





## **MEN'S ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS**

### *Overview*

The Men's Program brought in new leadership in 2020, with the hiring of Jason Woodnick as its new Vice-President in February. After a successful Winter Cup event and gold medals at the FIG Apparatus World Cup in Melbourne and the American Cup, the U.S. men were poised to have a great competition in Tokyo. However, the COVID-19 pandemic brought about the cancellation of all domestic and international events for the remainder of 2020, including the postponement of the Tokyo Olympic Games to 2021.

The pandemic caused gym closures across the country and university programs to be shut down for an extended period of time or dropped indefinitely. Our athletes were left without the ability to train for months. Most, if not all of our top athletes, including our OPTC residents were forced to leave their current programs to find consistent access to a gym. Our entire men's program, and USA gymnastics, was disrupted for all of 2020. It was not until January 2021 that our athletes were able to resume consistent training programs to prepare for the 2021 competitive season.

Our top competitors, Russia, China, and Japan never stopped training during this global pandemic. In fact, those teams improved greatly over the past year while most of the U.S. men were struggling to find a place to keep in shape. Through so much uncertainty, our athletes and coaches showed great resilience and determination in keeping focus on the Tokyo Olympics.

High Performance Staff realized every athlete's preparation situation was different depending on local health department guidelines. Given this, we needed to amend our selection procedures to be more inclusive and accommodating by allowing all those who qualified to Winter Cup in February a direct path to the U.S. Championships in June. By doing so, we were able to protect the progressions and health of those most affected and/or displaced during the pandemic, while also increasing the number of participants at the U.S. Championships.

While not everyone was able to participate in Winter Cup, it was a great way to start 2021 with both our Junior and Senior athletes competing for the first time in over a year. This was the first time in a year we were able to select a new Senior National Team. We needed to increase the number of Senior National Team members from 12 to 18 (6 unfunded) due to the World Championships also being held the same year as the Olympic Games. We also expanded our invitation to the Senior National Team camp to include 22 athletes in Indianapolis following the NCAA Championships in April.

The Senior National Team camp in Indianapolis was our only chance to bring everyone together in preparation for U.S. Championships, Pan American Championships and Olympic Trials. This was the first Senior National Team camp since March of 2020, and it allowed the HP staff to evaluate the athletes' current gymnastics status, overall health, and preparation plans moving forward. The camp also allowed us to have open discussions with the athletes and coaches about Selection Procedures amendments, National Team Funding criteria and World Team Selection.

In May, USAG hosted the first-ever combined Men's and Women's Development Program National Championships. Over 900 boys competed at this event from Levels 8, 9, and 10. We named new Level 8 and 9 Junior Elite National Teams for the first time since 2019. Those athletes will be eligible for international competitions and will be invited to multiple Junior National Team training camps.

The first week of June 2021 had finally arrived and new Senior and Level 10 Junior National Champions were crowned in Fort Worth, TX. New Junior Elite Level 10 National Team and Senior National team were also named. All members of the Senior National Team would compete at Olympic Trials, as well as one accepted petition.

Five athletes were unable to compete at the U.S. Championships as they were in Brazil participating in the Senior Pan American Championships, and therefore were automatically named to the Senior National Team. The Pan Am Championships was the final opportunity to qualify a +1 individual quota spot to the Tokyo Olympics. Paul Juda placed second in the AA event and secured the additional quota, totaling five (5) athletes who would compete at the Tokyo Olympic Games. The cancellation of the All-Around World Cup series eliminated a second opportunity for a +1 spot to be earned.

The five athletes who participated at the Pan Am Championships, as well as 16 additional Senior athletes from U.S. Championships were named to the Senior National Team and qualified directly to the Olympic Trials. The Trials would determine the Olympic Team, reserve athletes, National Team funding and the World Team Squad. By having 21 athletes at Trials, we were able to allow our top all-around athletes and individual event specialists to compete to earn their opportunity in Tokyo. At the conclusion of Olympic Trials, the Men's Olympic Team was named as follows:

- Brody Malone
- Sam Mikulak
- Yul Moldauer
- Shane Wiskus
- Alec Yoder (+1 NOC quota individual athlete)

### *2020 Olympic Games*

The US Men's Team had ranked fourth at the 2018 and 2019 World Championships. Our goal for Tokyo was a top three team placement, but we needed to increase our difficulty (D-Score) to be able to make that a reality. The onset of the COVID pandemic drastically hurt our ability to increase D-scores and close the gap between Russia, China, and Japan. We watched as the top three countries improved their difficulty while our athletes were displaced for months. This meant that a team podium finish would be very challenging.

In the qualification event, the team had an excellent competition finishing in fourth place. Brody Malone and Sam Mikulak qualified to AA finals and a total of four athletes qualified to Event Finals. Alec Yoder, who was our event specialist on Pommel Horse, Yul Moldauer on Floor Exercise, Sam Mikulak on Parallel Bars and Brody Malone on Horizontal Bar. This was a huge victory for the U.S. Men's Team and surpassed our expectations.

Team Finals is 3-up, 3-count, which leaves no room for error. The U.S. men were perfect on the night, and solidly in fourth place, until the very last rotation and last routine on Floor Exercise. We counted a fall which subsequently dropped our team to fifth place. The U.S. men hit 17/18 routines on the night.

While this will be the final Olympic Games for Sam Mikulak, it was the first for the rest of the team athletes, who now have Olympic experience to build upon as they look toward 2024.

In All-Around finals, Brody Malone continued to show poise and consistency in only the second Senior international competition of his young career, by finishing in 10<sup>th</sup> place. Sam Mikulak, competing in his third Olympic Games, finished the night in 12<sup>th</sup> place. Russia, China, and Japan continued to dominate the AA competition taking the top six positions.

The U.S. men concluded their Olympic Games in Event Finals with all four men finishing in the top six of their respective finals. Brody Malone finished just off the podium in fourth place on the Horizontal Bar. Alec Yoder finished in sixth place on the Pommel Horse, Yul Moldauer finished in sixth place on the Floor Exercise, and Sam Mikulak finished in sixth place on the Parallel Bars.

Overall, while the U.S. men did not achieve any Olympic medals, this will be considered a highly successful Olympic Games for our program. There were countless setbacks in 2020 that all of our athletes had to overcome to be ready for these Games and considering that four out of five of our athletes were at their first Olympic Games, the results were extremely impressive. As the core of our team will be continuing on to 2024, they now see how our team needs to improve to compete for a podium position in Paris.

### *Leadership*

Stefanie Korepin, Chief Programs Officer  
Jason Woodnick, Vice President of Men's Artistic Program  
Lisa Mendel, Men's Artistic Program Manager  
Steve Przechera, Athletic Trainer  
Dr. David Kruse, Team Physician  
Dusty Ritter, Development Program Coordinator  
Raj Bhavsar, Development Program Assistant  
Men's Program Committee

### *Senior Initiatives*

The Senior National Team (NT) grew in 2021 to be more inclusive of athletes vying for the Olympics and World Championships. The men's HP staff agrees that including more athletes in program discussions, training camps, and selection processes is beneficial for the program. Additionally, having more NT athletes provides a deeper pool for international assignments. Ideally, we would be able provide funding to a larger Senior National Team as currently only 12 NT spots are designated as "funded" spots. If no more funding is available, then we will be forced to continue naming additional athletes to "unfunded" NT positions.

In 2021, a Senior Development Team was created with a group of 18-20 year old athletes who are identified as potential Senior NT athletes. Those athletes will be incorporated into Senior NT meetings and discussions as well as being invited to Senior NT camps.

One significant initiative for 2022 will be developing a program to incentivize increased D-scores throughout the next three years. This program will be used at domestic championship competitions as part of NT selection. If we are to challenge Russia, China, and Japan in 2024, we must improve our

difficulty across the entire program. Tying D-scores to our NT selection process will provide the incentive for our athletes to challenge the top countries.

### *NCAA*

While the Men's Program experienced major challenges in 2020 and 2021 brought on by the pandemic, it also allowed us to introduce several new initiatives that we expect will be extremely positive for our program. The NCAA system and USOPTC resident athlete program are the two main pipelines for Senior National Team athletes, and USA Gymnastics made it a priority to assist both when the future seemed uncertain.

NCAA Men's Gymnastics programs have been declining for many years and once the pandemic hit, it was only a matter of months before two additional programs were lost. The University of Iowa and University of Minnesota made the decision to cut Men's Gymnastics in 2020. This brought the number of NCAA programs down to 13. The Men's Program leadership as well as USA Gymnastics' CEO spoke with collegiate stakeholders and various NGB's to see what had been done in the past for other sports in similar situations. Ultimately, the decision was made to bring in professional collegiate consultants to help sustain our current programs and even grow the sport into new colleges and universities.

USAG hired The Pictor Group in January, and within months they had established the key factors needed to sustain our current programs and strategies for adding new men's gymnastics programs. They facilitated strategic planning sessions with NCAA coaches to determine important rules and competition format changes, new sustainability concepts and models, and championships partnerships. In addition, they have targeted Division II and III institutions, who are looking to grow enrollment through new sports, as great opportunities to start men's gymnastics programs.

The Pictor Group has had discussions with multiple school presidents, athletic directors, and conference leaders. In August, USAG announced that Greenville University (IL) and Simpson College (IA) will both be adding men's gymnastics programs in 2022. These are the first new NCAA men's gymnastics programs in many years, and they will hopefully be the catalysts for an influx of new NCAA programs. With all of the work that has been done in 2021, and more potential successes on the horizon, we see the importance of investing in this consultancy position for at least one more year. Ultimately, we would like to bring on a USAG staff position that will be focused solely on the growth of NCAA gymnastics as it is vital for our sport to provide collegiate gymnastics opportunities to our athletes.

### *Resident Program*

The men's resident program at the USOPTC is led by Head Coach, Andriy Stepanchenko. Former Assistant Coach, Josh Loeser left the program to become Head Coach at the US Air Force Academy, leaving the resident program without a second coach. In 2021, the resident program added two athletes, bringing the total to nine current or former National Team members. The need for an Assistant Coach was evident and became even more necessary once COVID forced strict training guidelines at the OPTC that kept on-site and off-site cohorts from training together. Andriy was coaching four trainings a day over the course of 14-hour days. USAG realized that Andriy and the athletes needed more support, and we were able to bring in Konstantin (Kostya) Kolesnikov as Assistant Coach through the Tokyo Olympics as a contracted position. Kostya has been the Assistant Coach at the University of Minnesota for the previous 13 years and has extremely impressive technical and leadership skills that will only help

to improve the quality of the men's resident program. We know that a strong coaching staff will be highly attractive to potential resident athletes in the future and, therefore, we need to continue to invest in ensuring we have the best possible coaching staff working for our resident program.

In September, the men's resident program will lose Brandi Long as their ATC as she is moving to a new position. It is a priority to replace Brandi as soon as possible as having a full-time ATC with the resident program proved to be extremely beneficial to those athletes and our entire National Team as a whole.

### *Junior Initiatives*

The Junior Program has incorporated two new and very important initiatives in 2021. The first initiative came from recognizing that our country is lacking in difficulty as compared to the top countries in the world. If we are to improve our difficulty as a country, it must be done at the Junior level so that by the time those athletes reach the Senior level, they are already competitive internationally. Our HP staff made a decision to incorporate D-scores into our National Team selection at the Junior level. Through a combination of overall ranking at Championship events combined with D-scores, we feel that we will capture the entire spectrum of Junior athletes for our National Team and develop these athletes into internationally competitive Seniors.

The second initiative started in 2021 was to have USAG medical staff more consistently involved with the junior athletes. Our medical staff created a holistic medical questionnaire for each Junior NT athlete to complete prior to attending training camps. This allows the staff to be more proactive in preparing to treat each athlete as soon as the camps begin and establish a follow up process once camps are over. Once we are able to hold Junior camps at the OPTC, we plan to involve the Sports Performance Team and introduce the Junior athletes to sports psych, nutrition, and strength and conditioning. This will provide a more holistic approach to the health and wellness of our junior athletes.

COVID has cost our junior athletes two full years of international competition experience. This has been a significant loss both in terms of experience and motivation for those athletes. All international events in 2020 were canceled and only the Junior Pan American Championships have taken place in 2021, in which we placed first in the team and AA competitions. One major goal for 2022 will be to ensure we are sending our Junior NT athletes to as many international events as possible. The HP staff has made it a vital initiative to get our junior athletes competing frequently on the international stage so that they understand the level of gymnastics being done around the world and are prepared for international competitions when they reach the senior level.

Currently, the Junior Program is overseen by the Men's Development Program Coordinator, who is heavily involved in the Development Program structure, rules, and objectives. This position also directs and monitors the Junior National Team program. In reality, this is two positions combined into one. Therefore, in 2022, the Men's Program will look to split those positions by hiring a full-time Development Program Director to oversee the program at the state and regional level, while promoting growth in boys' gymnastics. This would allow us to have a dedicated Junior National Team Coordinator, whose sole focus is working with our Junior National Teams. This will provide the direct support needed for both components of the Men's Junior Program.

### *Sports Performance*

Throughout 2020 and 2021, the Sports Performance Team was imperative to our athletes maintaining their physical and mental health while their training was interrupted. They provided numerous resources

for mental health, physical conditioning, and nutrition that were applicable to all athletes during the pandemic. We will continue to utilize all aspects of the Sports Performance services for our Senior National Team athletes and resident program athletes, and we will introduce these services to all of our Junior National Team athletes.

Our High Performance Director will continue to utilize the Kinduct platform to collect performance data from our National Team athletes and international athletes. This information has become vital for tracking our competitiveness with the top countries in the world and provides the most pertinent information to our athletes and coaches in their development. The Kinduct platform has also become a useful tool when considering National Team selection.

### *High Performance Milestones*

#### **2021**

- Earn multiple medals and qualify to at least four finals at 2021 World Championships
- Earn team and AA gold medals at the 2021 Junior Pan Am Games, which would qualify the AA winner to the 2023 Senior Pan Am Games
- Host two Level 8/9 Junior NT camps, two Level 10 Junior NT camps, and one Senior camp in December, which will include the Senior Development Team athletes
- Launch a new program to increase D-scores over the next three years
- Establish at least two new NCAA Men's Gymnastics programs in 2022

#### **2022**

- Earn a team medal at the 2022 World Championships, which would qualify a team of five athletes to the 2024 Olympic Games
- Earn two individual medals at World Championships
- Increase international events for Junior NT athletes
- 2021 Senior Development Team athletes making Senior National Team
- Junior and Senior NT athletes working with Sports Performance Team
- Establish at least three new NCAA Men's Gymnastics programs in 2023

#### **2023**

- Team medal at the 2023 World Championships
- Three individual medals at World Championships
- First place team at the Pan Am Games
- First place team at the Junior World Championships
- Increase USOPTC resident program to 10 athletes

#### **2024**

- Team medal at the Olympic Games
- Four individual medals at Olympic Games
- Identify new benchmarks for 2028
- Implement strategy for team gold medal at the 2025 Junior World Championships

*Calendar of Events*

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
<b>2021</b>		
August 1-5	Level 8/9 NT Camp	Indianapolis, IN
August 22-26	Level 10 Camp	Indianapolis, IN
August 26-29	Chairman Summit and MDPC Meeting	Indianapolis, IN
TBD	Intercontinental Judges Course	TBD
September 14-19	World Championship Trials	USOPTC
October 8-12	Level 8/9 NT Camp	Indianapolis, IN
October 13-25	World Championships	Kitakyushu, JPN
October 22-26	Level 10 Camp	Indianapolis, IN
November 3-8	Arthur Gander/Swiss Cup	SWI
November 10-13	Future Stars Nationals	USOPTC
November 10-14	National Coaches Workshop	USOPTC
November 25-December 5	JR Pan American Games	Cali, Columbia
December 12-16	Senior Team Camp	USOPTC
<b>2022</b>		
January 5-9	Level 10 Camp	USOPTC
February 24-27	Winter Cup/ETC	TBD
March 5-9	Senior NT Camp	USOPTC
March	Canada International	Mississauga, ON
March 25-27	Collegiate Championships	TBD
April 1-3	World Cup	Pesaro, ITA
April 1-3/8-10	Level 9 Classics	TBD
April 8-10	World Cup	Sofia, BUL
April 15-17	World Cup	Tashkent, UZB
April 22-24	World Cup	Baku, AZE
April 29-May 1	East Championships	Battle Creek, MI
April 29-May 1	West Championships	Reno, NV
May 11-15	Development nationals	TBD
May TBD	SR Pan Am Championships	TBD
June 4-8	Senior NT Camp	USOPTC
June TBD	JR Pan Am Championships	TBD
June 26-July 7	World University Games	Chengdu, CHN
July 10-14	Level 10 Camp	USOPTC
July 28-31	National Qualifier	TBD
July 28-August 1	Future Stars Camp	USOPTC
August 18-21	US Championships	TBD
October 1-6	World Championships Selection Camp	USOPTC
October 23-27	Level 8/9 NT Camp	USOPTC
October 27-31	Level 10 Camp	USOPTC
October 30-November 6	World Championships	Liverpool, ENG
November 16-19	Future Stars Championships	USOPTC
November 17-20	National Coaches Workshop	USOPTC
November 30-December 4	Level 10 Camp	USOPTC
December 17-21	Senior NT Camp	USOPTC

Note: Dates are tentative