



## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Olympian: Kyle Shewfelt

Sport: Gymnastics

Best Performance: gold medal,

Athens 2004

What is your fondest memory from the Games?

They were all so different. I remember in Sydney being that wide-eyed kid who didn't know anything about the world of sports but was so in awe with the Olympic rings everywhere. But I think one of the best moments was in 2004. On the day of my Olympic final, I just remember feeling so ready and now as a retired athlete, I look back at that moment and just think: wow – it was crazy how everything came together in that moment, how ready I was and how I was prepared to face the challenge. And that's what I look for in my day to day, that same kind of feeling.

Do you still keep in touch with your teammates and/or coaches, if so, in what context?

Yes I do. I still keep in touch with my coach, Kelly Manjak and he is one of my best friends and I talk with him every week at least. We're both going through similar life circumstances right now and we've both recently just opened our gymnastics centers. I'm in Calgary and he's in Mississauga area and we are always collaborating and exchanging ideas as business owners. We're also great friends and we always do take time to reminisce. I try to keep in touch with my teammates. I think we all go in different directions but I think being Olympians keeps us bonded and we can always exchange stories about Games. I do have a lot of friends from other sports. I always reconnect with my fellow Olympians. It's a bond that you just can't recreate. It is a very deep bond.

What makes the Olympic team chemistry so special and why?

First and foremost, we all dreamed the same dream. At night, every one of us dreamt of what it would feel like to stand on the Olympic podium and what it would be like to compete at the Olympic Games. But more importantly, we've all woken up in the morning and had the goal and the focus and we all applied ourselves. And we all like to have fun, we live hard and we play hard and we don't do things half-heartedly.

What made you passionate about your sport and how do you apply it to your life now?

It's one of those sports where you feel so much freedom. You get to fly, jump, swing, hang and it's just the ultimate test of physical strength and mental strength. Every day I faced a direct challenge from the sport. It was like my best friend and my biggest enemy. That being said, the sport has given my life so much and it's created so much confidence for myself in my ability to set a goal and to achieve it. I think that's really been proven to me again by opening this center. I was again, like a little kid with this vision and it was like going to the Olympics and it was

applying myself and building the plan and pushing myself through the days when I didn't want to do the work that had to get done. But I figured out a way to do it because that's what being an Olympian is about.

**Where do you live now and what are your passions today?**

I live in Calgary and I'm a very passionate Calgarian. This city is just incredible. I'm also very passionate about community even more than I was as an athlete. I think as an athlete sometimes you have to be quite self-centered in order to achieve your goal. Now I'm very passionate about helping others reach their goals and full potential. I'm also very passionate about exercise and activity and I ran my first marathon two years ago. I'm passionate about new challenges; being active and being healthy. I really try each day to get the most out of life.

**Who was the most influential person in your career?**

There's a few that pop up in my mind. First, there's my coach Kelly Manjak. He was such a willing participant in the journey. He was a young coach when we started out and he reached out to his mentors, to some of the best coaches in the world. He brought in resources and he wasn't afraid to not know the answer but he always found the answer. He was there to protect me and I feel like he made sure I was always healthy, always safe and always feeling passionate. He would always ask me at the beginning of the day why are you here? What's your plan, your goal? And if I didn't have an answer, he wouldn't let me into the gym until I had one! He would say: I don't want to see you here for four hours if you don't want to be here and don't have a reason to be working. That was very influential!

And my parents, my mum and dad were something special. After winning my gold medal in Athens my dad said to me: I worked a lot of bingos for that gold medal! And it's true, my parents were so dedicated, they drove me to the gym, they paid the bills, and my mum was president of the club for a while. They did everything and anything that they had to so that I never had to worry.

Also my sport psychologist. I started working with him when I was 13 years old. He's just really helped me stay on track. There's a lot of emotions you go through when you're trying to be the best in the world. He helped me with different techniques about how to stay focused and try to achieve excellence.

**What was the most important lesson you learned as an Olympian?**

The most important would be to be a good person, before a good athlete. Aim to be a good person before being a good athlete. At the end of the day, sport does end and you want to have good relationships. You want to have made friends around the world. Sport is sport but aim to be a good person.

I did commentary at the London Games and after them I kind of did a "gut check" and realised that I didn't want gymnastics to be in and out of my life once every two years and that's when I decided I wanted to open the centre.

Winning a gold medal, that's just a moment. And then you ask, what comes next? The true value is to use the gold medal as a platform to give back and to make a positive impact in your community. There's no better place than to share my love of gymnastics at my center with kids. That's where the real value is in my Olympic accomplishment!

### Word of advice?

Each day you have the opportunity to be your best. As an athlete, I never tried to be the best in the world, I always tried to be *my* best and that's what I always aim for. I have a quote by the centre's locker room: "Do your best today", and you're the only who can determine what that is for you.