

# WMGBC NEWS

## Mid-Season Update

By Mark Russo, Head Coach

**G**reetings from the Husky Men's Gymnastics Team. We are at the midway point of our season and I would like to let you know how we are doing. So far we have competed in the Washington Open, the Blackjack Invitational in Las Vegas, the Winter Cup Challenge in Houston, and we just returned from a dual meet against Arizona State in Phoenix. Though traveling is not my favorite time, the team has handled it very well. Several outstanding performances have been turned in by Husky gymnasts. I feel we are very close to 'gelling' as a team. The goal is to gel at our home meet versus ASU on March 28 and beat those guys.

The season began early in January with our own Washington Open. This meet served its purpose well, getting us in competitive form early. Next we traveled to Las Vegas for a national caliber competition, the Blackjack Invitational. Though no other collegiate programs were there, numerous powerful private club programs were. It was a great competition. Our team finished third with several outstanding performances. Senior Jeff Johnson performed his solid ring routine and finished second only to Olympian Blaine Wilson. Sophomore Sergio Luna provided high-scoring routines on parallel bars and high bar. However, both Jeff and Sergio took a back seat to sophomore Ryan Welborn who went six for six to lead the team in the all-around. Ryan's all-around

performance was highlighted by an awesome parallel bar routine. Ryan has both a double back *and* a double front between the bars to upper-arm catch. Amazing!! This guy is tough! I am very proud of our team's performance.

The following weekend, Jeff, Ryan, Sergio, and myself traveled to Houston, Texas, for the Winter Cup Challenge. Ryan and Jeff competed as specialists on vault and rings, respectively. Sergio was scheduled to compete all-around, but a shoulder injury forced him to scratch the competition after rings, our first event. Jeff and Ryan finished second and ninth in their respective events. Another consistent, good performance for each of them.

For the third weekend in a row, our gymnasts traveled and competed in foreign territory. Arizona State had an easy win against us, as we were without all-around ace Sergio Luna who sat this one out with an injured shoulder. We lost the meet on our first event, pommel horse. While we missed three out of four routines, ASU hit all their floor sets. The score after the first event was ASU 35.0, UW 25.0. We settled down after pommels, but without Sergio we could not gain ground and ended up losing 211.55 to 193.80. Ouch!

In our upcoming meet at New Mexico, we'll get our second chance at ASU. I'm very curious to see how we do with Sergio. I know that by March 28, we will be ready to give them all they can handle. We will definitely need your loud voices cheering us on. This is our only home meet of the year, and we look forward to seeing you there!

Take care, more news to come!

## 1998 MEET SCHEDULE

Meet	Date & Time	Location
Washington Open	January 4, 10:30am and 2:30pm	UW – Seattle, WA – Hec Ed Addition
Blackjack Invitational	February 6, 7:30pm	UNLV – Las Vegas, NV
Winter Cup Challenge	February 13 & 14, 7:00pm	Houston, TX
ASU Invitational	February 28, 7:00pm	ASU – Tempe, AZ
Lobo Invitational	March 7	UNM – Albuquerque, NM
UW Invitational	March 28, 7:30pm	UW – Seattle, WA – Hec Ed Addition
USAG Club Nationals	April 9–11, Times TBD	Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, CT

For more details please contact Mark Russo at (206) 524-9480

## LETTERS

Dear Friends of Husky Gymnastics,

**M**y interest in gymnastics began several decades ago when I entered my high school gymnasium and saw these amazing guys swinging on the bars and flying through the air. Today I continue to swing on the bars, although much more conservatively. I have been interested in and a supporter of Men's Gymnastics at the UW for 12 years. Currently I am the treasurer of the WMGBC.

Gymnasts of my era tumbled on wooden floors (and on pavement in parades, Ouch!), climbed rope for speed, wore primitive hand guards without dowels and landed on mats of dubious composition. Yet we knew the joys of gymnastics. We survived and even prospered while learning about dedication, perseverance, commitment, and teamwork. These accomplishments took place through sweat, blisters, sore muscles, and dreams of glory. I don't think the important things in gymnastics have changed.

Dr. Hughes, founder of men's gymnastics at the UW and current Booster Club board member, mentioned in his last letter that interest in gymnastics remains strong in the Pacific Northwest (we had a record turnout of over 265 gymnasts at the Washington Open on January 5<sup>th</sup>), and the dreams continue. But not only dreams. We have three National Champions on our current team and the prospects of a very successful season upon us (come see us perform at the upcoming meets). These guys indeed work hard! Besides studying and working out, they earn money for the team by ushering at football and basketball games, and by moving equipment for women's gymnastics meets.

The Booster Club's goal is not only to fund the team from year to year, but also to build the financial infrastructure that

will enable this program to become self-sufficient. That means paying a coach a reasonable salary and being able to travel to away meets. We are raising monies through personal and corporate donations, grant funding, hosting competitions, selling merchandise, ushering, and moving equipment. But we need your help. Many of you sent generous donations over the last few weeks for which we say, THANK YOU! You people are wonderful. Perhaps others forgot, misplaced our last newsletter, or are waiting for the next few dollars to come in. Make that donation today to enable these young gymnasts to have the collegiate gymnastics experience. If you were a gymnast, I'm sure you remember...

If you have not already, I hope you will make a contribution to the WMGBC by completing the enclosed slip. Remember, 100% of your contributions go to the support of the team. "I guarantee it!"

We look forward to both your financial support and to seeing you at our home meet with Arizona State University on March 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:30PM in the Hec Ed Pavilion Addition. Multiple flips and twists will be performed throughout the competition. Come, bring the family and enjoy the infectious gymnastics spirit. Additionally, I invite you to share in the knowledge that you too helped make it all possible.

*Cameron S. Oliva*

Cameron S. Oliva  
Former Gymnast and Treasurer, WMGBC

## 1997-98 Husky Men's Gymnastics Team



Back row, left to right: Sergio Luna III, Lance Bowie, Ryan Welborn, Trevor Green, Coach Mark Russo.  
Front row: Bud Lonnais, Jeff Johnson, Evan Cabodi.

Senior Jeff Johnson

By Peter Sawyer, Board Member

**J**eff Johnson swings rings like few can. His current routine rates a 10.0 start value, and includes a back-uprise to I-cross, and 2(!) back-uprise to Maltese combos. He held the number one spot on rings last year, and stands second only to Blaine Wilson this year. Despite his incredible skill, this year's only senior gets his motivation not from competition, but instead from the simple notion that "it's fun . . . I like being able to do something most other people don't do."

At age 22, Jeff competes all-around, and doesn't suffer from any major injuries. Beyond his ability with the rings, Jeff's strengths lie in his tumbling skills on floor and vault. He doesn't particularly like high bar, and admits, "pommels is probably my worst event." Nevertheless, Jeff helps the team with his strong all-around performances and easy-going manner. His level-headedness during competition helps calm his teammates, and his cool approach to workouts shows the other guys that being a good gymnast doesn't mean sacrificing everything.



Jeff on his event.

This year is Jeff's last year of collegiate eligibility, but he will remain eligible as an individual to qualify for competitions such as the Pan-Am Games, Goodwill Games, and possibly World Championships. Many people of his caliber would probably view competing at these meets as the goal to strive for, but Jeff's focus is broader. When asked, Jeff says, "yeah - I'd like to compete in those meets, but you know, whatever happens, happens." Competition is just one way Jeff keeps gymnastics interesting because "it's fun competing against someone I've never competed against." Instead, he chooses to focus on the present: finishing school, spending time with his girlfriend, and just hanging out.

His workout schedule of three days from 2:30-9:00 (with a half-hour break for dinner) and weekend days from 10:00-

2:00 leave little time for studying, so finishing school means earning a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering, but probably not until the spring of '99. Of his academics, Jeff says "every year has gotten better," and that getting into the Chemical Engineering department "made the difference" because "you're treated like people." A well-paying job with Boeing or Zymogenetics appeals to him, but he's also excited by the prospect of a graduate degree, and states that "the more I get into it, the more I want to go to grad school."

Reflecting on gymnastics, Jeff observes that the "college sector is becoming more segregated" and that "less and less people are going to college for gymnastics." He wishes that the "NCAA would play a bigger role" in drawing gymnasts to the schools so gymnasts would earn a degree instead of trying to "just go for the money" of amateur athletics. Of his coach, Mark Russo, Jeff says, "he'll do anything he can do to help you get where you want to go." What about his future with gymnastics? Jeff states simply: "I'll keep doing it as long as it's fun."

That's Jeff Johnson for you - a hard-working, talented gymnast who is serious about his gymnastics, but doesn't take his gymnastics *too* seriously.



W M G B C

The Washington Men's Gymnastics Booster Club is a non-profit organization created to assist the Huskies with non-university affiliated fundraising. The WMGBC Board of Directors consists of the following members:

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- Sean Clapshaw ..... President
- David Pearlstein ..... Vice President
- Linda Luna ..... Secretary
- Cameron Oliva ..... Treasurer
- Jeff Johnson ..... Team Liaison

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- Torrie Kuwana                      Daniel Luna                      Mark Oliver
- Alysa Rees                              Peter Sawyer                      John Yingling

For more information, or if you'd like to help us out in any way, we may be contacted at:

**Washington Men's Gymnastics Booster Club**  
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 Seattle, WA 98115

Or call Mark Russo at (206) 524-9480