading into our championship meet we did not look our best.

It was a cold, clear day in Massachusetts when we arrived for Nationals. Nice to see the sun again but it was definitely still winter there. Drifts of snow were plentiful. Signs of spring were non-existent. In our collegiate club division, there were three teams that qualified: ASU, UW, and Brockport of New York. Though we added more depth to our roster with the additions of Layton Oka and Greg Steward, these two were competing floor and vault mostly, so we lacked the needed back-up scores on pommel horse, rings and high bar. We did pretty well at this meet though our weak high

bar and pommels destined us for 2nd place. Sam Softich led us once again with his score of 80.2. Peter Moser showed spots of future glory as he did well his first three events only to miss his best event, floor. Jeramie Hardi was back after his horrific accident the previous week at Air Force and finished well with good routines on pommel horse and rings. I would say we did as expected at this meet.

The season started off with so much potential that I honestly thought ASU would be chasing us most of the season. However, every year has its speed bumps and for us the loss of Bobby Miller and Kyle Farmer were insurmountable. The team came together after their departure and competed well, to the best of their ability for this season. What we lacked in ability we nearly made up for in teamwork and work ethic. Sam Softich shows the ability to jump to the next level of competition and try for qualification to USA Nationals. Peter Moser has the potential to be the number-one all-around for the team in the years ahead. Jon Chapman rose to lead the team through consistent hard work and exemplary attendance. There are good ingredients here for a future team that could contend for ASU's title. I am excited about next year already and have begun the work to get us to the next level.



Your 2010-2011 Husky Gymnastics Team

Back row (left-right): Mo Angok, Jon Chapman, Joey Lawrence, Greg Steward, Eugene Burton-Breazeal, Andrew Inaba
Front row: Coach Mark Russo, Peter Moser, Layton Oka, Kyle Farmer, Kevin Smith, Sam Softich, Bobby Miller, Taylor Anthony

Where Are They Now? An Update on Husky Alum **Mike Lovell**

by Dr. Eric Hughes

Mike Lovell was born in Seattle in 1944 but moved to Antelope Valley in California in 1959 when his dad, an electrician at Boeing, was transferred to Edwards Air Force Base. He and his brother Steve began their high school gymnastics there. The sport was big there with 55 team members, one of whom later became an NCAA champion. Mike said modestly that he was fifth man on floor ex.

Fortunately for us, Mike's dad was transferred back to Seattle a short time later. He took Mike, Steve, and a friend, Mike Flansaas, to an invitational meet at Highline High School. Mike says that all three of them were blown away with what they saw. Terry Hildebrand, a future Husky, won five of the six all-around events. Mike Flansaas also became a Husky and was featured in this newsletter a few issues back. They were so enthusiastic they had to get started right away; so they lashed a two-inch pipe between two trees so they could do pull-ups and teach themselves gymnastic moves. Mike Flansaas kicked up to a handstand and attempted a giant but was unable to hang on to the two-inch diameter pipe and peeled off into a wood pile. Fortunately there was no major injury.

The next gymnastic season Lovell turned out for gymnastics at Highline and became one of the top all-arounders on the Highline team that was perennially the best in the state. Steve and Mike Flansaas were also regulars on the team, but the next year Flansaas was forced to transfer to Glacier High School, which had no gymnastics team.

Lovell attended the UW from 1963 to '68, receiving a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering in '66 and an MSME in '68. These were the years that the UW dominated Conference competition (called the Athletic Association of Western Universities at the time) and was a major power nationally. Competition among team members for a place in the line-up was fierce. These were dream years for a coach. In 1963 the team went undefeated in dual meets, won the Conference, the Western University Intercollegiate Championship, and placed ninth in the nationals. Mike won the Most Promising Freshman Award.

In 1964 the team was again undefeated in dual meets, won the Conference, the Western Intercollegiate Championship, and placed fourth in the nationals. Lov-

ell won the Pacific Northwest high bar championship.

In 1965 Mike was an all-arounder on the most successful UW team ever. The team again won all their dual meets, the Conference, the Western Intercollegiate Championships, and placed second to Penn State at the NCAAs. Lovell was ninth in the all-around nationally and was elected captain for 1966.

Lovell's senior year was his best and a good one for the team although not up to the previous outstanding year. Washington placed second in the Conference, second in the Western Intercollegiate, and seventh in the NCAAs. Mike won almost all the dual meets in his two best events – floor ex and high bar – and received the Outstanding Gymnast Award at the end of the season.

After graduating from the UW in 1968, Lovell went to work for Boeing in their group supporting the Apollo



Mike on pommels

program. About a year later he moved to Detroit to work for the Ford Motor Co. in the engine design and development area. In 1993, he transferred to the alternative energy group at Ford and spent 14 years working on design and development of battery-electric hybrid and fuel cell cars. Mike met his wife Jan, a school teacher from California, in 1971 and was married a year later. They

have three children, a boy and two girls, and now have six grandkids who are, Mike says, being properly spoiled and are, again Mike says, above average in looks and intelligence. Mike is retired but Jan still works as a substitute teacher.

Lovell bowls and golfs but says he is not very proficient at either. He also drove a Zamboni as a part-time job for a while. I'm sure that is something we would all like to do. He goes to the gym three to five times a week but says his main activity is sedentary – reading. He has become addicted to several current and past authors.

Mike mentioned to me the relaxing affect gymnastics had for him. He recalled that he was always mentally taxed at the end of a school day and worried about doing his homework for the following day, but when walking down to Hec Ed from upper campus for practice, he relaxed and for a few hours became totally absorbed with his gymnastic activity.

He also recalled with fondness the singing the team did in the cars when traveling to away meets. The "team" song in those years was "King of the Road," a

(Continued on page 4)

Mike Lovell

(Continued from page 3)

hit by Roger Miller. The song leader was Gary Finne, an accomplished singer and trumpeter as well as one of the better gymnasts on the team. On one occasion Gary whispered to Mike, "please just mouth the words Mike and we'll sound a lot better."

Lovell also recalled, just as I do, that in 1965 when we placed second at the nationals that we probably could have won if we had used "the other Mike," Mike Flansaas. He was redshirted that year because of academic ineligibility, but became eligible at the end of winter quarter so could have been used at the nationals which fell in spring quarter. I have always regretted not using him, as an NCAA Championship was something I always wanted.

It should be mentioned that Steve, Mike's younger brother, was also an important member of these mid-

sixties teams. His best event was also horizontal bar and without his team points we would not have done as well as we did.



Mike on p-bars



Get back in touch!

Would you like to get in touch with some of your old teammates?

Maybe we can help!

Send us a request indicating whether you would like to be contacted by phone, email or address. We will publish your request in the next newsletter OR phone Coach Hughes ([206-632-2151](tel:206-632-2151)) to get the contact information you want. Information will only be provided to those who were on the same team for privacy purposes.



In Memoriam: Mickey Vergillo

Mickey Vergillo passed away recently after a battle with melanoma. He was on the team in the early '60s and was twice selected "Most Inspirational Gymnast" and elected captain for the 1962 season. He was also an outstanding competitive cyclist.





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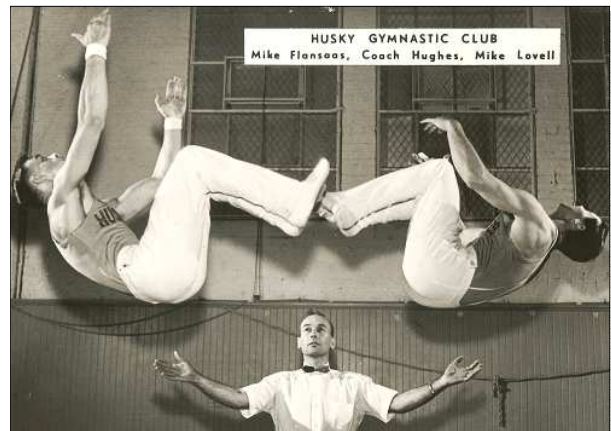
by Mark Russo

Our combination men's and women's meet on March 4th was a great event showcasing both University of Washington gymnastics teams. In conjunction with this competition, a party for the founder of the program, Dr. Eric Hughes, was organized and attended by many alumni from all the way back to his first teams to the current team members. Veterans from over 60 years of Husky Gymnastics gathered to honor the man who provided all this opportunity. Many a gymnast took the microphone and told the coach what being on his team has meant in their lives, thanked him for all he has done for gymnastics and the many people he has helped, and related many humorous events from escapades of years past. Though it

wasn't a roast, it felt like it when Dr. Hughes himself took the microphone and kept us all laughing with his deadpan humor. UW women's coach Joanne Bowers also spoke, to tell of her allegiance to gymnastics and how she values the tradition here and looks to encourage the men's team to her fullest abilities. Cake was donated by former Husky Ricky Mah and many pictures were taken of all of us dinosaurs from the Hughes era. It was a great honor for me to be in the presence of so many good people and I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to be a part of this great team that Dr. Hughes has assembled over this incredible amount of time.



Husky History on the Jumbotron



Dr. Hughes conducting his 'symphony'

THANK YOU!

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Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution* to WMGF in the amount of:

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★ *Some shots from our home meet at Hec Ed!* ★



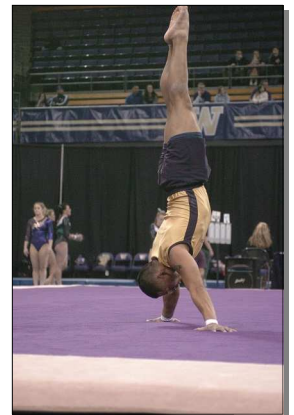
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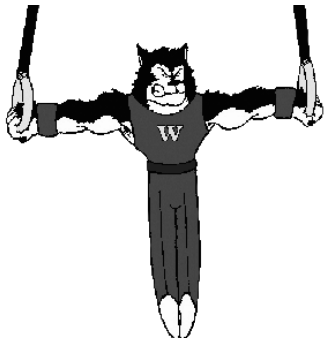


Kyle Farmer



Jeramie Hardi

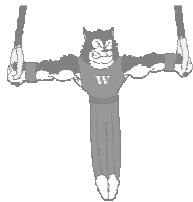
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In This Issue...

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

May 1, 2011



Please join us for the 2011
**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, 5/23/2011

Time: 2:00pm

**University of Washington
Waterfront Activities Center (*just
south of Husky Stadium*)**

Contact person: Mark Russo

Phone: 206-524-9480

Email: ossurkram@hotmail.com