


Darion Knight

Aurora, Illinois

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Objective

Dedicated gymnastics professional, nonprofit leader, author, coach, judge, and event director with more than 40 years of experience in the sport of gymnastics seeking the position of Illinois Xcel Gold through Sapphire State Chair. Committed to athlete development, coach education, positive leadership, and strengthening the Illinois gymnastics community through collaboration, communication, and service. Passionate about creating opportunities for athletes while fostering an environment that supports growth, inclusion, and long-term participation in gymnastics.

Professional Summary

Accomplished gymnastics professional with extensive experience at the club, state, regional, and national levels. Owner of Prairie Gymnastics Club, President of the Windy City Gymnastics Foundation, and Event Director of the nationally recognized Windy City Invitational. Author of the memoir *Did I Make You Proud*, which chronicles a personal journey through athletics, family, perseverance, and leadership.

Recognized for leadership in athlete development, competition management, nonprofit governance, community outreach, and advancing opportunities for gymnasts throughout Illinois. Dedicated to creating positive experiences for athletes, coaches, judges, and families while supporting the continued growth of gymnastics across the state.

Gymnastics Experience

Prairie Gymnastics Club — Owner / Head Coach

Batavia, Illinois

- Co-owner and operator of a successful competitive gymnastics club.
 - Oversees athlete development, staff management, program planning, and daily operations.
 - Works with athletes across developmental and competitive levels.
 - Develops long-term training systems focused on physical preparation, athlete retention, and competitive success.
 - Mentors coaches and supports professional development within the organization.
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Windy City Gymnastics Foundation — President

Chicago, Illinois

The Windy City Gymnastics Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding access to gymnastics opportunities for underserved youth throughout Chicagoland. The Foundation provides scholarships, financial assistance, and support programs designed to help young athletes participate in the sport regardless of economic circumstances.

Responsibilities

- Provide strategic leadership and vision for the organization.
 - Lead fundraising initiatives and donor development efforts.
 - Oversee scholarship programs and athlete assistance initiatives.
 - Chair Board of Directors meetings and governance activities.
 - Develop partnerships with businesses, community organizations, and gymnastics stakeholders.
 - Promote the Foundation's mission through public outreach and advocacy.
 - Ensure financial stewardship and long-term organizational sustainability.
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Windy City Invitational — Event Director

Chicago, Illinois

- Direct one of the largest gymnastics invitationals in the United States.
 - Oversee an annual event hosting more than 3,700 athletes and approximately 10,000 spectators.
 - Coordinate women's artistic, men's artistic, collegiate, and T&T competitions.
 - Manage event operations, scheduling, staffing, sponsorships, venue coordination, and volunteer management.
 - Collaborate with coaches, judges, collegiate programs, and gymnastics organizations from across the country and internationally.
 - Lead strategic growth initiatives that have significantly increased event participation and visibility.
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USA Gymnastics Men's Judge

Illinois

- National-rated men's gymnastics judge.
 - Over 10 years of judging experience.
 - Strong understanding of judging procedures, athlete evaluation, competition management, and rules interpretation.
 - Committed to professionalism, consistency, fairness, and athlete-centered judging.
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Athletic Background

Former Competitive Gymnast

- Former member of the **USGF Men's Junior National Developmental Team**.
 - Former USGF Junior Olympic athlete.
 - 1993 Illinois High School Association (IHSA) Floor Exercise State Champion.
 - Competed at state, regional, and national levels throughout his gymnastics career.
 - More than 40 years of involvement in gymnastics as an athlete, coach, judge, administrator, and leader.
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Leadership & Service

Candidate – Illinois Xcel Gold Through Sapphire State Chair

As State Chair, I would focus on:

- Supporting the continued growth and success of the Illinois Xcel Program.
 - Improving communication among coaches, clubs, meet directors, and state leadership.
 - Promoting athlete retention through positive and rewarding competitive experiences.
 - Encouraging coach education and professional development opportunities.
 - Supporting consistent, organized, and athlete-focused state championship events.
 - Advocating for opportunities that strengthen participation across all Xcel divisions.
 - Building collaboration and unity throughout the Illinois gymnastics community.
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Community Involvement

President, Windy City Gymnastics Foundation

- Founded and currently lead a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing access to gymnastics opportunities.
 - Established scholarship programs benefiting young athletes from underserved communities.
 - Works closely with local gymnastics clubs, community organizations, and donors to expand participation in the sport.
 - Promotes diversity, inclusion, and long-term athlete development through charitable initiatives.
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Published Author

Author – *Did I Make You Proud*

- Published memoir sharing a personal journey through gymnastics, family, adversity, perseverance, and leadership.
- Uses storytelling to inspire athletes, coaches, parents, and community leaders.
- Promotes the values of resilience, accountability, personal growth, and service to others.

Professional Memberships & Certifications

- Professional Member, USA Gymnastics
 - National-Rated Men's Gymnastics Judge
 - SafeSport Certified
 - Background Check Certified
 - Continuing Education Participant in Athlete Development, Coaching, and Event Management
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Core Competencies

- Gymnastics Leadership
 - Athlete Development
 - Xcel Program Knowledge
 - Event Management
 - Nonprofit Leadership
 - Board Governance
 - Fundraising & Sponsorship Development
 - Coach Education
 - Competition Operations
 - Public Speaking
 - Strategic Planning
 - Community Outreach
 - Volunteer Management
 - Team Building
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References

Available upon request.

Candidate Statement

"Gymnastics has shaped every stage of my life—as an athlete, coach, judge, club owner, nonprofit leader, event director, and author. I am committed to serving the Illinois gymnastics community by supporting our athletes, empowering our coaches, strengthening communication, and ensuring that the Xcel Program continues to thrive for years to come." – **Darion Knight**