

# WMGF News

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May 3, 2004

## Season Review

by Mark Russo

Collegiate Nationals took place in Denton, Texas on April 10<sup>th</sup> at Texas Woman's University. This meet is our big one and is the equivalent of college basketball's National Invitational Tournament with most of the 2<sup>nd</sup> tier of NCAA schools and the Collegiate Club teams in attendance. We competed against Arizona State and Vermont for the Club Championship. Our last win here was in 1993. Needless to say, we were hungry to taste victory.

We began on rings, while ASU started on High bar. Rings has not been a good event for us this season as we lack the awesome strength needed to score well. However, we hit our routines as well as I could expect and ASU opened with a disastrous high bar performance. Led by Ben MacColl's 8.20, we edged out to a slight lead over ASU, 29.80 to 29.55.

On vault, we had two vaults performed for the first time this season by Ryan Chriswell (laid-out Kasamatsu, 9.30 start value) and by Ben MacColl (laid-out Kasamatsu with a half-twist, 9.50 start value.) Ryan scored 9.075, Ben 9.05. These two led us to our highest vault and event total this season, 34.675, propelling us to a larger lead over ASU who were falling everywhere on floor.

After 2 events: UW 64.775, ASU 62.975!!

Freshmen Ryan Chriswell and Sean Liner hit nice Parallel Bar sets

## 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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to get us a good p-bar score while ASU stumbled again on pommel horse. We had beaten ASU's pommel score with our p-bar score to increase our lead, UW 95.725, ASU 92.775.

No surprise that Sean led us on high bar with an 8.25. He has been pretty consistent on that event all year. However, we had several misses and as a result, our high bar event score of 30.80 lost ground to ASU's ring score of 31.45. Our lead was slipping: UW 126.525, ASU 124.225.

I thought if we could hit floor four for four, we might hold on pommels and squeak by ASU. On floor we were without our best floor performer, Sean, who had twisted his ankle ten days earlier. That hurt us mostly in momentum in that we had to count two routines that were considered misses. Scott Provence and Ben MacColl came through with good performances, but ASU did very well on vault and all of the sudden we were down: UW 158.25, ASU 160.20.

ASU was building momentum as they hit successive p-bar routines while we struggled through pommels losing more ground. Freshman Stu Renz led the Huskies on Pommels. Jeff Fausz and Joel Hennig competed for the team on floor and vault and had their best routines of the season.

All in all, we did have our best performance but it wasn't enough to

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Husky History: 1965 My Most Exciting Year

By Dr. Eric Hughes

A coach is sometimes asked, "What was the most exciting year as a coach?" Well, some years stand out because of outstanding individual athletes on the team such as '67, '68, '69, '70 and '71 when Washington had a national all round champion five years in a row; others because of a great team effort. Watching the NCAA basketball tournament recently reminded me of what has to be the most exciting year in my coaching career.

In 1964 the NCAA Rules Committee got the not-so-bright idea that gymnastics should have a basketball type of playoff in 1965 to determine the national champion. It may be a great way to determine a basketball champion but was not well received by the sport of gymnastics. Actually, we loved it, as we were one of the two teams progressing all the way to the finals. However, other good teams that, under the traditional method, would have qualified for the nationals hated it as they were eliminated along the way. Needless to say the rules committee went back to the traditional format after one year.

This is the way it worked. The country was divided into four regions: east, mid-east, mid-west and west. Two teams from each region were selected for the tournament. The champion of the strongest conference in each region met the strongest at-large team from their region to determine the regional champion. We won the Athletic Assn. of Western Univ. (now the Pac 10) by beating Cal. Berkeley 63 to 57 at the Conference meet held in Seattle that year. Team scoring was different back then. Judges scores were used to determine places in each event and then team points were awarded for places one through five.

San Fernando State earned the at large berth in the West and both teams traveled to San Jose the next weekend where we handily beat them 71 ½ to 48 ½.

The next weekend we met Iowa State, the mid-west champion, at the Univ. of Colorado. The meet was held in Colorado's practice gym in front of maybe 100 spectators. Not many people in Colorado were interested in watching two schools they knew

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## Season Review

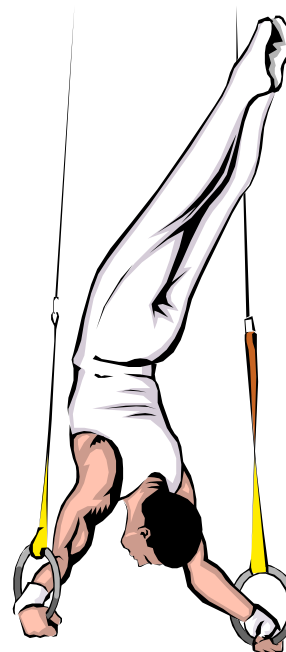
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hold off ASU. We finished second this year to ASU and defeated Vermont for second place.

Final tallies:	ASU	192.875
	UW	184.500
	Vermont	175.175

I must say the team performed well and as a team all season. Special kudos to Senior Ben MacColl who pulled a pommel routine out of thin air to get us four scores on that event and ended up becoming an All-American in the all around because of it. Unbelievable Ben!!

With three freshmen carrying much of the load throughout the season due to injuries of upper classmen, I was impressed with their improvement and durability. The guys do a lot during the year on top of practice and it's amazing that they make it through the battle. I very much look forward to building on what we've learned this year. With several new recruits, I can see us being more competitive with ASU than ever before.



## Husky History

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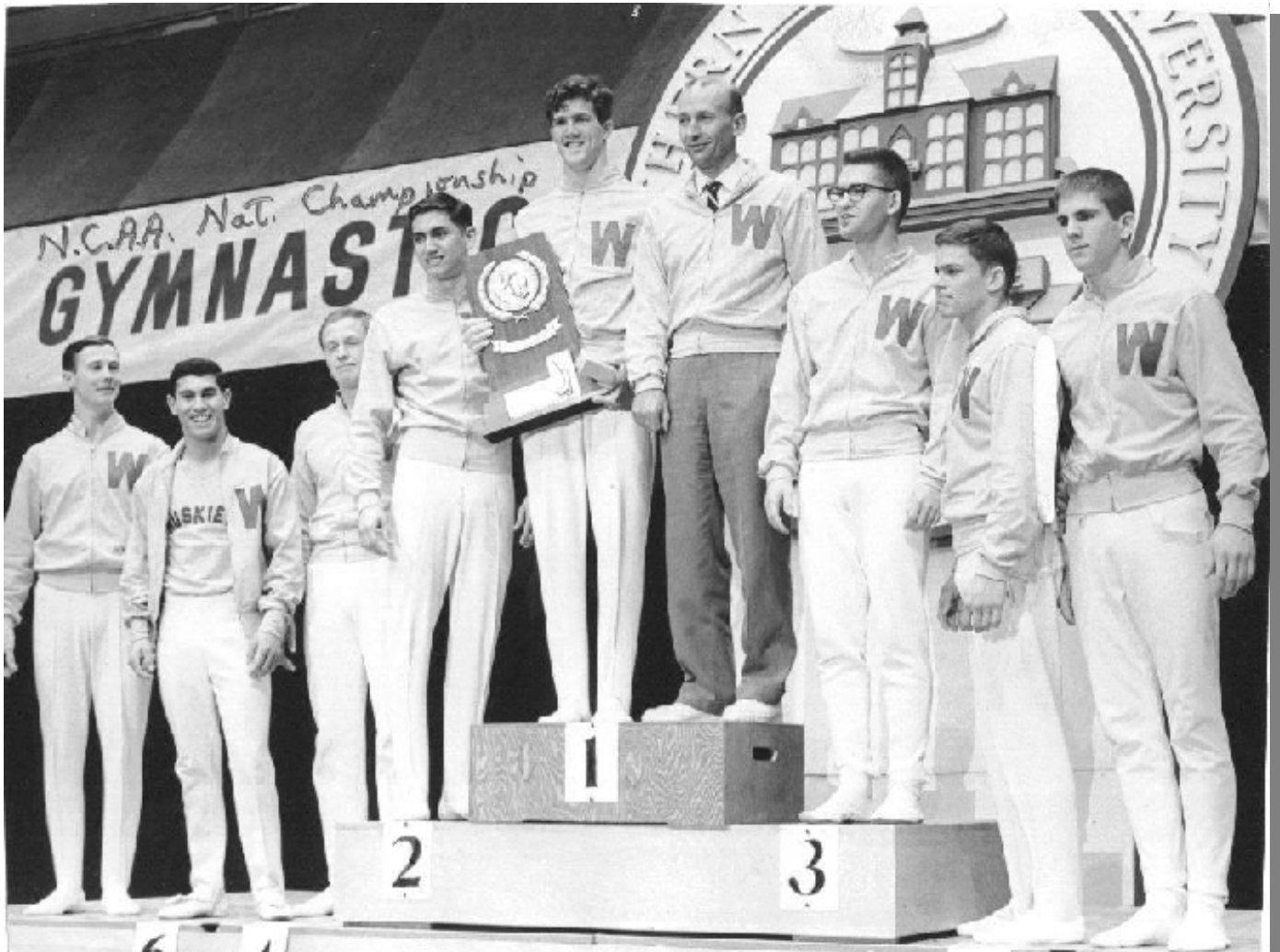
nothing about. We had eight men on our team, the smallest team I ever had; they had 18 or 20. It was a meet between a team with mostly all round and multiple event participants against one with many specialists. They were very confident and I could tell they were looking past us to the nationals. We surprised them and won 64 to 56. Of the eight members of our team seven had grown up and learned their gymnastics within a twenty-mile radius of the U. of W.

Beating Iowa State got us to the national championship hosted by Southern Illinois Univ. Penn. State had won their Eastern region and had then defeated the Mid-East champion. The national championship was determined by a dual meet between Penn. State

and Washington. We were finally beaten by a score of 68 ½ to 51 ½ but what fun we had for four week-ends in a row progressing to the finals.

A post script to this most exciting season has haunted me ever since. I made a major coaching decision after beating Iowa State that may have cost us the national championship. Our second best all rounder, Mike Flansaas, had been ineligible winter quarter. (Bob Hall was our best). Mike became eligible at the end of winter quarter and since the nationals fell in spring quarter he could have competed but if he did it would cost him a full year of eligibility. I have had second thoughts about not including Mike to save that year for Mike many times. The opportunity to win a national team championship doesn't come along very often.

### 1965 NATIONALS



Left-right: Mike Lovell (all round, Highline HS), Ric Fonceca (trampoline and rings, Franklin HS), Steve Lovell (horizontal bar, Highline HS), Jim David (trampoline, floor, vault, UW Extension Classes), Bob Hall (all round, State of Illinois), Eric Hughes (Coach), Gene Jensen, (P-bars, vault, Renton HS), Mark Buckingham (all round, Highline HS)

## Jeff Johnson:: Still Going Strong...Literally

by Paul Roggenkamp

A few weeks ago, I was thinking about the fact that Jeff Johnson, former National Ring Champion and 8th Place winner on the Rings at the 2002 World Championships, is still working out to improve and increase the value of his routine and remain competitive in his event at the World Championship level. Jeff is 28 years old, with a full time job as a chemical engineer for the Boeing Company working in Fuels Research. He has reached the pinnacle of his athletic specialty, yet he is motivated and determined to set the standard even higher and continue to compete at the highest level in this sport. WHY??? What is the motivation and fire that burns inside him to drive him when most of his contemporaries are out of the sport or on the sidelines watching?? I had the distinct honor of talking with Jeff about this while watching the 2004 WA State Boys Gymnastics Championships at UW. What follows is a candid interview with Jeff about his willingness to accept the challenge of more strenuous standards and competition at the world championship level.

**At what age did you decide that gymnastics was a high priority in your life?**

"I really decided during my junior and senior years in high school that it was important to me and a way for me to be an individual achieving something that few others could achieve. I was a small kid with the desire to make my special mark...I saw that I could do that through gymnastics."

**What motivates you to work hard and compete at the highest level?** "In a way it is the fear of stopping; fear of failure is in our minds, but it is more a feeling of not performing as well as I'm capable...when I have achieved something, I want to keep going. I observe the competitors at the highest level and I know I can be there. When I go to the big meets, I know I can still compete with the best. I have never done a perfect routine and as long as I feel that I have never done my very

best, I am motivated to work harder to achieve that."

**What is this experience in gymnastics like for you?**

"It's a journey...training is hard work; it's not always fun. But when I look back on it, I'm glad I went through it. It is worthwhile in the end."

**Have you been encouraged by other people to continue your commitment to this sport?**

"I feel like a lot of people have worked hard...everyone works to make my life easier. Mark Russo, the boosters (WA Men's Gymnastics Foundation), parents, friends and so many others. I don't have to worry about other things, just working out. My parents and sister were always behind me 100%; they came to all my competitions and provided the stability in my life. I always knew they supported me all the way."

**Who was your hero or gymnastics idol when you were a kid starting out?**

"No one, I didn't have an idol or hero, I just looked at gymnastics as my own thing. I lacked confidence as a kid...I was shy and looking for an identity. Gymnastics gave me a special way to gain confidence."

**What has been your greatest challenge?** "The little things...the difference between success and failure is determined by the little things that you do everyday. Be there everyday...working out even when you're tired. The little things are the hardest and can't be overlooked, even in workouts. You can't just go through the motions; you must work turn by turn and maximize each turn. There are lots of challenges; job, life, workouts, and I was injured in a car accident and have rehabbed my fractured ankle...I wasn't going to let that determine my future in this sport."



Jeff at Worlds in Hungary

(Continued on page 5)

## Jeff Johnson

(Continued from page 4)

**Do you have special diet?** “Everyone has special little quirks...I always try to eat healthy. I don't worry about my weight...my body tells me what it needs and when it's ready.”

**Do you have any special training routine or regimen?** “Everyone has special training practices...mine includes physical therapy on my shoulders daily. I plan in advance each day's workout and set up for the week. I work routines and block out certain times for specific exercises. I try not to do random work unless I'm sick, injured or tired.”

**What words of wisdom and guidance would you give to young, aspiring gymnasts?** “Do the little things...stick with it. Everything you do today, you do for tomorrow. Be patient. The mundane, daily things, in the end, have all the meaning in the world. Have fun...after all, this is sport!”

**“...the difference between success and failure is determined by the little things that you do everyday.”**

**What has been your most memorable achievement?**

“Making it this long; I'm 28 years old at this level. Ten years

ago I never would have guessed that I could compete at this level.”

**How did you feel when you won the National Championship? Did you feel an overwhelming sense**

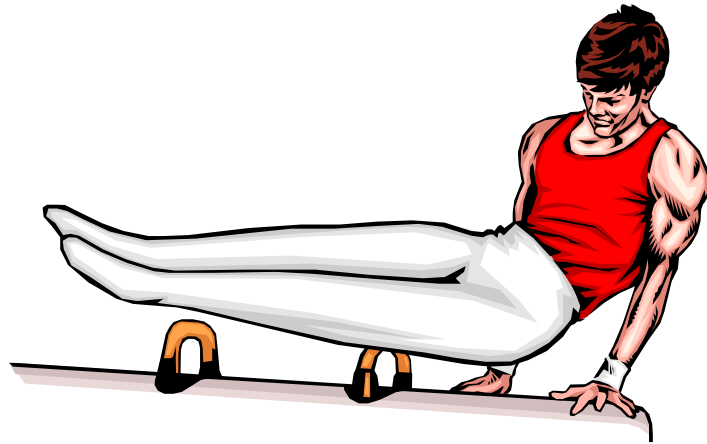
**of accomplishment and pride?** “I felt relief and a sense of belonging at that level...that I could compete at that level. I also felt added responsibility to keep going...it was not the end. The entire experience is progressive.”

**Has teamwork played a part in your gymnastics career or is it strictly individual effort and achievement?** “It is hard to work by myself; the support and camaraderie of the other guys is more than nice---it's essential. I do a lot of work alone, but, the guys are always behind me. They help spot me; they have different roles and I sense their expectations and, realistically, it helps to motivate me. People expect a certain performance and they would be disappointed if I didn't perform.”

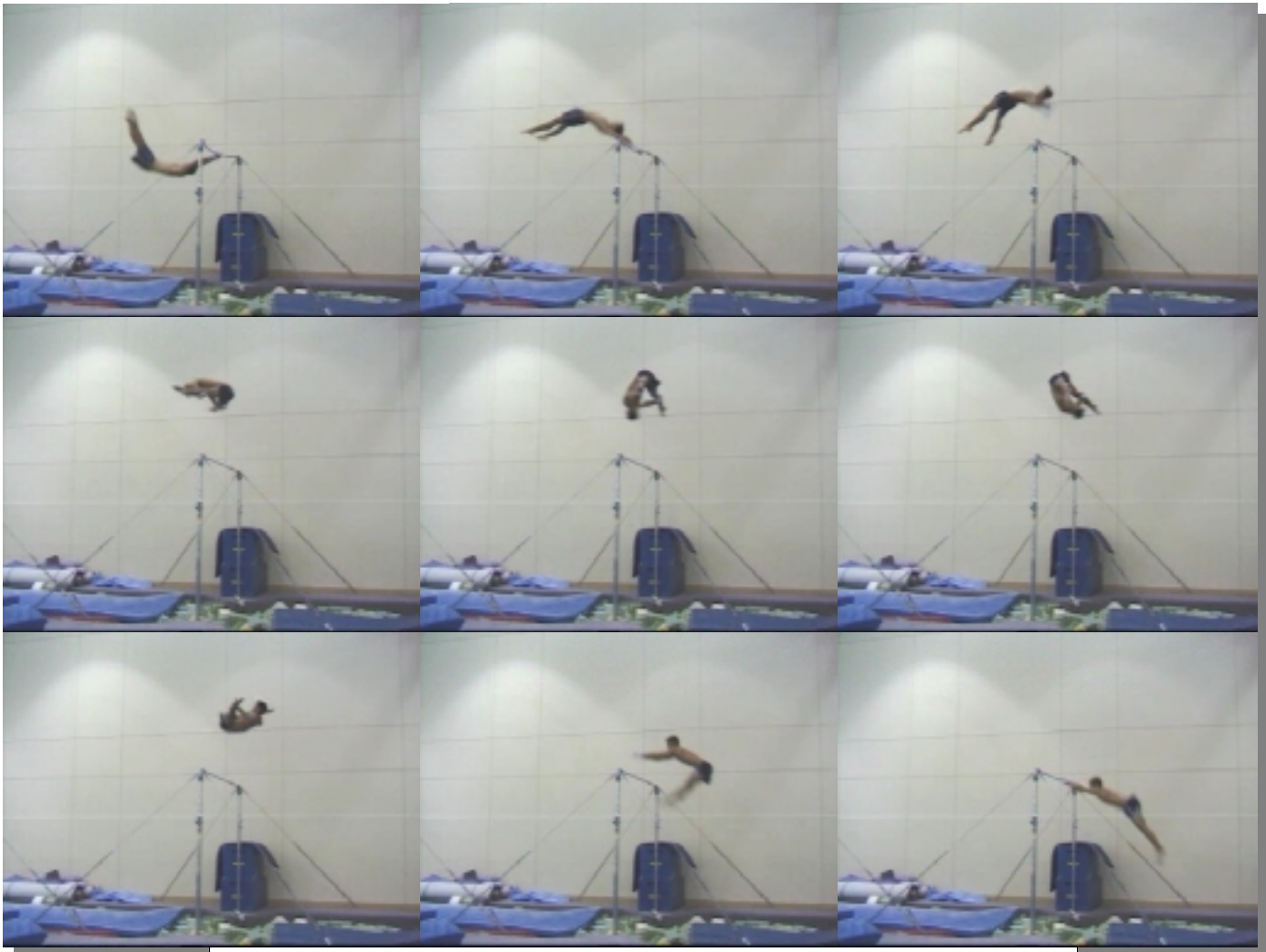
**What is your ultimate goal right now?** “2005 World Championships in Australia. I also want to stay healthy and determine when I retire...I don't want to have to quit due to injury or because I can no longer compete at the highest level. I want to make that decision on my terms.”

Reflecting on my conversation with Jeff, I was amazed that the foundation of his success and the motivation behind his desire to continue were rooted in the simple aspects of family, teamwork, fear of failure, and the perseverance to do the little things every day. Lofty goals and great achievement can result from the dedicated application of an athlete's fundamental principles and the selfless support of others.





### *Amazing New Skills*



WOW! Stanford's Cade Raggio performs a straddled Tkatchev with a front flip OVER the horizontal bar!

THANK YOU!

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

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

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Please join us for the 2004  
**Washington Men's Gymnastics**  
**Team Banquet**

Season re-cap! Slide Show! Dinner! Dessert!

*A chance to get together with friends  
from many eras of Husky Gymnastics*

**HOLD THE DATE!**

**Date: Sunday, 5/23/2004**

Time: 2:00pm

University of Washington

**Waterfront Activities Center** (just  
south of Husky Stadium)

Contact person: Mark Russo

Phone: 206-524-9480

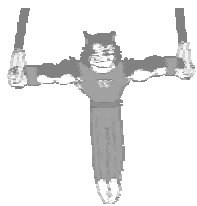
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In This Issue...

Season Review, Husky History, Banquet Invitation, and more...



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