UCLA Women's Gymnastics

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UCLA Opens Season In Las Vegas At Lady Luck Invitational

Schwikerts come home for their first-ever collegiate meet in hometown.

2008 UCLA Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result
	Lady Luck Invitational - Las Vegas, NV	
1/4	vs. ASU, OSU	7 pm
1/13	**MEET THE BRUINS***	**2 pm**
1/20	at Cal State Fullerton	2 pm
1/27	**STANFORD**	**2 pm**
2/1	at Washington	7 pm
	IGI Chicago Style Meet - Chicago, IL	
2/8	vs. Illinois, Stanford, Wash.	7 pm
2/17	at California	2 pm
2/22	at Arizona	7 pm
2/24	**UTAH**	**2 pm**
3/2	**OREGON STATE**	**2 pm**
3/9	**ALABAMA, ARKANSAS, CAL STATE FULLERTON**	**2 pm**
3/15	at Georgia	7:30 pm
3/29	at Pac-10 Championships	6 pm
4/12	at NCAA Regionals	TBD
	NCAA Championships - Athens, GA	
4/24	NCAA Prelims	TBD
4/25	NCAA Super Six	TBD
4/26	NCAA Event Finals	TBD

Home meets are in **BOLD CAPS** and held in Pauley Pavilion. * - Exhibition event at the John Wooden Center.

All times are local to site.

UCLA Career-High Marks

Gymnast	V	UB	BB	FX	AA
Berlin	9.9	9.975	9.875	9.875	39.425
Chan	9.85	9.825	9.95	9.9	39.375
Comforte	10.0	9.95	9.9	9.9	39.525
Jenkins		9.825	9.9	9.875	
Li	9.9	9.95	9.95	9.9	39.55
Padilla	9.875	9.825	9.725	9.85	38.975
J. Schwikert	9.95	9.975	9.925	9.925	39.5
T. Schwikert	9.975	10.0	9.975	10.0	39.825
Team	49.725	49.825	49.725	49.875	198.875

Returning All-Americans

Kristina Comforte - 2006 All-Around, Vault
Anna Li - 2007 All-Around, Beam, Vault*, Bars*
Jordan Schwikert - 2005 Beam*
Tasha Schwikert - 2005 All-Around, Vault, Bars, Beam, Floor; 2007 Bars, All-Around*, Vault*

* denotes second-team All-America honors

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Bruins Open 2008 Season In Vegas — The UCLA gymnastics team, ranked No. 4 in the pre-season coaches poll, will open the 2008 season in a three-team invitational in Las Vegas. The Lady Luck Collegiate Invitational, hosted by Brown's Gymnastics - Las Vegas, will take place at the South Point Hotel & Casino's Exhibition Hall at 7:00 pm. Teams competing are No. 11 Oregon State and No. 18 Arizona State. Tickets to the meet are available at the Exhibit Hall box office for $15. Doors open at 6 pm.

Live Coverage — Live scoring will be available at UCLABruins.com.

In The Rankings — UCLA opens the season ranked No. 4 in the pre-season coaches poll. The Bruins finished fourth at the 2007 NCAA Championships. UCLA will face nine of the Top 25 teams this season, including No. 1 Georgia on the road and No. 3 Utah, No. 5 Stanford and No. 6 Alabama at home.

About The Bruins — Five-time NCAA champion and defending Pac-10 champion UCLA is coached by four-time national coach of the year Valorie Kondos Field. The Bruins return four All-Americans from last year's squad - 2005 NCAA all-around champion and 2000 U.S. Olympian Tasha Schwikert, 2006 NCAA vault runner-up and two-time All-American Kristina Comforte, 2005 balance beam All-American Jordan Schwikert and four-time All-American Anna Li. Also returning is 2006 Pac-10 Co-Freshman of the Year Ariana Berlin, junior Melissa Chan, senior Natalie Padilla and sophomore Ashley Jenkins. In all, UCLA returns eight athletes who competed at the NCAA Championships last season, along with redshirt freshman Brittani McCullough.

The Bruins bring in a talented freshman class of six who will provide a much-needed depth to the squad. The freshman class is a strong mix of Elite and Level 10 gymnasts - two-time World Championships competitor Marci Bernholtz, 2005 Worlds competitor Shavahn Church, 2003 USA Championships competitor Allison Taylor, 2007 Level 10 National bronze medalist Mizuki Sato, 2007 Level 10 Top 5 finisher NiKi Tom and Level 10 regional competitor Talia Kushynski.

With a squad 15-deep, the Bruins have strength in numbers for the first time in a few years, and UCLA will take advantage of that depth as it goes through the regular season in preparation for the post-season, Line-ups are expected to be shuffled continually in order to rest key athletes and give the freshmen more experience, and the battle to make the line-up will give each athlete an added competitive edge.

Schwikerts Come Home For Season Opener — UCLA seniors Tasha and Jordan Schwikert will be back in their hometown of Las Vegas for the first and last time as collegiate athletes. The Schwikerts, who have not competed in the Las Vegas area in four years, trained at Gymcats under coach Cassie Rice and attended Centennial HS. Tasha was a member of the 2000 U.S. Olympic team and went on to win a total of six individual U.S. National Championships, including the all-around titles in 2001 and 2002. Jordan was a U.S. National Team member from 2001-02 and a standout Level 10 competitor in 2004, placing second in the all-around and on bars at the National Championships. At the collegiate level, both are All-Americans, with Tasha winning the 2005 NCAA all-around title along with Pac-10 all-around titles in 2005 and 2007.

Comforte, McCullough Back To Form — After missing either all or most of the 2007 season, redshirt freshman Brittani McCullough and Kristina Comforte are back with a vengeance in 2008. McCullough, a 2005-06 U.S. National Team member, missed all of last year after a November 2006 car accident in which she severed a tendon in her toe. Comforte, also a 2005-06 U.S. National Team member as well as a two-time All-American, was limited to just balance beam in the first month of the 2007 season after undergoing off-season shoulder and ankle surgery, and her injury issues took a turn for the worse in February when an old ankle fracture was discovered, putting her out for the year. Both Comforte and McCullough are expected to be top all-arounders this season.

Church Expected To Redshirt — Freshman Shavahn Church is expected to redshirt the season after undergoing successful knee surgery late last month. Church, who was a late addition to the Bruin squad, joining the team for the start of this winter quarter, will have to wait to make her collegiate debut. The British National Team member was a Top 20 all-around finisher at the 2005 World Championships and won a silver medal on uneven bars at the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Valley Girls — Half of UCLA's six-member freshman class hails from the San Fernando Valley. The Bruins' "Valley Girls" are Shavahn Church (Tarzana/Laurel Springs HS), Talia Kushynski (Sherman Oaks/Van Nuys HS) and NiKi Tom (Northridge/Chatsworth HS). Church and Kushynski trained at Waller's GymJam Academy in Santa Clarita, while Tom trained at JAG in Culver City.

New But Familiar Face — Along with the Bruin freshmen, UCLA has another newcomer to the 2008 squad in assistant coach Jim Foody. But Foody is no stranger to UCLA Gymnastics. He was a member of the UCLA men's gymnastics squad and won the NCAA uneven bars title and the MPSF parallel bars title in 1994. Foody, a 1997 UCLA graduate, was a three-year member of the U.S. National Team and a member of the USA's 1997 World Championship team and 1999 World University Games team. He also competed at the 2000 U.S. Olympic Trials.

Meet The Bruins Set For Jan. 13 — UCLA will host its annual Meet the Bruins exhibition on Sunday, Jan. 13 at the John Wooden Center at 2 pm. Admission is free to the public. Spectators will be treated to exhibition performances and skills demonstrations from the Bruins, as well as question and answer sessions with the gymnasts and UCLA coaches. Fans will also be given a crash course in Gymnastics 101 - an educational look at the construction of gymnastics routines. After the exhibition, spectators can obtain autographs and have pictures taken with the team. Season tickets and media guides will be on sale at the event, and team cards will be distributed at the door.

A Look Back At Last Season — The Bruins had an up-and-down, injury-riddled 2007 regular season but rebounded with outstanding gritty efforts in the post-season to claim the Pac-10 and Regional titles as well as a Top 4 finish at the NCAA Championships.

The injuries hit the Bruins hard early. Freshman Brittani McCullough was lost for the season after severing a tendon in her toe in a car accident in November. All-American sophomore Kristina Comforte was limited to just balance beam after off-season surgery and competed just one month before being sidelined for the rest of the year after the discovery of an old stress fracture in her ankle. Jordan Schwikert was limited to just the uneven bars for the first five meets due to a hamstring injury, and Ariana Berlin was kept off the floor exercise the first month of the season due to leg pain. Just as Schwikert and Berlin came back into the lineup, others followed them out, with Tasha Schwikert sitting out on floor exercise for five meets to rest a strained Achilles and Ashley Jenkins being limited to just balance beam after hyper-extending an elbow. The injury situation became so tenuous in February that UCLA was forced to field just five athletes on floor exercise for two straight weeks, and the lack of bodies helped contribute to losses in those meets to Denver and Oregon State.

Alongside those injuries, however, were instances of others stepping up above and beyond, such as senior Michelle Selesky, a former Level 9 walk-on who had competed sparingly throughout her career. Selesky became a consistent competitor for the Bruins, winning the floor exercise with a 9.9 and placing third on vault with a 9.825 in the season opener to earn a spot on the medals stand for the first time in her career. Selesky maintained her spot in the vault and floor lineups week after week and was rewarded with All-Pac-10 honors on vault. Senior Ashley Peckett stepped into a new all-around role, working her way into the lineup on beam, where she had competed only nine times in her first three years, as the Bruins became short-handed. In her first meet competing as an all-arounder, she scored 39.25 to tie for second and scored a 9.775 on beam to aid the Bruins' cause. Peckett continued to compete in the all-around for most of the season and broke 39 points in six of eight competitions. Junior transfer Natalie Padilla was also a valuable fill-in, providing clutch routines when the Bruins were competing just five-deep.

As UCLA started to get healthier, the Bruins also got more consistent. UCLA avenged the earlier loss at Denver with a 2.5 point victory at home two weeks later. The week after that, the Bruins upset second-ranked Georgia, 197.150-197.000 to snap the Gym Dogs' 27-meet unbeaten streak. A few weeks later, the Bruins reclaimed the Pac-10 title with a season-high score of 197.200, with Tasha Schwikert winning the all-around, vault and floor and tying for the beam title with teammate Anna Li. UCLA also won the NCAA Southeast Regional Championship to once again qualify for the NCAA Championships after a one-year absence.

At the NCAA Championships, UCLA used a strong final two rotations in the team prelims to move ahead of LSU into third place for the final spot in the Super Six Team Finals. UCLA needed a 49.05 on bars (9.805 average) in the final rotation to claim third place ahead of the Tigers. Berlin hit a solid leadoff routine, scoring 9.8. Padilla stepped in for an injured Jenkins and hit her routine for a 9.625. Peckett and Jordan Schwikert came through with 9.8s, and Tasha Schwikert nailed a 9.925. Li needed a 9.725 for the Bruins to advance, and she scored a 9.9 to clinch the team finals berth.

UCLA's ever-present injury issues reared its ugly head the night of team finals, but the Bruins were able to overcome it with grit, heart and character, earning a satisfying fourth-place finish, just .35 out of second place. On each of the first three events, the Bruins had to put in an injured athlete at the end of the rotation for strategical purposes. Yet each time, that athlete came through with scores that counted. First, Jenkins shook off an injured ankle to compete on bars and scored a 9.8 that allowed the Bruins to drop a 9.7 earlier in the rotation. On beam, Peckett stepped in to record a 9.825 in the anchor slot to negate a previous fall. After taking hits on floor the night before, the Bruins rebounded with strong routines. Berlin returned to the lineup despite leg soreness and scored 9.75. Janelle Dantzscher restructured her routine after being dinged in prelims and recorded a 9.875. Peckett and Li earned 9.85 and 9.8, respectively, and Tasha Schwikert erased her earlier prelims mistake on floor and nailed her set for a 9.9. Jordan Schwikert shook off her hamstring injury and hit for a 9.85 to put UCLA just .05 behind second-place Stanford. The Bruins finished strong on vault to pull ahead of the Cardinal, scoring 49.4 for a final mark of 196.925.

Bruins Sign Top-Level Recruiting Class For 2009 — The Bruins received national letters of intent during the early signing period from three standout Level 10 gymnasts. Joining UCLA for the 2009 season will be Vanessa Zamarripa of Shiloh, IL, Kaelie Baer of Columbus, IN and Tauny Frattone of Lake Forest, CA. Also in next year's freshman class is 2006 World Championships bronze medalist Elyse Hopfner-Hibbs of Toronto, Canada, who signed last spring and is deferring enrollment until 2008.

Zamarripa, who trains at Midwest Twisters and attends O'Fallon HS, is one of the most decorated gymnasts in Junior Olympic history, having won the 2007 Senior A national all-around and beam titles, as well as consecutive Junior national all-around titles from 2003-04. Baer, a former Junior National Elite who comes from DeVeau's School of Gymnastics and attends Columbus East HS, tied for the vault title and placed second in the all-around at the 2007 Level 10 National Championships (Senior B division). She also competed at the 2005 Nationals and had a Top 20 finish at the 2004 Nationals, placing fourth on vault, sixth on beam and 10th on floor. Frattone, a three-time Level 10 National Championships competitor, trains at Olympic Gymnastics Academy and attends El Toro HS. At last year's National Championships, she earned a Top 15 all-around finish and placed fifth on floor in the Senior A division. She won the 2007 State all-around and vault titles and earned bronze medals on bars and floor.

2008 UCLA Gymnastics Roster

Name	Ht.	Yr.	Hometown (High School)	Club	Notes
Ariana Berlin	5-2	Jr.	San Diego, CA (Patrick Henry)	SCEGA/South Coast Gymnastics	Scholastic All-American
Marci Bernholtz	5-2	Fr.	Unionville, ON (Thornhill Secondary)	ASF Gymnastics	2-time World Championships competitor
Melissa Chan	5-1	Jr.	Los Gatos, CA (Los Gatos)	Airborne Gymnastics	3-time Level 10 all-around champion
Shavahn Church	5-2	Fr.	Tarzana, CA (Laurel Springs)	Waller's GymJam Academy	Top 20 all-around finish at '05 Worlds
Kristina Comforte	5-4	Jr.	Burr Ridge, IL (Lyons Township)	Illinois Gymnastics Institute	2-time first-team All-American
Ashley Jenkins	5-3	So.	Laguna Niguel, CA (Mater Dei)	SCATS	Former U.S. National Team member
Talia Kushynski	5-2	Fr.	Sherman Oaks, CA (Van Nuys)	Waller's GymJam Academy	Walk-on Level 10 competitor
Anna Li	5-4	So.	Aurora, IL (Waubonsie Valley)	Aerial Gymnastics	Four-time All-American
Brittani McCullough	5-4	RFr.	Corona, CA (Centennial)	SCEGA	2006 U.S. National Team member
Natalie Padilla	5-4	Sr.	San Diego, CA (Bonita Vista)	SCEGA	Competed in 13 of 16 meets in 2007
Mizuki Sato	5-2	Fr.	Fair Oaks, CA (Bella Vista)	Technique Gymnastics	3rd all-around at '07 Level 10 Nat'ls
Jordan Schwikert	5-4	Sr.	Las Vegas, NV (Centennial)	Gymcats	All-American on beam in '05
Tasha Schwikert	5-3	Sr.	Las Vegas, NV (Centennial)	Gymcats	'07 Pac-10, NCAA Regional all-around champion
Allison Taylor	5-3	Fr.	Dallas, TX (Spring Creek Academy)	WOGA	16th all-around at '03 USAs
NiKi Tom	5-0	Fr.	Northridge, CA (Chatsworth)	JAG	Walk-on who placed 5th all-around at '07 Level 10 Nat'ls

Head Coach: Valorie Kondos Field, 18th year
Assistant Head Coach: Chris Waller, 6th year
Assistant Coach: Jim Foody, 1st year
Volunteer Assistant Coach: Marshall Nelson; **Undergraduate Assistant Coaches:** Ashley Peckett, Lindsey Vanden Eykel