

Konstantin Kolesnikov Written Statement February 11, 2022

I am Konstantin Kolesnikov. I competed in the Olympic team selection trial in Soviet 1992 and Russia 1996. Then I came to the US in 1996 under special invitation from Sandy Hamm (father of Paul Hamm who is an all-around medalist in Olympic 2004 at Athens) to coach at Swiss Tuner where Paul and Morgan Hamm are being trained. I became the assistant coach for the University of Minnesota in 2005 until they eliminated the Men's gymnastics team in 2020. I was at the University of Minnesota for 15 years.

Adam Reichow is an example of local Minnesota gymnastic talent that the U of M grew. He was at the U of M in 2005-2010. He was on a low scholarship support (10% package). We developed him as a student athlete. He was an excellent student. Before joining the team, he was not in the top 20. He worked hard and rose to national rank of second place in the floor event at the NCAA championship. He was less than 0.5 point from Olympian Jonathan Horton. Adam was coached by Scott Gay at TAGS Eden Prairie.

My journey with Shane started in 2012, Shane was under recruitable age (he was in 7th grade). I gave Shane regular private lessons for two years. Then, I joined Mini-hops MHG-hops Gymnastics. In 2015 and 2016, Shane won the junior national championship for all around. He was the top recruit in this country. To Shane, the U of M is like a second home. We had the U of M summer camp for junior gymnasts for 11 years and Shane came almost every summer (7 years straight). Coach Burns and I watch Shane and other Minnesota talents grow over the years. He made a choice to compete for the U of M. He turned down offers from top schools like Stanford, the University of Michigan, and the University of Oklahoma (rank #1 in the country). Shane was successful during his time at the University of Minnesota. While he was a student, he competed in the 2019 World championship Stuttgart Germany. Shane was national champion for Parallel Bar. He and I went to the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

The most difficult part of having the U of M Men's gymnastics team cut was leaving this team that coach Burns, and I were building for 15 years. In December 2020, I had to move to US Olympic Training Center Colorado Spring, away from my family, away from the U of M gymnastics. Shane competed for the U of M team one last time in the 2021 NCAA championship at Minneapolis. It would have been ideal for Shane to continue to train at the U of M, where he has family and Minnesotan support and the whole team before going to the 2020 Olympic. Shane and I worked very hard not to give up. Shane chose to still compete for the University of Minnesota. We are proud that we made it to the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. At Tokyo, Shane did well, he contributed to the team score and was an alternate for the floor event final. This is amazing for a first time Olympian.

After being away from my family for nine months, I moved back to Minnesota and took the position, Director of Boys Gymnastics Program at MHG. I am committed to growing Minnesota gymnastics talents from bottom to top levels. I am now coaching 5 years old to 18+ years old. I am taking two elite gymnasts (Mark Fu and Solen Choidi) representing Region 4 to compete at Elite Team Cup during the Winter Cup competition February 2022. One example of local Minnesota talent is my son Nikolai Kolesnikov. He just graduated last year when the program got cut. Like his teammates in MHG, he and many more lost the opportunities to attend the University of Minnesota as a NCAA Division one student athlete. Nikolai had no choice and sought opportunities elsewhere. He was recruited and accepted an offer from the University of Oklahoma that produced many Olympians throughout the years. When my son was a senior in high school in September 2020, he was told that the recruiting trip got canceled. Nikolai said "I am devastated and heartbroken to find out the University of Minnesota Men's Gymnastics Program is cut. My recruiting opportunity there was canceled." Now as a head coach for boys' gymnastics in Minnesota, I hear from junior gymnasts about their "loss for their future in gymnastics" when they know about how great the U of M was. I continue to be committed to local Minnesota gymnastics talents in hope that someday their gymnastic dream will come true again like Shane's. I hope the University of Minnesota will reinstate the Men's Gymnastics Program and be a top-notch NCAA Division One Team like before.

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