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TIM DAGGETT

After reaching new heights in Olympic glory, Tim Daggett founded Tim Daggett Gold Medal Gymnastics—now going strong for 17 years!



COURTESY OF USA GYMNASTICS

BY JEN JONES

Tim Daggett's bio reads like a mini-*Guinness Book of World Records*, with one jaw-dropping "first" after another. In 1984 he made Olympic history when he scored a perfect 10 on the horizontal bars, clinching the first-ever gold medal for the U.S. men's gymnastics team. Daggett garnered further acclaim after overcoming a debilitating injury to continue competing internationally.

Today Daggett runs Tim Daggett Gold Medal Gymnastics, a highly successful Massachusetts-based gym with more than 1,300 students. Aside from his business, he is also a respected industry commentator and motivational speaker. So how does Daggett stay on such a successful path? With self-belief, persistence and a lot of heart.

LUCKY KID #7

Growing up in a family of seven athletic children, Daggett was never at a loss for energy or activity. "We literally played sports all year-round, from baseball to soccer to swimming," Daggett says. "Both of my parents were also very athletic and encouraged us to stay active." While his siblings excelled in sports such as track and field and skiing, Daggett found his niche in the wide world of gymnastics.

After we won the gold medal in 1984, it would have been really easy to retire. However, I was the youngest member of the team, and I still loved it. —Tim Daggett

Daggett's first taste of the sport came at just 8 years old. While playing soccer at a local high school, he ducked inside to get a drink of water. When young Daggett passed by the gym, he was amazed by what he saw. "I vividly remember the first time I was exposed to gymnastics," he says. "I saw a guy swinging in huge circles on the bars and picking up speed. I was mesmerized; I couldn't believe there was a sport where you could mess around like that and not get yelled at!"

It wasn't long before Daggett convinced his parents to enroll him in a park recreation program in their hometown of West Springfield, MA. While taking these gymnastics classes, Daggett met Bill Jones, who became his personal coach and, later in life, his business partner.

"It was funny, because Bill really didn't

know much about gymnastics at the time," says Daggett. "He wasn't a high-level gymnast, yet he saw [in me] a student who loved gymnastics and had an aptitude for it." With no prominent gymnastics clubs in the area, Jones and Daggett had their work cut out for them. Together they spent large amounts of time training for and traveling to clinics and competitions all over the East Coast. Through those early challenges, Daggett emerged poised for Olympic contention.

GUTS AND GLORY

Like many world-class gymnasts, Daggett has experienced the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. His career high point occurred at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, with a perfect 10 performance on the horizontal bar—capped by a full-

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twisting, laid-out double back somersault dismount. Flanked by notable teammates like Bart Conner and Peter Vidmar, Daggett proudly accepted the first-ever victory for the U.S. men's team.

"After we won the gold medal in 1984, it would have been really easy to retire," says Daggett. "However, I was the youngest member of the team, and I still loved it. I made the commitment that I would go on to my second Olympic games in 1988."

Though Daggett's drive was admirable, numerous obstacles stood in the way of that second Olympic appearance. Surgery was performed on both ankles, yet Daggett decided to

stay on the competition track. Despite the pain, he shined on the floor, earning the titles of 1985 American Cup Champion and 1986 National Champion.

While practicing for the 1987 American Cup, a 15-foot fall from the high bar ruptured a disc in Daggett's neck and caused a large amount of nerve damage on his left side. Through strenuous rehabilitation and an undaunted spirit, Daggett made it to the Worlds and found himself in medal contention on two events.

Yet injury would soon strike again, with a now infamous vaulting attempt gone horribly wrong. While landing his vault, Daggett snapped both his fibula and tibia. Faced with a severed artery and a large amount of blood loss, Daggett was forced to undergo five major surgeries just to recover.

Always a fighter, Daggett continued to strive for gymnastics greatness. Known today for his dogged determination, Daggett says that defying the odds has always been in his nature. "When I was younger, I showed the most aptitude as a tumbler, but I was horrible on the pommel horse," he remembers. "After I dislocated my ankles, floor was harder for me and really beat me up. While recovering, I spent a lot of time practicing the pommel horse. Ultimately, I ended up with 11 perfect 10s on the horse throughout my career!"

PASSING THE TORCH

In the wake of his competitive years, the now retired Daggett has found a bevy of ways to stay actively involved with the sport. Since 1992, Daggett has been a fixture on the Olympic circuit as a commentator for NBC Sports. He's also held numerous coaching and executive positions for USA Gymnastics, along with a successful stint as a motivational speaker.

Even with all those balls in the air, Daggett spends most of his time indulging his real passion—teaching gymnastics. In 1989, Daggett partnered with former coach Bill Jones, who

headed a gym in Agawam, MA. After running the gym together for several years, Jones retired. Daggett has since been at the helm of what is now called Tim Daggett Gold Medal Gymnastics.

A 16,000 sq. ft., multimillion-dollar facility, Tim Daggett Gold Medal Gymnastics offers a wide range of gymnastics classes, along with martial arts, "ballet gym," and a new all-star cheer program (see "Cheering for the Gold" sidebar). To inspire the kids at the training facility, Daggett blends his real-life experiences with the teachings of the coaches throughout his career. "My coaches were all men of character and diverse, wonderful individuals," he says of his four coaches, who hailed from the

Soviet Union, Japan, and the U.S. "I had an incredible melting pot of culture, personality, character and knowledge, and it couldn't have been better."

Working with children of all skill levels is something that Daggett feels well equipped to do. After all, he believes that anyone can accomplish greatness with the right amount of hard work and inner strength. "If I could influence what people remember about me, it's that I wasn't a super-talented kid," he says. "I was just a little kid who saw a sport, dreamed big, and did everything in my power to be the very best that I could be."

For more info about Tim Daggett Gold Medal Gymnastics, visit daggettgymnastics.com. 

CHEERING FOR THE GOLD

What better way to launch an all-star cheer team than in the footsteps of a gymnastics legacy? In early 2005, the Gold Medal All-Stars took root at Tim Daggett Gold Medal Gymnastics under the leadership of Amanda Barnes and Pat McFarland (a former Daggett protégé). Though there is currently only one team, a senior Level 3 squad, the program is using its gold medal-plated wings to take flight.

Since its first season, the Gold Medal team has doubled in size. "Last year, we had to work hard

just to get Liberties and get everyone on the same page technique-wise," says coach Barnes. "All our kids from last year have come back, and we have very high hopes for the coming year."

As the team prepares for another competition season, Coach Barnes marvels at the unity displayed by the relatively new teammates. "It's phenomenal—I've never seen a team dynamic like this," she says. "It's great to watch them tumble and stunt and root each other on."

Daggett's students strike a pose.

