

## Blaine Wilson: Going for Gold

Blaine Wilson, 23, has had an incredible gymnastics career thus far. He has won two USA Gymnastics National Championships, two NCAA National Championships, the Visa American Cup, has been on two World Championships Teams and one Olympic Team. He finished 10th all-around at both the 1996 Olympics and the 1997 World Championships. Peter Kormann spoke with Blaine after the World Championships and he shared these thoughts with us.

**Kormann:** You look at all that you've achieved in just a little more than a year and that's a lot to do in a short time. What is it that allows you to withstand that much training and competition?

**Wilson:** I like to compete as much as possible. I think the more you compete, the better off you are. You just have to work out smart to compete more than 30 competitions in a year. You have to take care of your body. Mentally, you have to believe you can do anything you set your mind to.

**Kormann:** After the Olympics, most athletes experience a let down and find it hard to keep going. You didn't have a break. What is it that allows you to keep going?

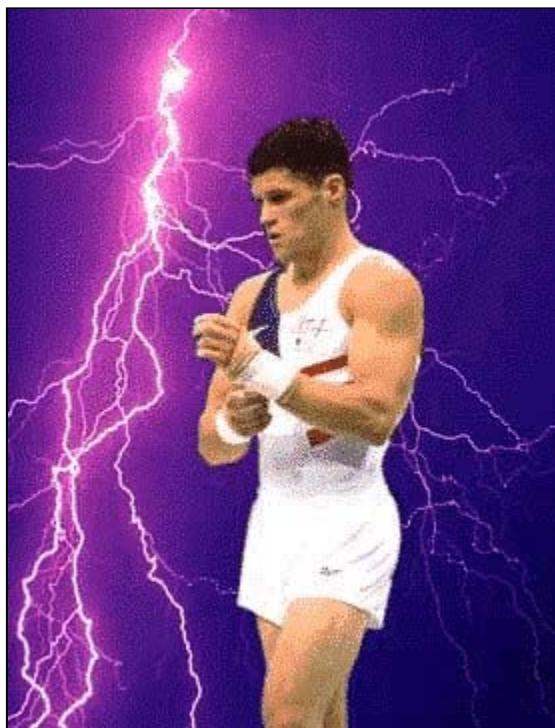
**Wilson:** Actually, I was looking forward to taking a break after the Games. I thought I'd finish my college career and be done. But things went better than I thought they would. I didn't feel as tired of gymnastics as I thought I would. Things have just gotten progressively better over the last year. I'm going to work out as much as possible over the next two-and-a-half years for the 2000 Olympics.

**Kormann:** I've talked to John Roethlisberger and John Macready and they both say they want to win a team medal. What are your thoughts on this topic?

**Wilson:** Yes, I want to win a team medal too, but I also think we want to earn respect, as well. Over the last three big meets, 1995 World Championships, 1996 Olympic Games and the 1997 World Championships, I think we have earned respect. I think it will continue to grow and we're going to become a better team.

**Kormann:** What do we need to do to win a medal at a World Championships or Olympic Games?

**Wilson:** I think we need more difficulty. We only missed one routine at World Championships but we didn't have enough difficulty. I'm going to try to get all my routines to a 10.0 start value. That's what we all need to focus on. If you have to take a big skill out to hit your routine then do it, but we should all be shooting for greater difficulty.



**Kormann:** What do you think the U.S. coaches need to be doing to ensure the U.S. earns a medal?

**Wilson:** They need to take a little more control over what gymnasts are doing outside of the gym to make sure that practices inside the gym are good. For example, gymnasts should be getting enough rest when they're not in the gym. I'm not talking about diet because everyone has their own eating habits. I'm talking about motivating the gymnasts when they're in the gym. The coaches should be saying "do you want to be good, then let's go." The coaches should also try something different if things aren't working well.

**Kormann:** So you look to the coach to give you a spark in the gym when things are not going right?

**Wilson:** Always. I figure the coach is the one that should be having me do things that I don't necessarily want to do, but I know I should do. Without someone telling me to do those things, chances are I wouldn't do them!

**Kormann:** Two years ago you won your first National Championships. This year you won your second. What was it like going into Championships this year?

**Wilson:** It was a little scary with the new Code. I didn't expect to win. I hadn't done as many sets as I probably should have going in. But that meet was so exciting and it felt great to win. It was my best win yet.

**Kormann:** You said you were scared and didn't expect to win, but yet you won by three and a half points. It wasn't even close. What was it that allowed you to win?

**Wilson:** I think going back to school after the Olympics and competing a lot helped me. I had a bigger jump on most of the guys because they went on the tour.

**Kormann:** What were your expectations going into the World Championships?

**Wilson:** I thought we could win the meet. I was watching workouts and attitudes of the other gymnasts and they just didn't look that good. We walked into the gym and we were a team, we were motivated and we wanted to work out.

**Kormann:** How do you explain only missing one routine? Even as the head coach, I wouldn't have guessed that you guys would have hit that many routines.

**Wilson:** It's just an attitude. It's a mental mindset. You pick one or two thoughts to help you get through your routines.

**Kormann:** Your first coach was Dennis McIntyre. What were some of the good things that Dennis did as a coach?

**Wilson:** I was 7 or 8 and I started out with another gymnast, Drew Durbin. Coach McIntyre pushed us towards doing more skills and harder stuff. When we were scared, he would encourage us to do it anyway. He wasn't negative, but he was very stern. He would tell us what we were going to do and when to do it. We would have to do things we didn't want to do, but that's the job of the coach.

**Kormann:** What would Coach McIntyre do if you missed a practice?

**Wilson:** (Laughs) I never missed a practice. I did get kicked out of the gym a few times because of a bad attitude, but I never just missed practice for no reason.

**Kormann:** Give me a reason why Coach McIntyre would throw you out of the gym.

**Wilson:** At times I had a bad attitude. I'd say, "I can't do that and I'm not going to." I also got kicked out of the gym for slapping the horse and throwing things. What I've learned is that you have to find a different way to control your anger. I'm 23 and just now figuring out how to handle it.

**Kormann:** What should a coach do if he has a young boy who is talented but has a bad attitude or can't control his anger?

**Wilson:** Well, throwing me out of the gym was good because I loved to work out. It was the worst thing you could do to me. It may not work on other guys because they might not care. I guess coaches just need to find something that works for their athletes.

**Kormann:** What other advice would you give to a coach who has a young boy who wants to be a good gymnast?

**Wilson:** Make sure the gymnast moves forward and progresses. Gymnasts always need to learn skills. Coaches should also keep an interest in what they're doing and keep it FUN. Look at the other sports like football, baseball, and soccer. In these sports, the athletes are always doing something like running, passing, catching, throwing, etc. You can't have the gymnasts standing around because that's boring. If they're capable of something, then make them believe they can do it. Sometimes you may have to push a gymnast to do something. If you're a good coach, you can talk a gymnast into doing anything.

**Kormann:** You've had a great career thus far, but how does your career end? What is your dream?

**Wilson:** To win a team medal, hopefully a gold. This would also help me to win an all-around or event medal. That would be a pretty sweet ending!

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