

WMGF News

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March 7, 2025

Mid-Season Update

by Head Coach Eli Richardson

As we hit the halfway mark of the season, we wanted to take a moment to reflect on the incredible journey we've had so far and express our deepest gratitude for your unwavering support. Thanks to your generosity and commitment, our team has been able to achieve great things, and we're excited to continue our strong performances as we move forward.

The season began with a bang as we hosted our annual Washington Open on campus, where the team faced off against our rivals, Arizona State. The atmosphere was electric, and our gymnasts delivered powerful routines, showing off their hard work and determination. This early success was just the beginning of a series of impressive performances.

In the next few weeks, our athletes took center stage at the Next Era competition, held at the newly built Seattle Convention Center. The event was not just an exhibition of talent; our team also took on a critical behind-the-scenes role, setting up and tearing down equipment for not only the Next Era competition but also for two other major events in the Seattle area during the same weekend. It's not only a testament to our team's work ethic, perseverance, and dedication to their craft, but also to the entire gymnastics community.

After that, we traveled to Colorado for our first away meet of the season against the Rocky Mountain Mavericks. In front of a challenging crowd, our gymnasts executed flawless routines and came out on top with our first road victory of the sea-

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.

Photo credit: CHRIS BURCH photography



Oscar Coromina-Pujol at 2025 Washington Open

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son. It was a moment of pride for the whole team, showing what we are capable of when we come together.

Now we are ranked third in the nation, and that's no small feat. This ranking reflects the hard work and determination of our athletes. As coach I try to instill a sense of pride and responsibility in the athletes and they deserve all the credit you can give them for stepping up to these challenges. It's also a testament to you – our fans and supporters. None of this success would be possible without your generosity. Your contributions allow us to pursue excellence both on and off the competition floor, and for that, we are truly grateful.

Looking ahead, we are preparing to face Arizona State once again – this time on their home turf on February 22nd. This competition will mark the start of the second half of our season including Conference and National Championships, and we're ready to stay poised and continue our momentum. With your support, we know we can finish strong and make a push for even greater success.

Thank you again for being part of this incredible season. Let's continue to cheer on our Huskies as they strive for excellence!

Go Huskies!



Meet the Board: WMGF President Paul Roggenkamp

by Mark Russo

For many years now, the WMGF has been fortunate to have Paul Roggenkamp as one of our most dedicated members. Paul has consistently placed himself in the thick of it, tackling many of the challenges the program has faced over the years such as helping to create a recruiting plan, teaching team interdependence, announcing at many of the competitions we host, and serving on our Grievance Committee. You can count on Paul to bring a positive attitude to any endeavor he applies himself to, and to find a solution to any situation or problem. I am very thankful Paul has been such a strong voice for our program and the good it does in the gymnastics community, and among the team members themselves!

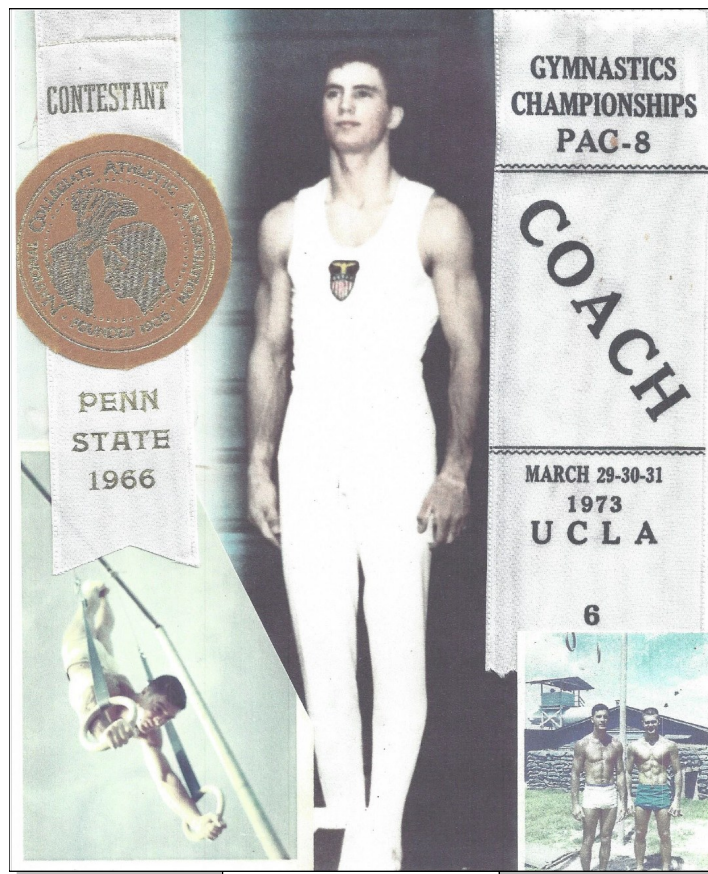
Thank you Paul for all you have given, and continue to give, to the Washington Men's Gymnastics family!!

What is your background with gymnastics and the WMGF Board?

I had no exposure to gymnastics until my freshman year at the US Military Academy at West Point, NY. All cadets are required to participate in sports at either intramural, club or varsity level each season. All freshmen are required to take Physical Education: boxing, wrestling, swimming, and gymnastics. I had swimming and gymnastics in the mornings during the fall, then I went out for 150-pound football after classes were finished. In those years, freshmen could train with the varsity, but could not compete in varsity competition. So, as freshmen we were the "practice squad" versus the varsity every day in practice. I loved it and had planned on playing on the varsity for three years. I worked out on my own, boxed and ran cross-country for the next seasons.

Because I felt that doing some gymnastics would definitely build my upper body strength, I would go to the gymnastics room and work out on my own doing some very basic parallel bars, rings, and a little high bar. The junior who was the Team Captain-elect for the following year noticed me and asked me if I was working out to try to make the team. I told him that I was just working to build up my upper body for football. "If you change your mind, let me know," he said. I appreciated being noticed, but I had other plans.

That fall I turned out for football and practiced for three weeks until the team roster was posted. My name was not on the list! I was so disappointed!! I tried soccer for two days and realized it was not for me. Then I thought, I'll go to talk with the gymnastics coach. All I



Paul in his competition days

wanted to do was to be a contributing member of a team and not get cut ever again. I saw the Team Captain and told him what had happened; he said, "Let's talk to the Coach."

After some curt questions and seemingly disinterested, the coach said, "Oh, go ahead and work out and we'll take a look at you." I got a chance to do what I wanted to do!!!

The assistant coach, Jay Werner, the 1960 NCAA All-Around National Champion from Penn State took me under his wing and began to teach me. After six months, I chose high bar as my event. With Jay's training and a lot of hard work, I competed in the last home meet of the season and I won the high bar competition because all the more experienced high bar competitors had a major break in their routines. I earned a varsity letter and determined that I would bust my butt to be the top high bar man on our team as a senior. I worked out every day of the week and gave up Christmas vacation my senior year to attend the National Gymnastic Clinic in Sarasota, Florida. My gymnastics career ended in April of 1966. I had won half of my ten dual meet competitions and fin-

(Continued on page 3)

Meet the Board: Paul Roggenkamp

ished in the top three in the remainder except one (I fell off and my score didn't count). I finished fourth in the Conference Championship and thus qualified to compete in the Regional Championships finishing sixth, which qualified me to compete in the NCAA National Championship. I had achieved so much more than my wildest dream!!!! It changed my life forever by teaching me how to achieve any goal and overcome any challenge. I entered the US Army and served in Korea and Vietnam and was assigned to teach ROTC at UCLA in 1970 and was also hired as Assistant Coach of the UCLA Gymnastics Team for the three years I was there.

I was assigned to Seattle in April, 1976 as Area Manager in Army Recruiting. The first person I went to see after I arrived was Dr. Eric Hughes to see if he needed any coaching assistants. He told me that his staff was full, but I could work out with the team anytime I wanted. Yes!!! I spent a lot of time getting to know guys on the team and Dr Hughes. My military career sent me to Korea and then to Ft Lewis, WA. I stayed in touch with Dr. Hughes and ran in a couple of Seattle Marathons with him. In 1988, I retired and started my second career in Commercial Property Management. In 1991, I paused my long distance running and worked out at Puget Sound School of Gymnastics where I met Bob Young, Evan Cabodi, and a couple of other boys. About seven years later, I noticed in the Seattle Times that the Washington Open was being held at UW Campus, so I went. The main entrance to the arena was open, but no gymnastics.... I heard some applause and commotion and so I followed the sounds and entered the Annex through the open side door. I sat in the bleachers and saw Evan Cabodi competing, I was very happy.

Why do you choose to be involved with this program?

While I was enjoying the WA Open, I felt a tap on my shoulder.... It was Dr. Hughes who said, "Paul, you got in here without paying." I apologized, "I came in the side door which was open and I wasn't aware that there was an admission desk!" Dr, Hughes just smiled and said, "OK, your punishment is to work with us on the

WMGF." That was the best gift I have ever received in my life.

What are your roles within the Board?

Member for over 20 years; I announced at WA Opens and home meets. In 2022, I became President of the Board.

What are your aspirations for the team and the Foundation?

My expectation is to continue to fund the team; and with Coaches Eli Richardson and Bob Young, to grow the team each year and train each gymnast to be the very best they can be, and to win the GymACT Championship. Additionally, I want to see more of our graduates become assistant coaches and join the Foundation to give back to the program which gave them the opportunity to compete in the sport they love.

What would you say to someone who might be interested in joining the Board?

WMGF and our team have accomplished many amazing things. If you are interested in gymnastics, or have a skill such as marketing, accounting/bookkeeping, or event management, your skills and experience can be used to raise the level of the program even higher. I believe that working with the coaches, the gymnasts, and the wonderful people who are serving on the WMGF Board is one of the most satisfying and meaningful service experiences anyone could have.

What are some of your other interests?

I love teaching Leadership; raising, training, and racing horses; and watching my great-grandkids in school activities and sports. I enjoy working with students, athletes, professionals, or anyone planning or changing careers to help them achieve their goals.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Go Husky Men's Gymnastics!!!!



Tales From the Gym

Do you have any fond (or not-so-fond) memories about your time in or around the gym that you'd like to share? Send them to us, and we'll print them in a future newsletter! Read on for a couple from two of our current Board members.

From Paul Roggenkamp:

We had a Ukraine-born cadet named Oly who worked very hard on the rings. He was a barrel-chested guy with a fantastic sense of humor who was frustrated one day because he couldn't perform as he'd hoped doing an Olympic Cross. So Oly approached the Coach and asked, "What do I have to do to do this skill better?" The Coach replied in his curt, matter-of-fact manner, "You will have to get stronger or lighter or both."

From Peter Sawyer:

Years ago, my coach, Mark Russo, decided to teach our best gymnast a kovacs on high-bar (a release out of a giant swing to a double-back over with catch). Mark had the gymnast stand on the bar and then back-flip into the pit. Next in the progression was to flip and touch the bar. Within just a few tries he was able to flip and catch the bar.

Now, I was never good, but the progression seemed simple enough and I thought I might be able to get to the "touch the bar" part. I figured working on the women's bar would be slightly safer since it's wood, so I climbed up and deliberately set back when flipping off the bar. No problem. I thought, "that was easy enough,

let me see if I can bring it in a just a little bit closer". I wasn't trying to touch the bar, just not jump back so far.

I'm glad I used the women's bar because somehow I screwed up and hit the bar. With my teeth. My bottom teeth! To this day, I have no idea how I managed to hit just my bottom teeth. It hurt, but the shame was worse since quite a few people witnessed my impact with the bar. I assured everyone I was fine, although I noticed a few of my teeth felt loose. The worse part came later though.

The next time I came into the gym Mark called me over. The conversation went something like this:

Mark: I heard what happened. You ok?

Me: Yeah...

Mark: Why shouldn't you be doing that?

Me: ...because I'm not good enough?

Mark: That's right.

There's a fine line between daring and dumb. I'm still not sure which side I was on, but at least my teeth firmed up again after a few days...not quite as straight as before, but no one but me would notice!



Photo credit: CHRIS BURCH photography

Your Huskies at this year's matchup with ASU at Washington Open

THANK YOU!

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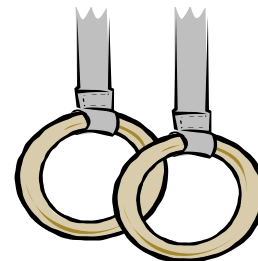
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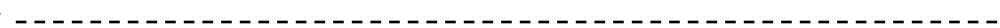
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Sad News from Temple University Gymnastics

by Paul Roggenkamp, WMGF President

The WMGF and our Husky Men's Team share the grief of the Temple Owls Men's Gymnastics Team at the tragic loss of their freshman star, Tyler Sabapathy from Toronto. He had just competed in his first varsity meet versus the Naval Academy. His coach, Jesse Kitzen Abelson, was so pleased that he hit his two routines and stuck both of his difficult dismounts. On that Sunday, Tyler attended the NFC Championship game and was so excited after the Philadelphia Eagles victory earning a berth in the Superbowl. Caught up in the massive post-game celebrations, he excitedly climbed a light pole and unfortunately fell, suffering serious head injuries. His coach and teammates visited him in the hospital, but he did not survive. The Temple Team has dedicated its season to Tyler.

Our condolences to the Sabapathy family and the Temple Owls on the tragic loss of Tyler. Every gymnast is a member of the global team of gymnasts. Let us honor Tyler by our performances in the remainder of this gymnastics season.



WMGF
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2025 SCHEDULE

January 11	Washington Open - Seattle, WA
January 18	AT Windy City Invite - Chicago, IL
January 25	Next ERA - Seattle, WA
February 8	AT Maverick Invite - Lafayette, CO
February 22	AT Southwest Cup - Chandler, AZ
April 5	AT GymACT All Stars - Pittsburg, PA*
April 26	AT Western Championships - Reno, NV
May 10	AT National Championships - Salt Lake City, UT