

NEW MEXICO SPORTS HALL OF FAME

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

TRENT DIMAS

OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST



 *Trent Dimas*
2014 NMSHF INDUCTEE

There were plenty of obvious reasons for the enormous pressure gymnast Trent Dimas felt that late night in Barcelona in the summer of 1992.

For starters, there was an Olympic gold medal at stake. The 21-year-old Dimas was the last hope for the American men's team that up to that point had failed to win a single medal.

To win, Dimas would have to beat three of the best gymnasts in the world—Grigory Misutin of Ukraine, Andreas Wecker of West Germany and China's Li Jing.

And Dimas was a longshot—quite possibly the biggest underdog of these Summer Games. It would take, he knew, a performance for the ages for him to get the Gold.

"You are in the largest and most prestigious competition in the world," says Dimas now of that night.

"(It was) the biggest competition that I would ever be in, with some of the greatest athletes that the world has known. I was not among those. I was scared. I had a lot of fear inside of me."

But in the moments before he mounted the high bar, the butterflies and nerves racing through Dimas' body centered on things much more personal, much more poignant.

He thought of his parents, Teddy and Bonnie, a couple of modest means who had saved and sacrificed to make sure the flame in Trent's Olympic dream kept burning. His dad, a lifelong bricklayer, helped build the gym in which Trent did his training. Trent's mother made sure Trent and his brother Ted—

himself a two-time All American gymnast at Nebraska—never missed a practice, made every meet. It was Ted, two years older than Trent and nicknamed "the Bull," who taught him the virtues of the cliché, "there's no gain without pain."

Understandably, that self-imposed pressure weighed more heavily on Trent's young shoulders than any medal.

"I didn't want to let my family, my coach down. The people who had put a lot of trust in me," says Dimas. "This wasn't just for me. It was for all those people. The winters (dad) laying block in Angel Fire in sub-freezing temperatures. All the hours my mother spent driving us back and forth to the gym. That support system made it possible for us to do well because it taught us the fundamental aspect of success, which is responsibility."

It turned out that on this night, on this stage, fear was a good thing.

In what would be his greatest 30 seconds and change on the perilous high bar, Dimas put on a dazzling, audience-captivating performance. His three release and catch moves above the bar were flawless. And when he stuck the landing—a rarity in this event even in the Olympics, Dimas amazed even himself.

"Oh My God," said Dimas.

When the winning score of 9.875 flashed, Dimas leaped into the arms of his coach, Ed Burch, and into the Olympic record book.

His performance and victory were even more impressive when you consider there were no American judges scoring the high bar that night. It was a panel of judges that included a Russian, West German and Chinese who did the scoring.

It was so good that Dimas thinks there were other forces at work that night besides his talent.

"To stick that dismount and do a perfect routine, all at the Olympics ... it's not possible to accept it was all of my doing. In my opinion, there was some divine intervention in what occurred."

His faith and religious roots have been a foundation of his career and life, says Trent.

"Jesus Christ is a very central theme in my life," he says. "I approached my athletics in one way and that was I was doing gymnastics for the pleasure of glorifying God. In the gym, it was not about whether I was first or whether I was last. My happiness came out knowing I could go out and do my very best. At the end of the day, for me it was a matter of bowing my head and saying, 'Lord, I want to please you with this.'"

Dimas, who was born on Nov. 10, 1970, began gymnastics at the age of five and climbed steadily through the ranks and levels of gymnastic competition. By the time he was 13 he was a member of the U.S. junior national team and at age 15 made the U.S. senior national team.

Trent went on to the University of Nebraska, where he was a three-time All American. With Dimas on the team, the Cornhuskers won the NCAA title in 1990. He left Nebraska after his freshman year to train fulltime for the Olympics.

In 1991, Dimas competed in the Pan American Games in Havana, Cuba, where he won bronze medals in the high bar and floor exercise. He was on the U.S. team that won the silver medal at the Goodwill Games in Seattle the summer of 1991 and was a member of the U.S. team at the World Championships in France in 1992.

Post-career, Dimas returned to school and earned a degree in political science from Columbia University and a law degree from the University of New Mexico. Today, he's a professional fund-raiser and uses his law degree to do pro bono work for the homeless.

Dimas has traveled much of the world, but Albuquerque and New Mexico will always be home.

"I'm really proud of New Mexico and I really love Albuquerque," he says. "There is something special about these people and I think that was something that carried me—knowing that I was representing not just myself, not just my family, but the people back home."