

TWISTARS USA PRESENTS

# GYMNASTICALLY SPEAKING

May 2013

**TWISTARS USA  
GYMNASTICS CLUB**  
Home of World and Olympic  
Champion Jordyn Wieber  
Home of World and Olympic Head  
Coach, John Geddert

## NATIONAL SUCCESS

It is not uncommon or unusual for Twistars USA to announce another national champion at the completion of the competitive season. It is however **BRAND NEW** to announce a national champion from our boys team.

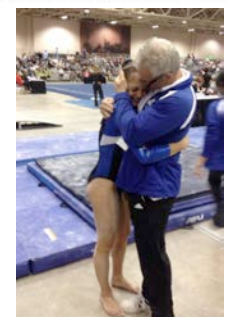
That's right! This years lone national champion is Jake Moore who captured the gold medal on Pommel Horse at the Junior Olympic National Championships. The meet was held in Portland, Oregon at the beginning of May.

Jake bested a field of over 150 national qualifiers so as to capture Twistars **FIRST EVER**, national championship from our boys team. I am sure this is just the beginning of more great things to come from Coach Tom Buese's building boys program. Congrats Jake, Congrats Tom and congrats to the entire boys program!

On the girls side we had some very impressive results also. 6 Twistars qualified to the JO National Championships which were held in Minneapolis, Minnesota the 2nd weekend of May.

Senior Rachel Haines and Junior Bailey Gardner both earned spots on the USA J.O. National team via their strong AA performances. Both finished 4th in their respective age groups.

Bailey placed in the top 10 on all 4 events (V-9, UB-9, B-8 and FI-6). Taylor Livingston scored her highest AA of the season placing 13th while medalling on Beam. Lauren Bancroft put her



LEVEL 9 and 10 NATIONALS FUN!

best foot forward placing 7th AA and 5th on Bars. Carly Preston also had her best meet of the year placing 11th AA, 2nd on bars and 10th on floor. Sophomore Rachel Cutler was a beam fall away from 4th or 5th place AA and did finish 5th on Bars.

Backing up to Senior Rachel Haines, along with her 4th place AA finish she placed 8th on Bars, 9th beam and 4th on floor.

The Twistars level 10 team ranked 6th overall (dropping from our number one finish in 2012) but considering we were missing some very talented level 10s at nationals this year, we are very pleased with that showing.

At the Eastern National Championships held in Battle Creek, our Level 9s were the top dogs! Our Level 9s ranked NUMBER ONE over all the teams present and earned some very impressive individual honors as well.

Senior Cassie Robinson capture the AA and Bar Title (2-V, 6-B, 2-FI) while teammate Maddie Bonofiglio finished 9th AA (3-UB, 6-FL).

In the Sr 3 Age Group Lucy Jones scored the highest individual event score in the meet and won bars with a 9.7. She placed 3rd AA (9-V, 6-B, 9-FL). Jade Brown followed suit in the Sr 1 age group placing 3rd AA while

winning bars and floor and finishing 5th on vault.

In the Jr 1 age group Autumn Blaney placed 6th AA (2-UB, 9-B and 4-FL) She also impressed the talent scouts from USAG which earned her an invitation to the Elite Developmental Camp to be held in June at the National Team Training Center in Houston Texas.

Our Jr 2s Kai Rivers and Jori Jackard placed 3rd and 4th in AA respectively. Kai was crowned champion on Bars and Jori won Floor. Kai added 4-V, 6-B, 2-FL while Jori added 5-V, and 2-UB.

Our newby Level 9 performed like a veteran. Amanda Arnold placed 2nd AA and added a 8th-V, 3-UB, 3B and 6th FI.

Going into nationals this year we were a bit concerned about the lack of total firepower that we had. The injury bug had taken its toll. Well after nationals we couldn't be more pleased with how our team gelled and stepped up to the challenge. The depth of talent was made apparent in no uncertain terms which leaves the future looking very bright for Twistars USA.

Congratulations to our boys and girls national qualifiers on their impressive showing.



LEVEL 9 NATIONAL QUALIFIERS

THOUGHT OF THE DAY:  
Without true and honest criticism there can be no worthy praise.



# NEW GROUPS- LEVEL ADVANCEMENT

## PATIENCE

I just finished 2 parent orientation meetings for prospective new team members. Part of my program explanation includes our philosophy of building a strong base and therefore how we take our time to make sure all the details are covered. Building a quality athlete parallels building an impressive sky scraper. Sure you can skimp on the foundation, leave a brick out here and there, use lesser grade materials and who would notice. Well nobody until the foundation gives way while trying to add the upper stories. We do not skimp on the foundation and thus our buildings do not collapse a year of two into the process. It takes patience and time to create a masterpiece.

## ADVANCEMENT CRITERION

So as to provide some consistent system for making advancement decisions, we have a written set of criterion (see team handbook). It is important to realize however that this criterion is the minimal consideration and that there is much more that goes into preparing an athlete to advance levels. Most often quoted is the stipulation that we would like to have athletes score 2 separate 36.5 AA scores prior to advancing. This is a minimal standard and does not automatically equate to skill readiness for the next level.

## EVERYONE WANTS TO ADVANCE

We are very aware that for most athletes and parents there is this stigma that advancing means progress. We understand that most athletes would love to advance at least one level each year. Gymnastics, unlike school, does not work that way. It is not

uncommon to repeat a level so as to solidly cement in those building blocks of your foundation.

I guess the point here is, we know most would love to advance a level and we will certainly proceed with this in mind. The bottom line is however, that advancement is based on skill readiness for the next level and at a level that meets the established standards for this club. Those with bubble scores may want to keep this in mind so that there is not a feeling of entitlement and more of a determination to improve in training.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- \* We retain 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear and 95% of what we teach someone else to do.
- \* God gave us 2 ends. One to sit on and one to think with. Success depends on which one you decide to use most often. HEADS you WIN, TAILS you LOSE!
- \* Ability is what you are capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it.
- \* Optimists are NOT always happy, but they always think they will be very soon.
- \* Isn't it great that we have the ability to avoid those people that we never liked, have the good fortune to run into those that we do and the eye sight to tell the difference.
- \* Not everything faced can be changed, but certainly nothing can be changed until it is faced.
- \* The price of greatness is responsibility



THOUGHT OF THE DAY:  
 "A mind stretched by a new experience can never go back to it's smaller shape"



**AMY AL-ASHARI**



**AMY and sister ALYSSA**

## AMY AL-ASHARI

Sometimes athletic careers do not quite turn out like we had planned. That is a lesson in life. But sometimes we can take a negative and shape it into a positive. That is what one of our newest staff members has done.

Amy Al-Ashari was a TOP National Team Member, and a level 9 National Champion for Twistars USA. At one point she looked to have the brightest of futures in gymnastics. Things didn't work out that way yet now she has channelled that un-used passion and uses it to help others.

## KNOWING AMY

Having lived through our program she knows the expectations and standards. Having had her gymnastics dreams cut a bit short, she has an added motivation to help her athletes past the same stumbling blocks that she incurred. She is a driven coach, very reliable and intent on enhancing her coaching knowledge at every opportunity. She has a natural knack with organizing rotations and implementing a plan which is invaluable when trying to inspire young up and coming athletes to greatness.

## LET'S GET PERSONAL

She currently attending LCC with her heart set on transferring to MSU when the time comes. She comes from a family of 6 (3 boys and 3 girls) which may also play a role in her ability to control and organize a large group.

Rumor has it that she has a boyfriend so I guess at least one of my lessons taught during her years here at Twistars has been tossed to the curb. (Boys are bad!).

Amy plays an important role in preparing our developmental team members for the challenge of Team. She does this very well.

## AMY AL-ASHARI:

Being a former Twistars athlete she understands the standards of the program. She is a driven coach who is intent on assisting her students to succeed



# MARY POPPINS

## WOULD HAVE BEEN A LOUSY GYMNASTICS COACH

“Without criticism, there can be no true praise”. I read this the other day and it really made me pause to think. It made me think about my coaching philosophy and approach to dealing with athletes. Although I did not write this quote, none could be closer to describing my thoughts.

Text book motivation preaches the revelations of positive reinforcement. Of course this serves the best interests of developing children and adults who need motivating. I understand the inherent benefits of the sandwich approach to motivation (say something nice, give constructive criticism, and then finish with something nice). I believe this method has valuable purpose BUT just like most worth while tactics, if overused it loses it's power. In todays society I believe the Mary Poppins, nice nanny, sugar coat

everything, to everyone, every minute approach is over played.

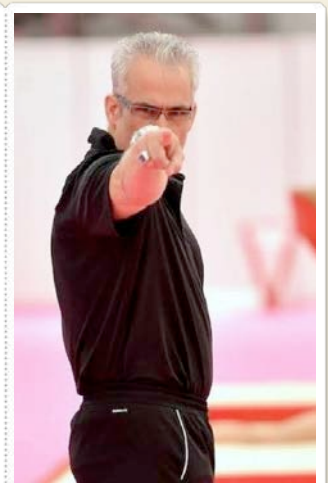
Kids are smart. They know very well when something deserves praise. False praise glows like a neon light. They know when coaches/parents are “just being nice”. When overused, this tactic creates counterproductive results. First, if the athlete does not buy into the sincerity of the praise, they loose respect for the person giving it and thus future feedback may be viewed with skepticism. “Wow my coach just told me my cartwheel was awesome but I know my knees were bent, my hand was turned the wrong way, my hips were out of line and I landed out of control” Does my coach know what she is talking about? Do I listen to future feedback?

But what if the athlete does buy the sincerity of the praise. This creates a situation where they expect it for

everything.. not only in the gym, but at home. Not only for earned efforts but for mediocracy too. Take the praise away and so goes the motivation. I have seen this time and time again. False praise creates a monster “If you don't tell me how wonderful I am ... then I can not function”. It is classic.

I am not condoning sarcasm and ridicule. I am not saying to use NEGATIVE reinforcement (although there is plenty of research to support the lasting impact of such). I am not saying that children and athletes don't need a “pick me up” boost of encouragement from time to time. I am saying that they don't need to be praised unnecessarily. Save it for maximum impact.

Self esteem is best served by well intended and worded criticism, advised solutions with assistance, which brings about noticeable progress.



# LEVEL EIGHTS DOMINATE

## REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS ARE IMPRESSIVE

9 Twistars Level 8s qualified to Level 8 regionals (all earning spots on the State Team to represent Michigan). The results were staggering.

After 2 sessions, Twistars USA had 2 All Around Champions. Alyssa Al-Ashari capped off a phenomenal year by winning the Jr A age group along with V, Bars and Floor (she placed 2nd on beam) Teammates Michaela Johnson placed 3rd AA while adding a 5-V and 3rd-Fl. Meanwhile one of our youngest and newest Level 8s, Jillian Swinehard placed 3rd on bars.

In the second session Chloe Bellmore won the AA, V and Bars and placed 3rd on Beam and Floor. Teammate Natalie Woodland (our

newest level 8) finished 9th on bars with a 9.55.

In the Jr E division Brooke Hylek placed 2nd AA while earning a regional title on Fl. She also placed 2nd on Bars, and 4th on B. Tristin Brown grabbed a Regional Bar Title in the Sr A age group while finishing 9th AA, 5th V.

In the Sr E age group Mariah Gleeson was in great form winning the AA title by almost a full point. She also added titles on Bars and Beam and placed 2nd on V and Fl. Brittany Lewis took an ugly fall and was unable to finish the meet.

When all was said and done Michigan dominated the over all team competition against the other regional states (Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky). Michigan captured 9 out of the possible 11 age

group titles. No matter how you look at that... it spells domination.

When adding individual club scores (just for fun) Twistars Level 8s would have had the highest team score in the entire region. They also would have posted the highest event score on each of the 4 events. That too is impressive.

The results say volumes about the amount of effort our level 8s put forth this past year. They have talent but more importantly they are willing to use it on a daily basis. As a group they have fun yet are determined and focused to succeed. Well succeed they did!

Congratulations to our Level 8s.

97°

Sometimes.....  
I put my hands on the floor  
Tuck my head into my chest  
And lean forward  
Cos' that's just how i roll....

\* GYM CLEAN DAY  
\* CAMP SET UP  
SATURDAY JUNE 15 is our annual gym clean day. We can use all the help we can get.

This event uses the good neighbor approach. Pitch in for a good cause  
CAMP TEAR DOWN

July 1

4:00. If you cant make the set up day... this give you another chance to help our team out.

# BOYS TEAM MILESTONE

## FIRST EVER NATIONAL CHAMPION

### A First For the Boy's Team!

On May 5, 2013, a major landmark was made for the Twistars Boy's Team, the first ever NATIONAL CHAMPION! Jake Moore scored a combined 26.9 to be named the 2013 JO National Pommel Horse Champion! Jake had a monster 14.25 on the first day of competition beating every level 9 gymnast in the country on that day. Going into the second day, Jake had a .95 cushion over the next highest horse score. Just to give his coach a little more stress that weekend, Jake decided to make it interesting and he had a fall on his 3<sup>rd</sup> skill. We had to wait through 3 more rotations to see if it would hold (and in the meantime finish out his all around competition). Finally, when the competition was over, Jake was 11<sup>th</sup> on HB, 10<sup>th</sup> AA, and officially the national champion on horse! It was a great way to finish a great week in Portland, and will hopefully be the start of many more to come for the Twistars Boy's Team!

### Gymnastics "Off" Season

With almost all of the team being done in the next week, it's time for what some gymnasts and coaches feel is the most fun part of gymnastics, the off-season training. During this time the gymnasts tear their hands up, get some bruises, and sweat it out working to increase their strength and flexibility and get the skills they will need to be successful the next season.

With all of the drills, progressions, and repetitions it takes to learn new skills, every minute of the offseason becomes invaluable. Especially with over half of the team looking to be level 7 or higher, it is very important to be at every practice you can in order to achieve summer goals.

The coaching staff does realize, though, that summer is when people take their vacations (I've got a wedding and honeymoon this summer, so I will probably miss more time than any of the boys). A week or so vacation during the summer is not going to be a major setback to the training plan, and sometimes can be a helpful rest to the body and mind from constant training. However, once they get past two weeks or if they are missing a day or two every week for various

reasons, their gymnastics can start to go downhill, making it difficult for them to achieve their goal of progressing to the next level.

The bottom line is try to find the balance between gymnastics and vacation that coincides with your son's goals. We will be doing our yearly end of season conferences to go over the goals that each part of the athlete-parent-coach relationship has for your son next season. The sign up sheet for these is located on the boy's bulletin board in the parent waiting area downstairs.

Our boys team continues to grow in size and strength. Let's keep that going with an exciting offseason of dedicated practice!

