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# ◊ WMGF News ◊

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October 27, 2000

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## *Season Preview*

by Mark Russo

The 2000-2001 season brings renewed optimism to the team as we can field a full team on all events for the first time in five seasons! Not only does this guarantee us a higher team score, but it enables the guys on the team to compete – in the gym – for competition spots on each event. It is a luxurious feeling to have the depth we have, which gives me a strong sense that we will be contenders for the team championship this year!

The team will be led by senior Ryan Welborn, last year's Collegiate Club Male Athlete of the Year. All-American Welborn sets his sights on Yoshi Hayasaki's school record 56.05 All-Around score set back in 1974. As he strives to make this indelible mark on Husky Gymnastics history, his teammates will undoubtedly follow his lead with strong performances that could put the Huskies into the top 15 of collegiate-funded teams nationally. To back Welborn up, Washington looks to juniors Lance Bowie, Ben MacColl and Evan Cabodi. This trio of all-arounders has attained All-America status as well in the last two years. Combined with sophomore Aaron Cole (Vault finalist) who is strong on four events, and new incoming freshmen Jeff Crockett and Jesse Dowell (Gem State Gymnastics, Boise – coach Greg Schamens), the Huskies will be putting the shivers into the likes of ASU, Santa Barbara, and Air Force this season! Specialists Chris Peterson and Matt Coles will add much-needed depth to the team on

## 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.



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## High Bar and Pommel Horse.

This season's schedule takes us to Tempe, Arizona; Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and Davis, CA; and hopefully to the University of Alberta in Canada. We are tentatively planning for one meet at home near the end of March if our home is finished by then.

All in all, it looks to be a good year for us with the right blend of experience, youth, and talent combined with our strong work ethic. The team is focused on the tasks at hand and is having spirited practices. Our goal is to replace ASU as the top collegiate club. Please help us with your encouragement and positive energy!!

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## *Hec Ed Renovation...*

For the latest updates and photos of the continuing Hec-Ed renovation, visit the following web site:

[www.gohuskies.com/wash-heced-gallery.html](http://www.gohuskies.com/wash-heced-gallery.html)

## *Husky History: Melvin Cooley*

*By Dr. Eric Hughes*

On occasion we highlight former Husky gymnasts in our newsletter who have contributed greatly to the UW program. Melvin Cooley certainly falls into this category.

Melvin was recruited by Dr. Hughes out of Venice High School, in a suburb of Los Angeles.

In 1975 he was voted Most Promising Freshman by his teammates.

In 1977 he broke the UW Horizontal Bar record which he had tied in both '75 and '76. Mel was the Pac 8 conference Champion on High Bar in 1977 and took second place at the NCAA meet. For this he received All-America honors. After the season he was voted Most Outstanding Washington Gymnast and was selected as captain for the following year.

Melvin's senior year was even better. He broke the UW high bar record again, won the conference title again, was selected Conference Gymnast of the Year, won the NCAA title and received All-America honors again. At the end of the season his teammates selected him for two awards: Most Inspirational and Most Outstanding.

Mel was inducted into the Husky Hall of Fame in 1994 to join the following gymnasts: Bob Hall, Yoshi Hayasaki, Jim David, Mauno Nissinen, and Coach Hughes. (Female gymnasts also in the Hall of Fame are Yumi Mordre, Joyce Tanac Schroeder, and Dale McClements Kephart.)

Melvin's personal qualities are equally as outstanding

as the above listed accomplishments. He was a coach's dream; he listened, he concentrated, he worked as hard as anyone else in the gym. He was always smiling and pleasant and greatly respected by his teammates.

In spite of all the honors he won, Mel was extremely modest and unassuming. An example that exemplifies this perfectly occurred several years after he graduated, at the end-of-the-year banquet for a High School girls team he was coaching. The guest speaker remarked on how fortunate they were to have such a wonderful human being as their coach (they agreed) and to have a *National Champion* coaching them. They were dumbfounded. Melvin had never told them of this great accomplishment.

After graduation Melvin Cooley has continued to add to his list of accomplishments. He was one of the founders of the Washington Men's Gymnastics Foundation and served on the Board of Directors for several years. He has been successful in his chosen profession but most important of all he remains the happy, likeable, pleasant, wonderful human being that we all loved when he was a UW gymnast.

*Following is a recent update Melvin was asked contribute for this newsletter.*

## *A Husky Gymnast: Then and Now*

*by Melvin Cooley*

Eric Hughes asked me to briefly share what life was like for me before, during, and after UW gymnastics. My story may be of some interest. So, starting from present to past, here is my story in a nutshell.

In this post-gymnastics period you would find that I am deeply passionate about my beliefs and value my friendships. They span the years of my involvement in the sport. I feel the guys and gals of UW yesteryear are one big family that continues to show an interest in the welfare of each other. I usually jump at the first opportunity to visit teammates because I find pleasure in knowing the peace and happiness they know in their lives. Being a UW gymnast is a shared experience that binds us together.

These days, I spend a great deal of time with adolescents. I am a middle school administrator. I am still a dreamer. Judy, my wife of fourteen years, teaches Kindergarten, and Shelby, my daughter, is an eighth-grader at Washington Middle School. Judy and I support public education because we believe in it.

My interest in working with kids dates back to the days of Eric's Saturday morning junior program. It was tough getting out of bed on Saturday to teach gymnastics.

However, after being in the gym working with kids, I recall the fun I had with them.

In the early '80s, I coached a recreational boys program at Garfield High School, and later took over the last vestiges of Günther Bohrmann's dynasty at Kent-Meridian High. It was a carefree yet rewarding time in my life.

In the '70s, UW gymnastics was truly special for me. Road trips, competing, and being on campus were exciting moments. In contrast, I remember the cold reality of being a committed student. If someone told me when I was a high school freshman that I would complete college with two advanced degrees, I would have balked. But here I am.

I attribute any measure of success I may know to the quality of individuals I have known. I feel surrounded by family and friends, and we share our lives unconditionally. These bonds strengthen each day. I am happy and at peace with the world.

# *Fifty Years of Washington Men's Gymnastics*

by Dr. Eric Hughes

Amazingly, Washington Men's Gymnastics has been around now for 50 years. Much has changed since 1950, and here we look back at how the program has evolved since then.

## The Birth of a UW Gymnastics Club

Gymnastics had been taught as a PE class prior to 1950 but was not available as an extracurricular activity. In the fall of 1950 a co-ed gymnastics club was formed by Eric Hughes who had enrolled at the UW to work on his Doctorate Degree and serve as a teaching assistant in the PE Department. The following fall Hughes started a boys' program through the UW Extension Department (after a few years this program developed considerable talent for University of Washington teams) and pressured the Athletic Director to include gymnastics as an intercollegiate sport. Finally, in 1954-55 the club was given a small stipend with the promise it would be given minor sport status if it did well. Although a few individuals competed in various AAU and invitational meets from 1950 to '54, the club was primarily a recreational group that put on tumbling, trampoline, and hand-balancing performances for both on- and off-campus functions. There was absolutely no competition available for women in the northwest in these years.

## Minor Sport Era

As promised, gymnastics was added as a "minor" sport to the intercollegiate program in the 1955-56 school year. WSU and UBC were the only other colleges in the northwest with teams but Washington also competed against the Seattle YMCA, the Vancouver, BC Turners as well as in AAU and invitational tournaments.

## Major Sport Status and Full Funding

In 1959-60 major sport status was granted and a few scholarships awarded. It wasn't until the following year, however, that an outstanding group of freshmen enrolled and the team began to compete favorably with top teams around the country. Another, even better, group of freshmen enrolled in 1961 and by the following year Washington was a national power.

## Era of Dominance

From 1963 to 1973 Washington was one of the top two teams in the Conference and was ranked in the top ten nationally every year except one. The UW was second at the NCAA in 1965 and won the National AAU Championships in both 1968 and '69. National individual championships were won with regularity in the NCAA, AAU, and USGF during this period, including six in the all-around. Three foreign tours were taken: 1966 to Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii; 1968 to Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Singapore, and Hawaii; and 1970 to five South American countries. Many foreign national and club teams also visited Seattle to compete against the now-famous Huskies. In 1966 Washington was the team

champion in both the Australian and New Zealand national meets.

## Budget Cuts and Gradual Decline

The budget was first reduced in 1972 and several times in years after that. It became difficult to recruit enough good gymnasts to maintain team depth but Washington still managed to place 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation in 1975 and 10<sup>th</sup> in 1976. Hughes started to contemplate retirement and in 1976 hired Dick Foxal as an assistant with the understanding that he would be recommended for head coach in a few years. The change was made in the 1978-79 school year. Bad timing for Foxal. Gymnastics was dropped as a varsity sport after the 1980 season.

## Club Era (Again)

What goes around comes around. With funding gone Dick Foxal decided to leave. Fortunately, Jim Holt, a former WSU gymnast, had been serving as an assistant for Foxal and volunteered to stay on and coach the team as a student club. People who have not coached cannot comprehend how much time a commitment like this takes. As well as the three to four hours a day, six to seven days a week spent in the gym there is approximately an equal amount of time spent out of the gym on planning and administrative details. That a WSU gymnast would step forward and save Washington gymnastics is most appreciated. For a few individuals the love of the sport overshadows any conflicting personal feelings. Thank you Jim Holt. (Jim is preparing a write-up that will be feature in a future newsletter). When Holt decided to move on in 1988 to other activities, which still included considerable contribution to the sport, it was thought that competitive gymnastics at the UW would die. Fortunately, an equally dedicated individual, Mark Russo, offered to fill the void. Because Russo was featured in a recent newsletter article "Meet Coach Mark Russo," his era will not be expanded upon at this time except to say he has produced his share of national champions as well.

Coach Russo was responsible for founding the WMGF, the organization that publishes this newsletter, and still serves as an ex-officio member of its Board. The purpose of this foundation is to raise the necessary finances to foster and promote the competitive sport of men's gymnastics at the University of Washington.

## *50th Anniversary Picnic a Success*

*by Daniel Luna*



*What a beautiful day for a WMGF barbecue!*

August 26th turned out to be a perfect day for the Washington Men's Gymnastics 50th Anniversary Picnic. Although rain in Seattle that morning had us worried, the Deception Pass area saw nothing but sunshine all day.

Dave Nakanishi and Rod Minaker did an excellent job of organizing the event, which was held at Dave's beach cabins near Deception Pass. Thank you Rod and

Dave for all your effort!

It was a full day of great food, friends, and lots of fun. Between the kayaking, volleyball, badminton, bocce, and some intrepid tree-climbing, there was something for everyone and their families.



*Some serious lawn bowling.*

THANK YOU!

If you'd like to contribute, please clip and send this portion of the newsletter to:

WMGF
5529 27th Ave. N.E.
Seattle, WA 98105

Enclosed is my contribution\* to WMGF in the amount of:

\$100 \_\_\_ \$200 \_\_\_ \$500 \_\_\_ \$1,000 \_\_\_ \$1,000,000 \_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

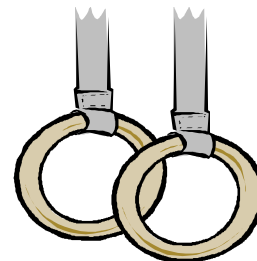
\*Remember: if you wish to donate a stock or other security, please contact Dr. Hughes at (206) 632-2151 for details.

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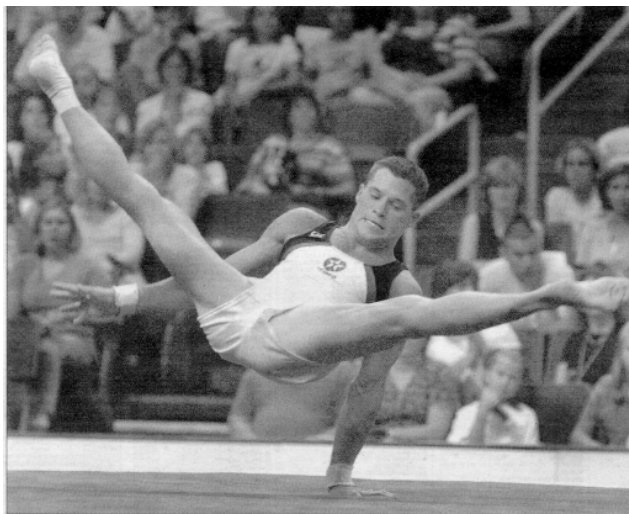


What Gymnasts Are Up Against...

By Paul Roggenkamp

In a major Seattle-area newspaper following the 2000 US Olympic Gymnastics Trials, the photograph at right and erroneous caption appeared. "Ray" (should be Blaine) Wilson would be amazed to know that he performed a one-arm handstand in that position (it could be a trick named after him) rather than being caught by the camera in that position while doing flairs on the floor. Can you imagine other sports being so erroneously reported by major media?? Is it any wonder that our beloved sport is so misunderstood and underappreciated?? In the recent Sports Illustrated issue on the 2000 Olympics Wrapup, there was a photo of a German male gymnast doing flairs on the end of the parallel bars with a caption reading something like this, ".....doing a strength element on the parallel bars."

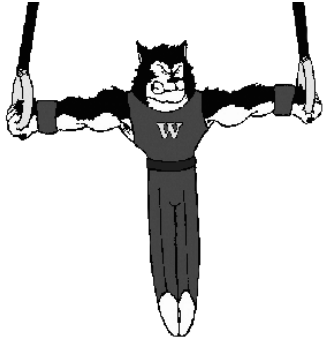
There is a great deal of erroneous information on the sport of gymnastics; it is important for all of us who understand and love the sport to take time to explain it to all of our friends and associates in order to enhance the universal understanding of this wonderful sport!



Associated Press

Ray Wilson performs a handstand on his floor exercise routine during the US Championships.

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5529 27th Ave. N.E.  
Seattle, WA 98105



In This Issue...

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# Washington Men's Gymnastics

## 2001 Meet Schedule\*

*\*Tentative! Please check our website for updates: [huskies.w3site.com](http://huskies.w3site.com)*