

CAT SCRATCHES

Dec 2007
Vol. 10, #2

The Newsletter of The University of Arizona GymCats

Happy Holidays!



Dear Friends, Alumni & Boosters,

As you can see by the illustration above, there is a new gym on campus! We moved in to our new facility on December 13th and the team was amazed. Certainly one of the finest facilities in the nation, we all feel very grateful to Jim Livengood, Rocky LaRose, Scott Mackenzie, John Perrin (and the departed Chris Del Conte). It is a well known fact that The University of Arizona is by far one of the best places anywhere to be a collegiate athlete and that goes double for being a female athlete (as documented by Sports Illustrated). It is amazing how much effort was put in to give the gymnastics program an incredible facility to train in. The entire program can't thank the department enough.

The gym has many new changes, both from an equipment standpoint and from an aesthetic standpoint. We have added another loose foam pit to an extended vault runway, put the Tumbl-Trak in-ground, and rearranged the other existing pits to allow for much more efficient training environment. The gym has been carpeted in red, to replace the blue, and with new graphics, the place is very bright. For everyone who has visited and looked over the Gymnastics Hall of Fame on our south wall, we are in the process of redoing it for a much more impressive display. We are also planning an academic award display along the west wall. Overall, it is a much larger workout area, 10,000 sq. ft. that will allow us to train effectively while adding new equipment as needed. It is due to be completely finished sometime around March. Make sure you stop by and visit to see the new digs!

Team Halloween Party This year's team Halloween Party was one of the best in a long while. Maybe it is just that this team likes to play dress-up because the costumes and themes were pretty impressive.



Newest Members of the Family We are very excited to welcome four new members to the GymCat family. These four athletes will join the team next fall and I know that you will all enjoy their gymnastics.

Rebecca Cardenas Rebecca is a true All-Around gymnast. She has high level, 10.0 Start Value routines on all four events. I expect her to immediately add depth and compete for the line-up on every apparatus.

Rebecca is a multi-time qualifier to the J.O. National Championships. Rebecca is traveling from the tropical climate of Honolulu to pursue her collegiate career here in the Desert. She currently trains and competes for Hawaiian Island Twisters in Honolulu.

Deanna Graham Deanna is a home grown girl from right here in Tucson. It seems like we have been watching her grow as a competitor for a long time as she has been a long-time camper at our camps. Deanna is a very powerful athlete and I am sure she will impress everyone who watches her. She is the current Junior Olympic Vault Champion as well as being the silver medalist on Floor. She will definitely add punch to those two events and is also very talented on Beam and Bars. She was named the Arizona State Optional Gymnast of the Year in 2007. Deanna trains and competes for Springs Gymnastics here in Tucson.

Katie Matusik Katie hails from McKinney, TX and will be joining her brother as an Arizona athlete. Katie is a very elegant, classical gymnast who also possesses a high level of difficulty. Her artistic style will certainly be a hit with the fans. She will immediately impact the Floor, Beam and Bars line-ups. Katie is a three time qualifier to the J.O. National Championships and placed 4th on Beam in 2007. Katie trains at W.O.G.A. in Plano, TX.

Jillian O'Neal Jillian is the next in a long line of GymCat family who have come from Arizona Sunrays (Tania Schneider, Heidi Hornbeek, Nikki Beyschau, Amanda Goins, Danyra Varela, Stevie Fanning, Brina Weissman). It might be said that Jillian's best event is bars but she is also very talented on beam and floor. She brings a high degree of difficulty on all three of those apparatus and will most certainly earn competition time on all of them. Jillian is also a J.O. National Championship qualifier.

It's good to be us

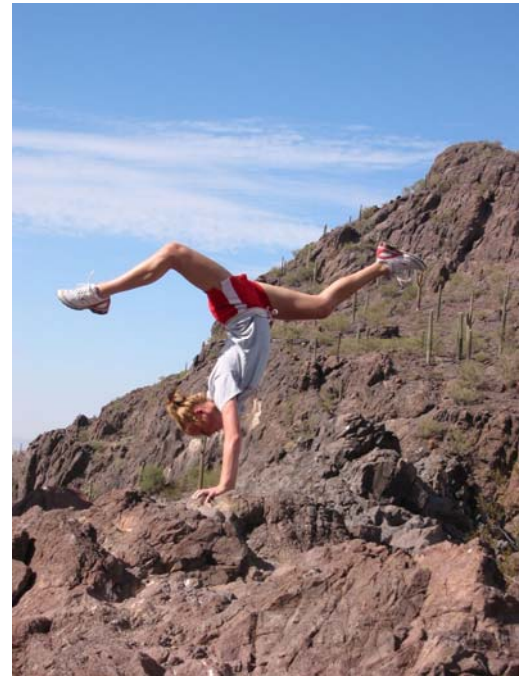
The team has been training well the past month and aside from a few injuries, the routines are coming together. I decided to break the normal training regimen and take the team on a difficult, technical mountain climb/hike for some cross-training. So we headed up the freeway to Picacho Peak, a stone peak that arose from volcanic action. We have all driven by it many times, too and from, the Phoenix area but never discovering the national park that surrounds it. It was not lost on any of us that cross-training in mid-November is a luxury that not very



many teams can experience. That is just one reason why it's good to be us. We ascended on Hunter Trail, a very technical climb, with cabling and safety fencing to try and prevent a quick fall off of the side! It was pretty physically demanding and if you didn't like being on a wall with a 1000' drop below you, this was not your idea of fun. But it was mine! Sometimes the team just has to put up with me!



At the top!



Suzanne, typical gymnast

In Memoriam The Arizona gymnastics community and Tucson suffered a big loss as Kim Bird, coach and judge, passed away on November 19th from complications arising from Valley Fever. Many of you know Kim and certainly know of his years of judging our program as well as producing national level gymnasts at his club, Tumbleweeds. I first met Kim only a few months after my arrival here in Tucson. Mr. Gault and I went over to look over the new club he was opening and offer suggestions back in November of 1990. Since then I have become not just a professional colleague of Kim's, but certainly his friend. Kim was a U of A graduate and was a member of the men's gymnastics team until the program was dropped. After that he joined the cheerleading squad until his graduation. I really had come to respect Kim because of unwavering fairness in judging. He wasn't intimidated by coaches and scored it as he saw it. And so it was that regardless of the outcome of any meet, we could laugh and talk about it after the season. Tumbleweeds was Kim's creation, his passion and the hundreds of Tumbleweeds gymnasts that he produced will be his legacy. He was a very kind and giving person that was always willing to help any way he could. He provided a viable training option for our team while our facility was being expanded.

I knew Kim for 17 years and it is still a little surreal to think that I won't see him around at gymnastics meets anymore. He certainly made an impact on numerous people and I am sure that we all will always remember him when we think of our time with U of A Gymnastics.

Intrasquads Our first intrasquad was held on November 30th at Tumbleweeds. After a semester filled with unique obstacles, it was good to get some judges in front of the team. The team is always pretty excited/nervous for this time of year – it means that the reality of competition is just around the corner. This intrasquad was an evaluation of Vault and Beam. Danielle, Melanie, Rachelle and Suzanne all would be held out because they were

recovering from injuries/surgeries so that left us with nine athletes to perform. Vault was first and due to the short nature of the event, I had the team go twice. We have the potential of a very, very strong vault team. The judges were stiff with their scores, which was just fine with me. It will help us to continue to improve for our first competition in January. The fact that we are already on a 49 pace for Vault confirms my opinion that this will be a strong event for us.

On the other hand, the Beam team will grow and develop over the season. Last year, we were blessed with a great Beam team, to the point that if we had a fall, never-the-less, counted a fall on beam, I was genuinely surprised. Well, a good portion of that team has retired and this year's team is much younger. I believe they will be just a good, I just can't take it for granted right now. Each time they are put under pressure, they get better at hitting under pressure and the intrasquad was the best yet. We are not sure who exactly will be competing on January 11, but in the next month, a lot of things will become clear.

Saturday, December 15 was the day of our second intrasquad. We had only been back in our gym for two days so in reality, this was unfamiliar equipment to the team. It didn't matter though as we needed to push forward to January and the first meet. There were some changes from the first round in the lineup. Karin was diagnosed with a stress reaction (a precursor to a stress fracture) in her leg and we are treating it as a stress fracture for right now. That only allowed her to perform on bars and miss floor. This was also Danielle's return to performing for judges. It has been a long way back for Danielle from her surgeries and even though she is still a ways away, she is making remarkable improvement daily. I truly believe that she will compete on all four events this year and I know that she will be saluting on January 11.

We only had seven athletes perform on bars and the bar team was under a lot of pressure to perform. Overall, the routines were good, not great. There were a lot of little deductions that add up. Beamer performed her new bar dismount, double layout/full-out, but unfortunately had to put her hand down. Her second routine wasn't quite the same but if she gets it together, it could be great. Alexis, Miranda, and Sarah all hit but had deductions that they wish they had back. Erica had a fall on her dismount which crippled her score. I am confident that the routines will be ready for our first competition but the scoring was a reality check for the bar team.

After the first intrasquad, Alexis completely re-worked her beam routine and performed the second version for the judges. The judges liked the changes and Alexis' abilities as a beam worker for the team continue to rise. As everyone expected (maybe except herself) Danielle hit her beam routine. Who cares that it has been nine grueling months of rehab and only recently began supporting her own body weight with her arm above her head. She has a very difficult routine and hit all the hard stuff only to miss a dance connection. I guess a little rust is to be expected also!

We only had seven gymnasts perform on floor as well. The routines went pretty well overall. We have difficult tumbling in most of the routines and the team is still getting their endurance up to par. No falls on the double back last passes and for the most part, the big first passes were good also. Our big thing was missing special requirement connections that really lowered the scores. When Karin, Danielle, Suzanne, and the rest of the injured reserve return to active status, I am confident we will be a quality floor team. Right now we have a few days left of this semester to train before the break. After that, we will

take a break and return to Tucson for an intense two weeks before our first meet.

	Vault 1	Vault 2	Beam	Beam 2	Bars	Floor
Erica Anderson	9.45	9.45	9.2		9.2	
Beamer Bergeson	9.65	9.6	9.8		9.7	9.7
Colleen Fisher	9.775	9.75	9.625			9.675
Alexis Greene	9.775	9.85	9.375	9.625	9.55	9.65
Danielle Hicks				9.625		
Miranda Russell	9.625	9.775	9.5		9.65	9.75
Kristen Schmieder	9.5	9.5	9.575		9.55	8.7
Sarah Specht	9.675	9.85	8.7		9.6	9.725
Bree Workman	9.6	9.875	9.375			9.35
Karin Wurm	9.725	9.725	9.725		9.825	

Holiday Party After finals were finally over and the dust had settled on both the load-in of the new gym and the intrasquads, the team got together to reflect at our annual Holiday Party. The team is a very close, tight-knit group and I myself am honored to coach them. It was good to get together this one last time outside the gym before we head into the season. It is good to be us.



Pre-Season Rankings Just prior to this issue being mailed, the pre-season rankings came out and have Arizona at #12. It is nice to get the respect from our peers and we will work hard to live up to it.

Alumni Sightings A number of alumni were around for Homecoming. Coming in from out of town were **Monica Bisordi, Katie (Johnson) Ranne, Jamie Schell, Kristine Harper, Stevie Fanning, Erin Muirhead, Amanda (Goins) Dziawura** and **Mary Reiss**. Of the local alumni **Jessamyn Salter, Lisha Stone** and of course **Jamie Holton** were in attendance. Just before Homecoming, I had a chance to catch up with **Randi (Liljenquist) Acosta** about her new daughter and everything else new. She is now in the business of selling jewelry which allows her to work mostly from home. I see **Alli Hay** often as she is currently coaching at Tumbleweeds. She is coming in to train her gymnasts as the team is leaving the gym. She still works at Raytheon during the day. **Randi (Liljenquist) Acosta, Jessamyn Salter, Jamie Holton, Alli Hay, Meagan Killpack, Jamie (Duce) Quintero, Sarah Galecki, Mary Reiss, Kara (Fry) Meyer, Robin Hurowitz, and Nancy (Altmann) Jones** were all in attendance at the memorial service for Kim Bird. **Jessamyn Salter, Kara Fry, and Aubrey Kelly** were at the intrasquads. As the Holidays approached, I have been able to catch up with **Rose (McLaughlin) Neale, Cami Banholzer, Katie (Johnson) Ranne, and Lisa Heckel**.

Boosters Hopefully you have received the ticket mailer sent out by the Athletic Department by the time you read this. I really hope that you all can make it out and cheer on the team. We will be trying to implement some new items to the website and the competitions to make them exciting. As always, you all make it possible with your continued support.

If you would like to donate, just send a check made out to "University of Arizona / GymCats" and send it to me here at the office. I will get it to the proper people. Your donation is tax deductible and greatly appreciated.

Cyberspace Last season, the live webcast of our meets went over well. Once again, the meets as well as much more multimedia content will be available. Check out the AllAccess on the Official University of Arizona Athletics Website (www.arizonaathletics.com) for more information. If you would like to see the full color version of the newsletter, it will be on the main website. It will also be on the same site as the archives, (www.u.arizona.edu/~ryden/gym.html). In fact there is an entire segment of GymCat supporters who receive this newsletter electronically. Please contact me if you would like to be put on that list.

Happy Holidays and a Wonderful New Year...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill". The signature is stylized with a large, looping "B" and a simple "ill" following it.