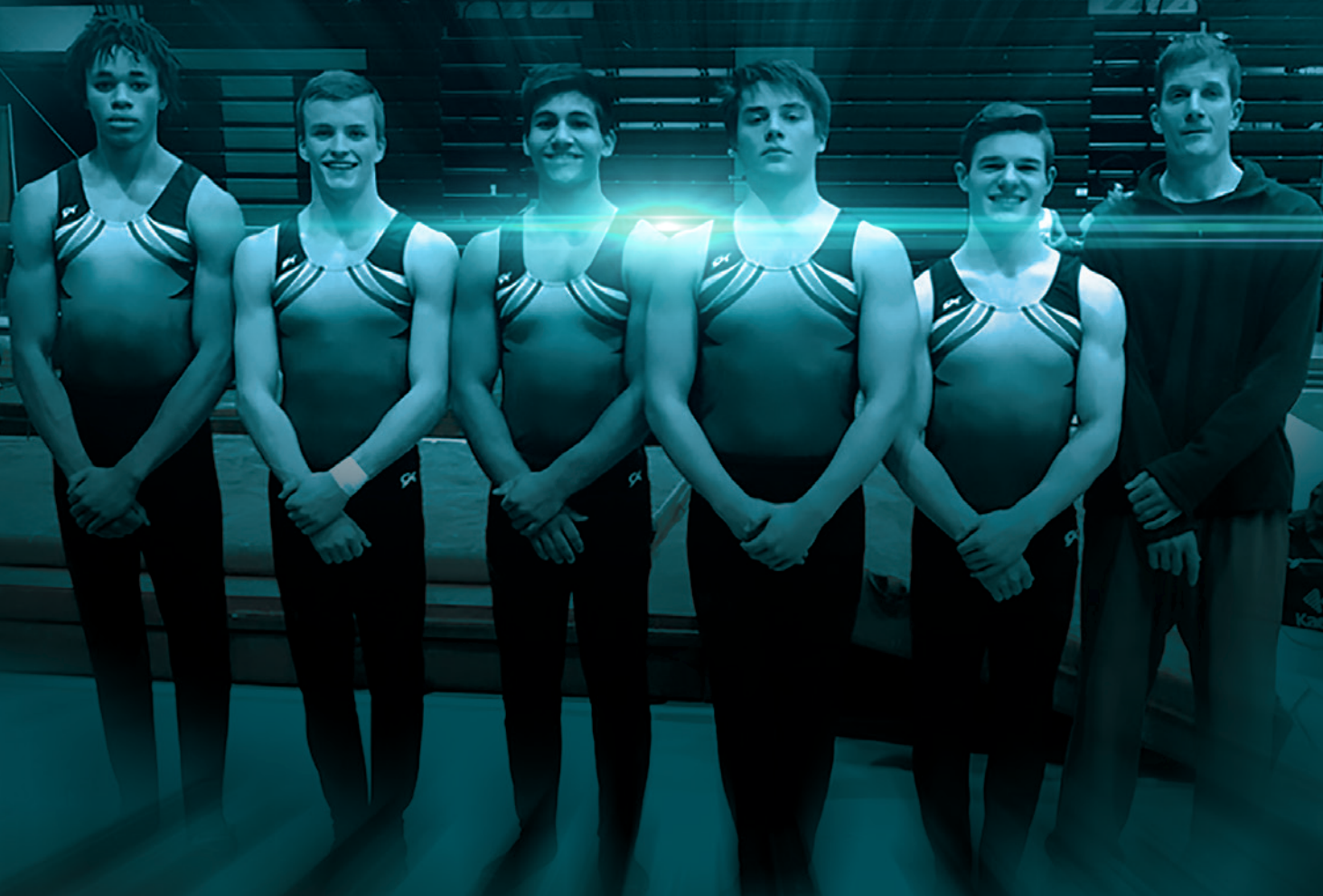


FEATURE

BY LUAN PESZEK

GAIN RECOGNITION FOR YOUR BOYS

BOYS HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASTICS COMPETITION



INDIANA HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASTS FROM DEVEAU'S (LEFT TO RIGHT): STORM MILLS, MITCHELL BROWN, NICHOLAS GUY, JOSEF HANLEY, PARKER CLAYTON, AND COACH JEFF GREENE AT THE JUSTIN SPRING INVITATIONAL.



The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and USA Gymnastics joined forces in 2014 to expand boys' high school gymnastics opportunities across the country. Nine states are currently participating in the program. The goal is to continue to grow the program!

Bob Gardner, executive director of the NFHS, said, "This partnership is a win-win for our student-athletes and our educational institutions. By working with USA Gymnastics, young men across the country will have an opportunity to participate in the sport they love and represent their high schools in a state championship. We appreciate USA Gymnastics identifying and implementing this innovative program, and we have great confidence that it will reap positive success."

"School budgets are growing tighter and tighter, and we want to help supplement the available athletic offerings," said Steve Penny, president of USA Gymnastics. "Gymnastics is a sport that helps student-athletes learn the importance of sportsmanship, self-discipline, dedication and commitment. Participation in high school athletics provides recognition for schools and from athletes' peers."

To complement the existing state high school gymnastics programs, USA Gymnastics has activated its national network to create a state championships framework that works in concert with local high schools, school districts and state associations.

USA Gymnastics is providing rules and regulations through NFHS for the states that have existing programs. For states currently not involved with boys' high school gymnastics, USA

Gymnastics State High School Championships will be part of the USA Gymnastics Age Group Competition State Championships that can be implemented on a state-by-state basis. Each USA Gymnastics state administration will coordinate with its clubs as those club programs work to establish relationships with their local high schools and school districts that recognize boys' gymnastics. USA Gymnastics will also promote and recognize boys high school gymnastics on its website, usagym.org.

Participating states will report the results of the high school athletes. USA Gymnastics will present State High School Championships results and list the gymnast who is the state all-around champion on its website. For those states with a team competition (three or more gymnasts competing from one school), the state high school team champion will also be listed.

"High school athletics is a keystone of Americana," said Penny, "and we believe high-school-age gymnasts deserve to be a part of that and receive recognition for their athletic efforts for their schools."

THE BOYS HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASTICS LANDSCAPE

Illinois and Massachusetts still have a High School Boys State Championships. Seven additional states sanction Boys' Gymnastics and recognize it. The students follow the eligibility rules and policies, and the school is covered by insurance, yet they don't have a State High School Championships. Texas has an established High School Championships within an established Texas High School Association, which

is not a part of the University Interscholastic League. So nine states sanction the sport of Boys' Gymnastics. In 2014-15, more than 2,000 boys participated in these nine states at the high school level.

WHY GET INVOLVED?

Do you have Level 9 or 10 high school boys in your gym? They spend 20-plus hours a week in your gym. They most likely don't participate in a high school sport because they spend so much time in the gym. Why not get them some recognition at their school, among their peers and also receive great exposure for your club within the community? The USA Gymnastics Boys High School Gymnastics program is the answer.

USA Gymnastics' goal is for the program to continue to grow and flourish so that boys around the country can continue to do gymnastics through their high school years and receive recognition from their high school, even if they do not have a high school gymnastics program in their state.

"USA Gymnastics has a framework in place for each of the states," said Penny. "The USA Gymnastics men's program will conduct the outreach to its members to identify high school gymnasts in the states without existing organized programs. 2014 and 2015 were basically the program's pilot years, and we are working to refine the system as we move forward."

The format is relatively simple, but provides the competitive framework and recognition process that will elevate awareness boys' high school gymnastics.

Continued... 

MOST OF THESE GUYS SPEND A LOT OF TIME IN THE GYM AND MOST OF THEIR FRIENDS AT SCHOOL DON'T EVEN KNOW THEY DO GYMNASTICS AND HAVE NO IDEA HOW GOOD THEY ARE. THIS PROGRAM GIVES THESE GUYS RECOGNITION AT SCHOOL. IT IS A GREAT PROGRAM.

GENE WATSON, COACH AT INTERACTIVE ACADEMY IN ZIONSVILLE, IND., WHOSE ATHLETE WON THE INDIANA HIGH SCHOOL BOYS TITLE IN 2015

HOW DOES IT WORK?

When entering the USA Gymnastics State Championships, athletes will indicate what high school they attend and their year in school. When competing at the USA Gymnastics State Championships for their club, the athlete will also be competing for his school at the same time. After the competition, results will be given for the club competition, as well as the high school competition. Basically, the USA Gymnastics State High School Championships will be a part of the traditional USA Gymnastics State Championships. At the conclusion of the event, the results of the high school athletes will be pulled, and the gymnast with the highest all-around score will be the state high school champion. In addition, if there are three gymnasts from a single high school, they will be eligible to win the state high school team title.

We asked Indiana State Chair Jeff Greene how he implemented the program in Indiana for the last two years. He said, "Throughout the meet season, I compiled a list of Level 9 and 10 boys, their high school and grade in school. At the USA Gymnastics State Championships, we included all high school Level 9 and 10 boys in all-around rank order. The top score (regardless if they were Level 9 or 10) becomes the high school state champion. To enter a high school team, the

school must have at least three gymnasts at Level 9 or 10."

He added, "At the USA Gymnastics State meet, I gathered the boys and parents and explained the program and the goal. It caught me by surprise how enthusiastic the kids and parents were about this program. These kids do so much in the gym and have not received recognition from their school. It is great that we now have a program working with the National Federation of High Schools and are able to recognize these guys in their school."

HOW DO YOU GET THE HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION ON BOARD WITH THE PROGRAM?

Greene said, "I had the parents research the principal and athletic director of their son's school and give me contact name and emails. Then, I sent an email to the school explaining the program. Some schools were fabulous and very responsive while others did not respond immediately."

It takes some effort, no doubt about it. However, coaches, club owners, state chair and parents need to work together to blaze the path with each school in your area. Once the program is in place, then it should no longer be so difficult at each school.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For more information on this program, please download the USA Gymnastics Boys High School Manual at usagym.org/boyshighschool. If you have more questions, contact Luan Peszek at 317-829-5646 or email lpeszek@usagym.org.

WHAT THE USA GYMNASTICS HIGH SCHOOL BOYS PROGRAM MEANS FOR A CLUB

- ✓ Affiliation with high school athletics
- ✓ Recognition for your club and athlete
- ✓ Additional benefits to your gymnasts and families

WHAT THE USA GYMNASTICS HIGH SCHOOL BOYS PROGRAM MEANS FOR ATHLETES AND THEIR PARENTS

- ✓ Recognition within their high school
- ✓ Potential for lettering in a high school sport
- ✓ Pride for their school

