

Sun Devil History



Now in his 18th year as head coach, John Spini has helped mold Arizona State women's gymnastics into a prominent fixture among the elite in the collegiate ranks. The Sun Devils have been represented at all 16 NCAA Championships, and have sent a team to 13 of those meets. In addition, ASU is among the top five nationally in terms of national champions (nine) and it was the first school in the country to crown a champion in each individual event and in the all-around. In addition, the program has produced seven All-Americans since 1993, the sixth-best mark in NCAA Division I.

Spini came onto the scene in 1980-81, replacing Marie Bilski, who guided the Sun Devils to three top-10 national finishes in her four seasons. Pam Godward was the initial All-America gymnast at Arizona State, as she reaped national recognition for her performances on the balance beam in 1979 and 1980.

With Spini's arrival, Arizona State made the jump to national contender in his inaugural season with a fifth-place finish at the AIAW Championship. Jeri Cameron was Spini's first All-American, as she earned acclaim in the uneven bars and vault in 1981. However, Cameron reached the pinnacle of her career during her junior campaign when she captured four events at the conference championship before earning All-America status in the all-around and uneven bars. The Sun Devils recorded a fifth-place finish at the initial NCAA

Championship in 1982 after winning the first of four conference crowns in the 1980s.

Perhaps the finest trio of freshmen gymnasts ever joined Spini's arsenal for the 1982-83 campaign ... Jackie Brummer, Kim Neal and Lisa Zeis. Add Cameron to that threesome and the Sun Devils were considered among the most potent teams in America. That quartet responded with a 20-1 dual mark during the 1982-83 season en route to a second consecutive conference title and a second place at the NCAAs. Neal, one of several U.S. National team gymnasts to attend ASU, won individual honors in the floor exercise, while Cameron claimed the uneven bars crown. In all, four Arizona State gymnasts garnered All-America honors. The following season saw them win 19 of 23 dual meets and place fourth at the NCAAs, while Brummer collected the NCAA uneven bars title and joined classmates Zeis and Neal on the All-America squad.

ASU responded during the next two campaigns with a pair of NCAA runner-up finishes, and five Sun Devils became NCAA individual champs. Former assistant coach Zeis won her first NCAA crown in 1985 on the balance beam. The 1985-86 campaign saw ASU walk away with most of the hardware, as it claimed four individual events ... Brummer (all-around, balance beam), Zeis (floor exercise) and Neal (vault). However, the Sun Devils were edged by a quarter of a point in their attempt to win the NCAA title. ASU's 1986 squad featured four

individual champions, which ties for second as the most NCAA champions in one year.

The talented triad of Brummer, Zeis and Neal combined for seven NCAA titles and All-America accolades 22 times during their illustrious four-year careers. During that time, ASU posted a 77-8 dual mark, won two conference crowns and placed among the top four of the NCAAs each year.

"They may have been the most talented group of gymnasts ever assembled on one squad," says Spini. "They were dynamic competitors, and represented Arizona State University admirably throughout their careers."

Shari Mann was an integral part of the Sun Devils' success during the mid 1980s, as she secured All-America accolades twice. Mann was one of ASU's most proficient performers on the uneven bars and vault. In 1985-86, another talented gymnast called Arizona State her home, as Karli Urban progressed until she became an All-America performer as a junior. She was regarded as one of the nation's most complete gymnasts as she closed her career as a two-time All-American.

Freshmen rarely achieve All-America status, but Tracy Butler earned that distinction by placing fourth on the beam at the 1989 NCAA Championships. Tina Brinkman matched that feat in 1992, finishing third on the floor exercise. Jenny Ester finished eighth on the uneven bars in 1993, earning All-America status in her rookie campaign. In 1996, All-America honors went to Katie Freeland, who closed out her Sun Devil career as a two-time All-American, and Meagan Wright, who took All-America honors in three events: the all-around, vault and the uneven bars.

Last season, ASU left Gainesville, Fla., with the most Tempe-bound hardware in a decade. The Sun Devils came in second, finishing as the NCAA runner-up (by three-tenths of a point) for the fourth time in their history. Four Sun Devils received All-America honors, the most since Brummer, Mann, Neal and Zeis in 1986. Wright picked up where she left off, collecting All-America honors in the all-around and all four events. However, another freshman sensation burst onto the scene in Elizabeth Reid, ASU's first NCAA individual champion in 11 years. Reid grabbed the balance beam title with a 9.9 and was the national runner-up in the floor exercise and uneven bars with another pair of 9.9s. Beam Queen Lisa Vincijanovic, the 1996 Pac-10 balance beam champion, captured first-team kudos on beam with a 12th-place finish. In addition, Carie Courtney finished 13th in the all-around and 13th on beam to garner All-America honors as well.

The history is ripe for the making in 1998, as the Sun Devils welcome all four All-Americans back to Tempe to anchor an extremely talented squad.

Records and Conference/National Finishes

Year	Dual	Conf.	Nat'l	Head Coach
1996-97	8-4	6th	2nd	John Spini
1995-96	8-4	2nd	DNQ	John Spini
1994-95	10-4	2nd	DNQ	John Spini
1993-94	13-4	3rd	10th	John Spini
1992-93	12-2	4th	12th	John Spini
1991-92	10-5	4th	7th	John Spini
1990-91	13-8	4th	9th	John Spini
1989-90	8-6-1	3rd	DNQ	John Spini
1988-89	7-13	3rd	7thT	John Spini
1987-88	13-7	2nd	8th	John Spini
1986-87	11-7	4th	5th	John Spini
1985-86	18-1	1st	2nd	John Spini
1984-85	20-2	1st	2nd	John Spini
1983-84	19-4	2nd	4th	John Spini
1982-83	20-1	1st	2nd	John Spini
1981-82	10-3	1st	5th	John Spini
1980-81	9-1	3rd	5th	John Spini
1979-80	22-6	2nd	9th	Marie Bilski
1978-79	7-9	2nd	DNC	Marie Bilski
1977-78	12-5	1st	7th	Marie Bilski
1976-77	9-2	1st	7th	Marie Bilski
1975-76	10-2	1st	6th	Monique Sublette