

READ THIS LETTER FIRST

September 25, 1997

TO: Former U of W gymnasts and
Friends of Men's Gymnastics
FROM: Dr. Eric Hughes, former Husky Men's Gymnastic Coach

For the last few years the annual letter requesting donations has come from Mark Russo, the present coach (see the article in the enclosed newsletter – "Meet Coach Mark Russo"). This year I'm making the request and asking you to dig deeper into your pockets than ever before.

The men's gymnastic program has come full circle since I started it in 1950. Originally we were a club sport, receiving no university support until 1955. The peak financial support came in the late '60's and early '70's when the budget was over \$100,000, a lot of money in those days, with 12 scholarships. Since 1980 the men's team has received no Athletic Department support and last year "existed" on a budget of \$24,000, about half of which was raised by the gymnasts themselves by ushering at football games, by moving equipment for women's meets, and by selling T-shirts. In contrast the women's team has a budget of \$422,000!

I hope it is as important to you as it is to me that this program survive. Please join with me by making a tax-deductible contribution to the WMGBC. Last year we had one donation of \$2,500 and several of \$200 or more. About a dozen others contributed from \$25 - \$100. For those of you who have not contributed surely you can come up with \$25, \$50, or \$100 and still eat this month.

Enclosed is a letter being sent to corporations. In the past we have not actively sought support in this way. If you work for someone who gives matching funds please ask them to match your contribution.

Contributions can be made to the WMGBC by completing the slip enclosed. I guarantee that if you give to the WMGBC, 100% of your contribution will go to the support of the team. Everyone working for the Booster Club volunteers their time (we could use help in this way too) so we have no administrative costs as do most other charitable organizations.

Thanks to all of you who have contributed in the past. Please keep your checks coming.

Sincerely,

Dr. Eric Hughes
Former Husky Men's Gymnastic Coach

WMGBC QUARTERLY

October 1997

Pre-Season Update:

By: Mark Russo

Another year is about to begin and we would like to communicate with you what this year has in store for Husky Men's Gymnastics. We thank you for your support of last season in which Husky gymnasts performed extremely well winning several national titles. (Jeff Johnson – 1st place Rings; Sergio Luna – 1st place High Bar; Ryan Welborn – 2nd place Vault). It could not have been done without your contributions and help, and the gymnasts' hard work and practice. Together a winning combination continues to grow.



Summer is usually a time to relax. Not so for Husky gymnasts! The team has been working hard learning new skills to have higher level routines this year. I am very impressed with their intensity at this time of year. Sophomore Sergio Luna qualified for USA Gymnastic Nationals in Denver, August 13 – 15. Sergio competed against the 48 best gymnasts of our country and finished a respectable 38th his first time at this meet. It was a good showing for him and gives us an idea where he and our program stand in relation to the rest of the country. Look

for higher placings and more Huskies at this meet in the future.

Recruiting has brought two new faces to our gym. Freshman Evan Cabodi joins our team from Olympia, Washington. He trained at Black Hills Gymnastics for the last several years. Look for a bio on Evan coming in a future newsletter. Evan brings a good background of gymnastics to our team and will help us immediately. Also joining our program is Lance Bowie from Anchorage, Alaska. Lance trained with Paul Gebaver at Babe Casell's Anchorage Gymnastics Association Gym. Lance has excellent air sense and this will translate to a high level of gymnastics. I am looking forward to teaching these new guys.

Competitively, our schedule looks challenging:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meet</u>
January 4	Washington Open @ UW
January 23-24	@ Air Force Academy
February 13-14	Winter Cup
February 21	@ Arizona State
March 6	@ UC Santa Barbara or @ Albuquerque
March 28	ASU @ UW
April 8 – 11	Nationals @ S. Connecticut
August 19 - 20	USA Championships

Please plan on attending our home meet with Arizona State on March 28th. We haven't beaten these guys since they joined the Pac-10. We need your help to do it. Let's make it so! Thank you for your continued support. We very much appreciate it!

Meet Coach Mark Russo

by Dr. Eric Hughes

Mark has been coach since the '88-'89 season so will be starting his ninth year this fall and yet I would guess some of you know little about him.

First let me say Coach Russo is one of the most dedicated gymnastic coaches I know. For his first eight years he volunteered approximately six hours a day not including time for preparation at home, recruiting, and attending competitions. Last year the WMGBC was able to provide a salary of \$5,000 and this year we hope to do the same. This works out to about \$1.25 an hour. See what I mean --- that's dedication to the sport.

Of course no one can live on this salary. Mark supports himself as owner of a laundromat on Eastlake Avenue, "Washingtown". This sort of occupation



allows for flexible hours so he can be in the gym for practices, which are sometimes in the morning, sometimes afternoon, and often twice a day.

Coach Russo was born in Seattle in 1961 and lived on Mercer Island while quite young. His father works for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. His mother is an employee of Mercer Island School District.

Mark was attracted to the sport of gymnastics in his P.E. classes at Mercer Island Junior High School and enrolled in my U of W Saturday extension classes for boys in 1975. The only thing I remember him saying about those classes was how he hated to do "log rolls". At least I

didn't completely drive him away from the sport. He continued his gymnastics at Mercer Island High School, which had a competitive team at that time, first under Coach Jim Lang, a U of W gymnast alum and then under Mace Brady, an Eastern Washington graduate.

Mark attended Washington and received a degree in Fisheries in 1985. As a freshman he was asked to join the team by Mac Smith, who had also graduated from Mercer Island High School and was the big-gun on the university team. Jim Holt, a former WSU gymnast, was his coach. (I'll digress with a little history. There have been four head coaches of men's gymnastics at the U of W: Myself from 1950 – 1978; Dick Foxal from 1978 – 1980 when the Athletic Department dropped the program; Jim Holt from 1980 – 1988 and Mark Russo from 1988 – present).

While Mark was a university student he started working in the age-group program organized by the University women's coach, Bob Ito. In 1986 he became head coach of this children's program and when Jim Holt retired in 1988 also head coach of the men's club team. During this time he moonlighted by coaching at a private gymnastic club in south Lynnwood – Cascade Elite. Wayne Kerr, a former Husky gymnast, owns this club.

Mark is a Washington product – born here, educated here, trained here. He is gung ho Washington gymnastics. He lives and breathes the sport. We couldn't possibly find a better man for coach. He has consistently produced quality teams and several outstanding gymnasts including two present National Champions, Jeff Johnson on rings and Sergio Luna on high bar. Elsewhere in this newsletter you can read about others. We should all be thanking Mark Russo and giving him our support.

Mail to:

W.M.G.B.C.
P.O. Box 95001
Seattle, WA 98145

Enclosed is my contribution to the W.M.G.B.C. in the amount of:

\$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$200 _____ \$500 _____ \$1,000 _____ other _____

Name _____

home phone () _____

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Address _____

City _____

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Zip _____

e-mail address _____

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