

WMGF News

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Mid-Season Update

by Coach Trevor Ruggeri

We opened the season facing some early adversity. A few untimely injuries tested our depth and forced several athletes to step into bigger roles sooner than expected. While it wasn't the start we had envisioned, the response from this group has been outstanding. The team has steadily improved each week, and most importantly, we're getting healthy at the right time.

Our first major test came on January 31st at the Next Era Invitational here in Seattle, where we faced the Rocky Mountain Mavericks. Competing on our home floor, the Huskies delivered a strong, composed performance and came away with a team victory. It was an important early-season statement and a sign of the resilience building within this group.

Just one week later, on a quick turnaround, we hosted our Co-Ed Dual Meet at Alaska Airlines Arena alongside the UW Women's Gymnastics team against the Bay Area Bandits. In a meet where every tenth mattered, the energy in the arena was electric. The Huskies battled event by event and ultimately squeaked out a win by less than a single point. It was one of those competitions that reminds you how razor-thin the margins are – and how critical execution under pressure can be.

After several weeks away from competition, we traveled to Arizona for the Southwest Cup on February 21st. Facing five other strong pro-

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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



Carter Hawthorne at our Co-ed Dual Meet

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grams in a highly competitive six-team field, the team rose to the occasion and finished third in an intense, high-energy meet. The experience was invaluable as we sharpened lineups, refined routines, and continued building competitive confidence.

Now, the focus shifts to our final regular-season competition on March 15th in Santa Clara.

From there, all eyes turn toward postseason preparation. With Western Championships and National Championships on the horizon, our emphasis is clear: Maximize health, clean up execution, and peak at the right time.

We're also coming out of our busiest stretch of equipment moves and event support, which means the athletes will have more time to recover, reset, and focus fully on training. That added rest and preparation time will be crucial as we aim to compete at our highest level when it matters most.

This group has weathered challenges, grown through adversity, and continues to trend upward. The best gymnastics of our season is still ahead.

GO DAWGS!!



The Spiritual Nature of Men's Gymnastics Today: Let's Keep it ALIVE!!

by Paul Roggenkamp

In the mid-1960s when I was training to compete at the collegiate level, men's gymnastics was an interesting sport with localized pockets across the country of well-trained athletes with a code of points which valued form, consistent smooth movement, and a dismount to a "stuck" landing on hard mats. The competitions were generally well-attended and the cheering for an athlete following a performance was usually applause from the supporting crowd. There was no background music and when a competitor approached the apparatus and performed, the atmosphere was not unlike a church service: Quiet and respectful. Team members silently supported each other while competing and cheered upon completion of the exercise.

In the 1970s, I had an amazing opportunity to be an Assistant Coach at UCLA for three seasons. We did not play music in practice nor during competitions, but we worked to instill in each gymnast the team spirit of helping each other in practice and getting to know each other's workout patterns, emotional investment, and goals. When we arrived in the gym for any competition, we would gather as a team around a chalk container and all chalk up and then do the UCLA cheer: "U. C. L. A. ... UCLA!!! Go, Fight, Win!!!" Naturally, this would result in a huge cloud of chalk dust. This was our way of stating that "we had arrived and we're ready to compete and we have brought our Los Angeles Smog with us." We also established a simple reward system for each gymnast like the Ohio State Football team's Buckeye symbols seen on players' helmets to signify individual achievements. The head coach and I established a system to recognize each individual's maximum possible score on each event in which he competed. For example, if a gymnast doing his very best could possibly score a 9.3

out of a maximum of 10.0 on rings, he would earn a gold star to be sewn onto his gym suspenders. If a gymnast won an event in competition, he would earn another gold star. For an athlete who won a conference championship, he would be awarded a set of red, white and blue suspenders. The awards were presented by the head coach immediately after the gymnast's dismount. This drew the attention of everyone in the building. The team became very cohesive and all members supported each other. Opposing teams' coaches noticed a difference in the spirit of UCLA Gymnasts.

It is my belief and observation that this year's UW Huskies team has taken team spirit to a new level. The gymnasts are emotionally invested in their sport and in the team as a whole. Individuals are committed to cheer for and help other teammates in practice and competition. They truly love each other and want all to improve and win. We have been blessed as a gymnastics community to see the team spirit alive and well in our program. The raucous cheering and clapping as a gymnast prepares to mount the apparatus is carried over to each element of his performance. It is true that "the mind is the athlete" and the body does what the mind tells it to do. One can feel the support and desire of the teammates communicated to the competing athlete urging him to do his very best.

I am so excited for the future of our program and for the gymnasts we have now, and for those future gymnasts to be a part of the greatest athletic sport! Let's continue to work to provide more young athletes the opportunity to be coached and trained to the highest level possible.

GO HUSKIES!!!

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Your HUSKIES getting ready to compete at Hec Ed against the Bay Area Bandits

Photo credit: CHRIS BURCH photography

In Memoriam: Les Driscoll, 1955-1958 UW Team

We are sorry to relay the news of the passing of one of our Huskies. Below is a reprint of his obituary, from <https://www.penttilaschapel.com/obituaries/leslie-driscoll>. Please visit that website if you'd like to leave a note.

Les was also featured in a Where Are They Now? article in our December 2023 newsletter. You can read it (and all past newsletters) at <https://wmgf.us/newsletters>.



Leslie Alan Driscoll (Les) left this world surrounded by family on February 15, 2026.

He was born May 24, 1935 to Tom and Hazel Driscoll in Portland, Oregon. His sisters (and brother) were Barbara, (Steve) Smith, Evelyn (Al) Lynn, Lois (Ron) Kaino, Virginia (Corky)

Wilson, Beverly (Dallas) Johnson, and Ken Driscoll. They have all preceded him in death. He was also preceded in death by his daughter Ava.

The family lived in Portland where his parents were working building Liberty Ships. At the end of World War II, the family moved to Ocean Park, WA. He entered the 7th grade and then went on to graduate from Ilwaco High School where he was class president and lettered in football, track, and basketball. He was the

quarterback in 1952 when Ilwaco was undefeated and won the state championship.

Les began working on Willapa Bay in the shellfish industry and worked for Eberhardt Oyster, Wiegardt Brothers, Bell Oyster Co, EH Bendickson, Cornell Crab Pot, and Northern Oyster Co. This made it possible for him to pay for his way through college.

After a Navy Recruiter came to visit him in Ocean Park, Les decided to attend the UW where he was in Naval ROTC. At the university he earned letters in track, gymnastics, and basketball. He was a member of the Big "W" Club and Pi Kappa Epsilon Fraternity. Les was invited to try out for the Olympics but by that time he had begun his teaching and coaching career with Seattle Public Schools and worked at West Seattle High School where he taught P.E. and Health, was department head, and coached football, track, and gymnastics. His teams won city and state championships, he received many awards, and was also chosen as Coach of the Year. He was a member of many professional organizations.

After retiring from teaching, Les and family moved to Ilwaco, Washington. There he served as an Ilwaco City Council member and also worked in the family oyster business. Les was a member of the Ocean Beach Presbyterian Church and served as an officer.

His survivors include his wife Ann whom he married in 1959, sons Dennis and Dan (Linda), and granddaughter Shannon.

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SCHEDULE SEASON

1.10 WASHINGTON
OPEN

2.21 SOUTHWEST
CUP

4.10 GYMACT
ALL STARS

1.31 NEXT
ERA

3.14 SILICON VALLEY
INVITE

4.25 WESTERN
CHAMPIONSHIP

2.07 CO-ED DUAL
MEET

5.9 NATIONAL
CHAMPIONSHIP

HOME MEETS ARE IN GOLD

AWAY MEETS ARE IN WHITE