



**JIM CURZI**



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**BUTLER'S GREATEST ALL-AROUND GYMNAST**





**GEORGE NISSEN, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND INFLUENTIAL DEVELOPERS OF AMERICAN GYMNASTICS, PRESENTS JIM CURZI WITH THE FIRST NISSEN AWARD IN 1966. CURZI WAS NCAA DIVISION ONE PARALLEL BAR AND HIGH BAR CHAMPION AND WAS AN ALL-AMERICAN IN EACH OF HIS THREE YEARS OF VARSITY COMPETITION.**



**JIM CURZI WAS THE FIRST WINNER OF THE PRESTIGIOUS NISSEN AWARD PRESENTED TO THE MOST OUTSTANDING SENIOR GYMNAST IN NCAA DIVISION ONE.**





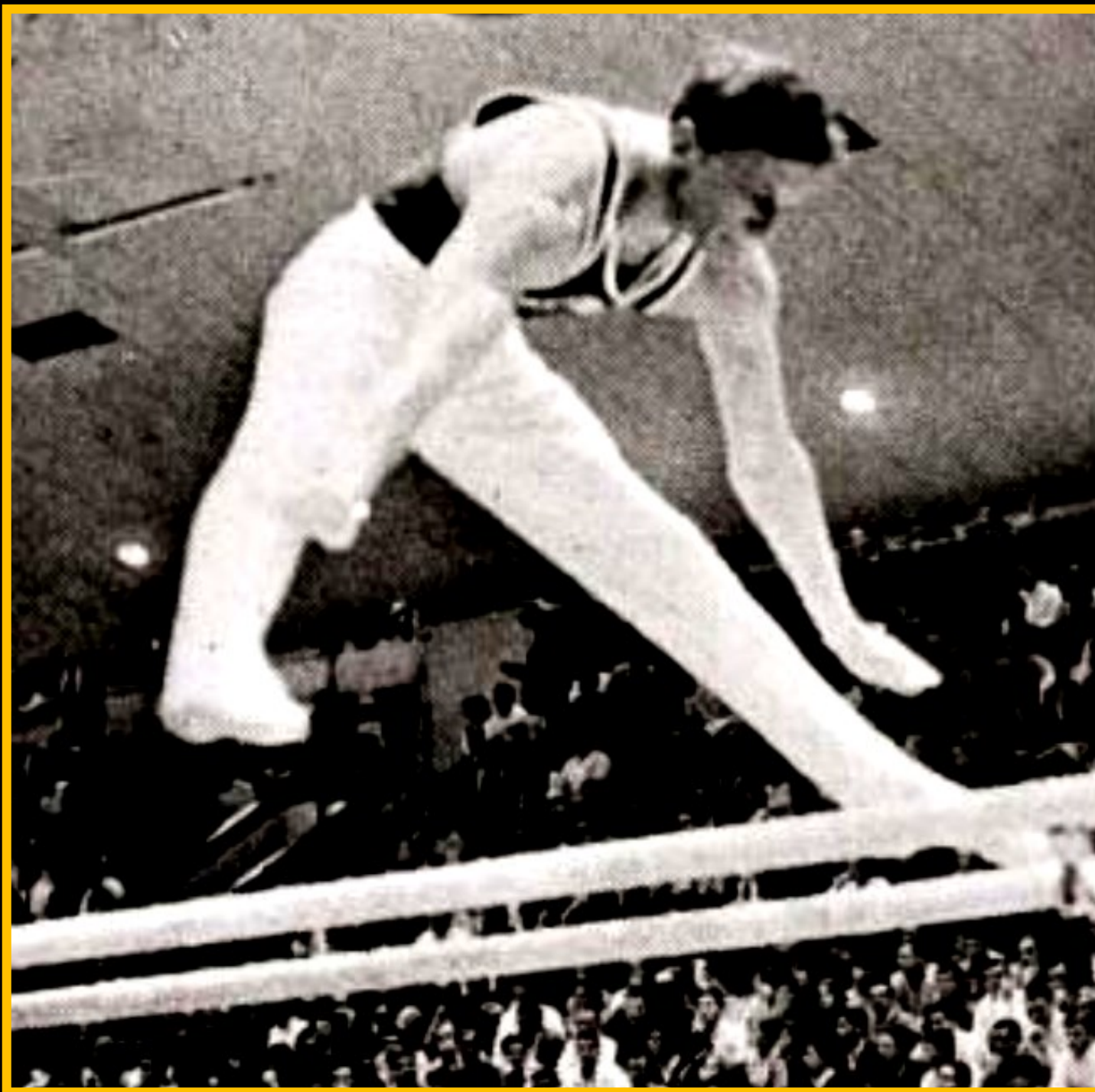
**THE FIRST NISSEN AWARD, GYMNASTICS EQUIVALENT OF FOOTBALL'S HEISMAN TROPHY, PRESENTED ANNUALLY TO THE BEST GYMNAST IN NCAA DIVISION ONE.**



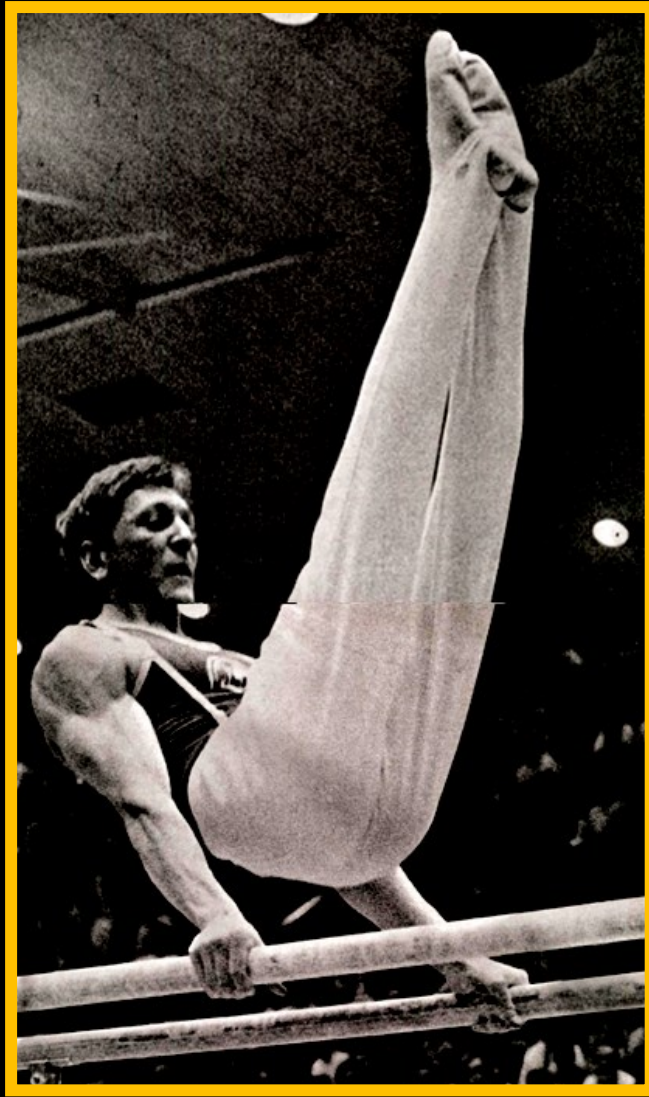
**AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, JIM CURZI WAS AN ALL-AMERICAN ALL-AROUND GYMNAST, BUT HE EXCELLED ON HIGH BAR. HIS DOUBLE INVERTED AND DOUBLE GERMAN GIANTS WERE TECHNICALLY, STYLISTICALLY AND CREATIVELY WORLD CLASS.**

**HIS UNIQUE KEHRE IN TO GERMAN GIANTS, HIS HIGH AND FREE HOP PIROUETTE OUT OF ELGRIPS. HIS HIGH AND FREE VAULT, AND HIS BEST-IN-THE-WORLD FLYAWAY WERE HIGH POINTS IN A ROUTINE WHICH WENT UNMATCHED FOR NEARLY A DECADE.**





**CURZI'S PARALLEL BAR ROUTINE WAS ALSO WORLD CLASS. IT INCLUDED A LOCK ARM BASKET HAND, A BACK TOSS TO HAND, AND A STUTZ TO HAND, ALL HIGH AND FREE FLOWING. HIS FRONT UPRISE AND STRADDLE CUT SKILLS WERE TAKEN TO THE MAXIMUM IN EXECUTION AND STYLE. HIS CONTEMPORARIES IMMEDIATELY GAVE JIM A STANDING OVATION AS HE STUCK HIS DISMOUNT AND WAS THE OBVIOUS WINNER AT THE 1966 NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS AT PENN STATE.**



**AS AN ALL-AROUND GYMNAST, CURZI'S FLOOR EXERCISE, POMMEL HORSE, STILL RINGS AND LONG HORSE VAULT WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM A POTENTIAL AMERICAN OLYMPIAN; HIS PARALLEL BARS AND HIGH BAR WERE WORLD CLASS. THE ROUTINE COMPOSITIONS WERE CREATIVE AND ARTISTICALLY EXECUTED, WITH RISK, ORIGINALITY AND VIRTUOSITY PREDOMINANT. ON THESE TWO EVENTS JIM RAISED THE STANDARD FOR GYMNASTS TO FOLLOW AND ACHIEVE.**





**THE 1966 MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY TEAM, COACHED BY COACH OF THE YEAR GEORGE SYPULA, WAS RANKED NUMBER ONE IN THE NATION AND EXPECTED TO WIN THE NACC TEAM TITLE. LED BY TWO POTENTIAL OLYMPIANS, JIM CURZI AND DAVE THOR, EXPECTATIONS WERE HIGH. THEN NEAR THE END OF THE SEASON CURZI SUFFERED AN INJURY WHICH LIMITED HIS ABILITY TO PERFORM IN THE ALL-AROUND. WITHOUT CURZI'S FULL ALL-AROUND SCORE, THE TEAM FINISHED A CLOSE THIRD IN THE CHAMPIONSHIPS HELD AT PENN STATE, DESPITE BEATING FIRST PLACE SOUTHERN ILLINOIS ON FOUR EVENTS.**

**THE INJURY CONTINUED TO PLAGUE CURZI AND PREVENTED HIM FROM THE OLYMPIC TRIALS, AND A POTENTIAL PLACE ON THE OLYMPIC TEAM. TEAMMATE DAVE THOR SUCCESSFULLY MADE THE OLYMPIC TEAM. THE FINAL TEAM INCLUDED STEVE HUG, FRED ROESTHELISBERGER, SID FREUDENSTEIN, STEVE COHEN, KONATTI ALLEN, RICHARD LLOYD AND JIM CULHANE.**





**JIM CURZI INFLUENCED MANY BUTLER HIGH GYMNASTS, SOME OF WHOM ALSO WENT ON TO COMPETE IN NCAA GYMNASTICS. THIS PICTURE, TAKEN IN 1967 AT A HOME TOWN CONGRATULATORY EVENT HONORING CURZI, SHOWS A FEW WHO WERE ABLE TO ATTEND. THE BACK ROW, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT , INCLUDES JOHN DALLER, DAN D" ANIELLO, TOM HORNE, KEN MUSKO, DAVE MCKINNIS, DAVE SHIDEMANTLE, AND JIM SACCO. IN FRONT ARE DAVE CROFT, JIM CURZI, AND CLIFF DIEHL. IN THE BACKGROUND IS A PAINTING DONE BY BUTLER HIGH AND PENN STATE FOOTBALL GREAT, BILL RETTIG. AFTER CURZI'S DEATH IN 2020, THE PAINTING AND ALSO THE NISSEN AWARD BOTH DISAPPEARED, THEIR WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN.**





Former Butler gymnastics coach Paul Uram, right, shares a moment with standout gymnast Jim Curzi. Both were key elements to the Golden Tornado's run of success in the sport.

**JIM CURZI IS WIDELY RECOGNIZED AS THE BEST ALL-AROUND GYMNAST EVER COACHED BY PAUL URAM.**

**CURZI IS IN THE MICHIGAN STATE GYMNASTICS HALL OF FAME, THE BUTLER HIGH SPORTS HALL OF FAME, THE PENNSYLVANIA SPORTS HALL OF FAME, AND THE BUTLER COUNTY SPORTS HALL OF FAME.**

**URAM IS IN THE NATIONAL GYMNASTICS HALL OF FAME, THE NATIONAL GYMNASTICS JUDGES HALL OF FAME, THE SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY SPORTS HALL OF FAME, THE BUTLER HIGH SPORTS HALL OF FAME, THE PENNSYLVANIA SPORTS HALL OF FAME, AND THE BUTLER COUNTY SPORTS HALL OF FAME.**





**THE VERY BEGINNING  
OF COACH URAM'S  
LYNDORA GYMNASTICS  
PROGRAM WHICH  
BECAME THE FORE-  
RUNNER OF BUTLER  
HIGH GYMNASTICS.**

**JIM CURZI,  
A THIRD GRADER  
IN THIS HISTORIC  
PHOTO.**



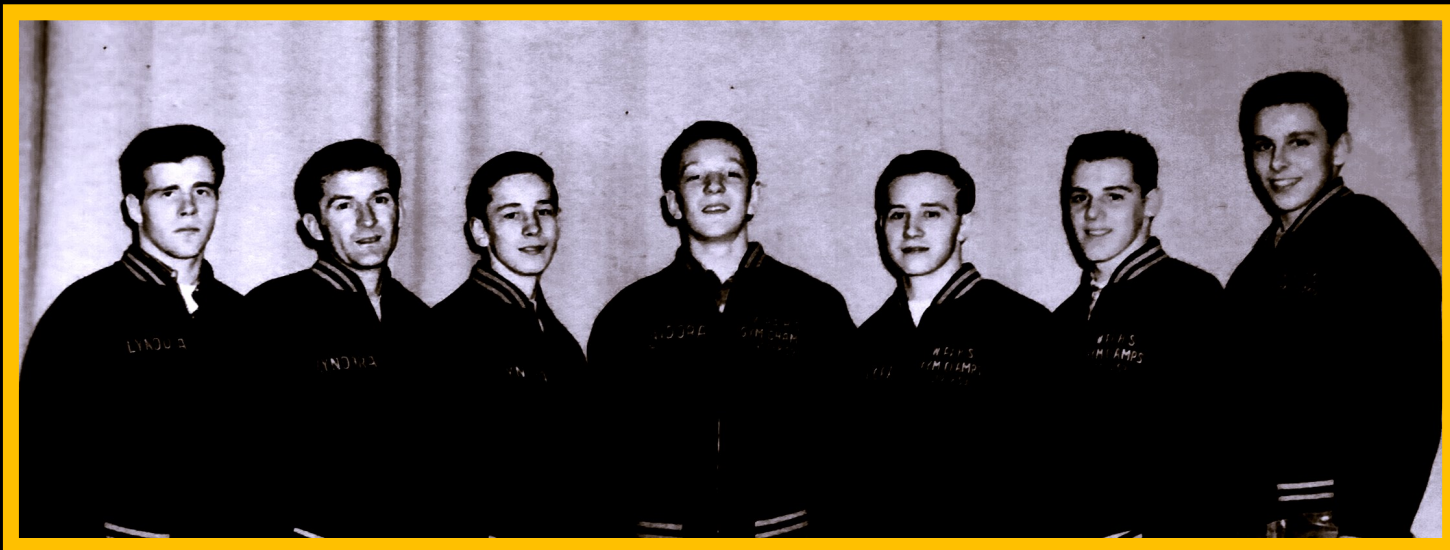


**PAUL URAM'S  
FIRST  
LYNDORA  
TEAM**

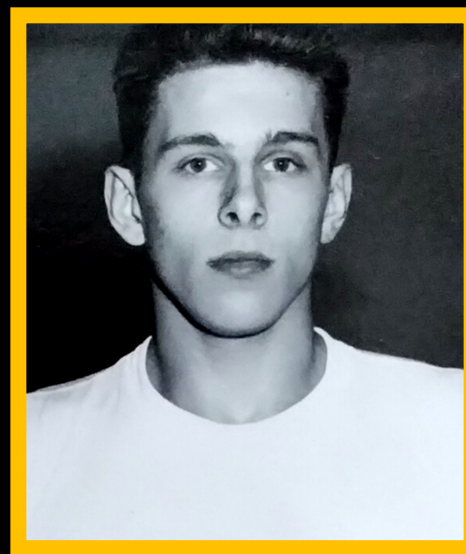
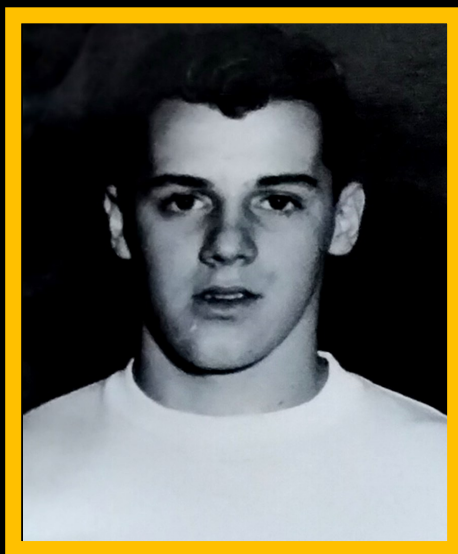


**JIM CURZI  
ALL-AROUND  
GYMNAST  
BEGINNING HIS  
GYMNASTICS  
CAREER**





**DAVE JOHNSON, COACH URAM, GEORGE JANKOVICH,  
JIM CURZI, JOHN FRANCHUK, BILL ERDOS, KEN MUSKO**



**BILL ERDOS, JIM CURZI AND KEN MUSKO WERE THE THREE  
ALL-AROUND GYMNASTS WHO FORMED THE NUCLEUS OF  
THE PIONEERING LYNDORA TEAM WHICH BECAME THE  
ORIGINAL BUTLER HIGH GYMNASTICS TEAM,**



THE U.S.

NOVEMBER 1968

50¢

# GYMNAST

MAGAZINE

**PROFESSIONAL GYMNASTICS**

STORY ON PAGE 28



## U.S. GYMNAST MAGAZINE NOVEMBER 1968

The 1st National Professional Gymnastics Championships, held at Cedar Rapids, was hosted by the Nissen Corporation in conjunction with the National Professional Gymnastics Association. The meet was without a doubt a great success.

In all, 17 athletes competed in this first tournament. An unfortunate bicep injury to Art Shurlock during the previous week reoccurred during the preliminaries and forced Art to default in the middle of the competition.

In contrast to amateur gymnastic meets which are conducted on a grading point system, professional gymnastics features match competition in the form of double elimination tournaments.

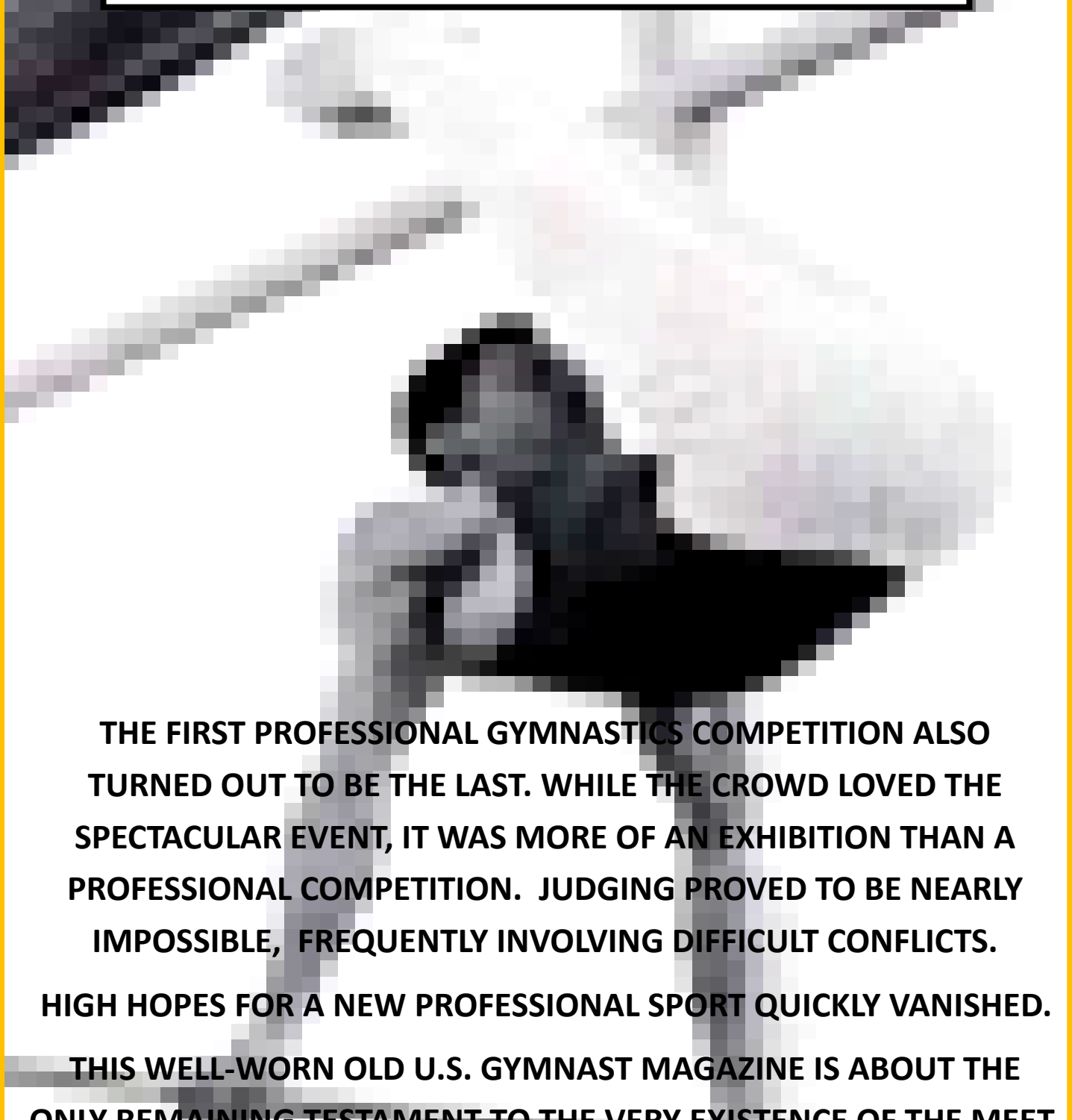
Competitors competed in pairs, alternately presenting an optional routine. No score or mark was assigned. The judges only had to decide which of the two performers presented the better over-all routine. In making their decision the judges took into consideration the difficulty and combination rating of the routine along with form of execution.





**RARE AND WELL-WORN COPY OF AN HISTORIC  
PHOTO OF JIM CURZI COMPETING IN THE ONE  
AND ONLY PROFESSIONAL GYMNASTICS**

**First Annual**  
**PROFESSIONAL GYMNASTIC CHAMPIONSHIP**



**THE FIRST PROFESSIONAL GYMNASTICS COMPETITION ALSO TURNED OUT TO BE THE LAST. WHILE THE CROWD LOVED THE SPECTACULAR EVENT, IT WAS MORE OF AN EXHIBITION THAN A PROFESSIONAL COMPETITION. JUDGING PROVED TO BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE, FREQUENTLY INVOLVING DIFFICULT CONFLICTS. HIGH HOPES FOR A NEW PROFESSIONAL SPORT QUICKLY VANISHED. THIS WELL-WORN OLD U.S. GYMNAST MAGAZINE IS ABOUT THE ONLY REMAINING TESTAMENT TO THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THE MEET. CURZI'S PERFORMANCES ON PARALLEL BARS AND HIGH BAR WERE OUTSTANDING AND DEFINITELY CROWD PLEASERS.**





**JIM CURZI SERVED AS ASSISTANT COACH AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY AND ALSO A ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY BEFORE RETURNING TO TEACH IN THE BUTLER SCHOOL DISTRICT AND BE ASSISTANT GYMNASTICS COACH FOR ONE YEAR. HE THEN MOVED ON TO BE AN ASSISTANT COACH FOR THE ST. LOUIS FOOTBALL CARDINALS FOR TWO YEARS BEFORE BECOMING ASSISTANT FOOTBALL COACH FOR THE WASHINGTON REDSKINS FOOTBALL TEAM. CURZI, ALWAYS RESTLESS YET ALWAYS YEARNING FOR PRIVACY, MOVED TO FLORIDA AND WORKED IN A VARIETY OF POSITIONS IN PRIVATE BUSINESS. FINALLY OPTING FOR A QUIETER LIFE, JIM SETTLED IN RURAL FLORIDA. JIM CURZI PASSED AWAY IN 2020. JIM CURZI WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED BY THE BUTLER GYMNASTICS COMMUNITY AS BUTLER'S GREATEST ALL-AROUND GYMNAST.**