

2004 Big Ten Men's Gymnasts of the Week

March 16

Luis Vargas, SO, PENN STATE

Rio Pedros, Puerto Rico/University of Puerto Rico Vargas was victorious in all four of his events to lead Penn State to a victory against Army and earn the first Big Ten Gymnast of the Week award of his career. The Nittany Lions sophomore posted scores above 9.000 in every event to place first in the pommel horse (9.700), high bar (9.400), parallel bars (9.350) and floor exercise (9.050). Vargas, who earned All-Big Ten honors as a freshman last season, posted a career-high on the floor exercise and a season-best on the parallel bars. He joins teammates Kevin Tan (February 11) and Chad Buczek (February 25) as the third PSU gymnast to be selected this season, which leads all Conference schools.

March 9

Justin Spring, SO, ILLINOIS

Burke, Va./Lake Braddock Spring established a school record in the all-around and placed among the top three in four of six events at No. 2 Oklahoma to repeat as Big Ten Gymnast of the Week. Competing in the all-around for just the second time in his career, the Illini sophomore placed third with a score of 54.850 to break the previous program high. He also set a school record with a score of 9.700 to win the parallel bars while finishing third on the high bar (9.550), floor exercise (9.250) and vault (9.350). Illinois' team score of 221.975 is a program record and the second-highest in the nation this year, as the host Sooners produced a tally of 225.200 to win the meet. Spring has now claimed Gymnast of the Week honors five times in his career, all in the past six weeks.

March 2

Justin Spring, SO, ILLINOIS

Burke, Va./Lake Braddock Spring was victorious in four of the five events he entered and set or tied two of his own school records against Temple to earn his fourth Big Ten Gymnast of the Week award this season. The Illini sophomore posted a school-record score of 9.80 to win the floor exercise, surpassing his previous program-best of 9.75, and equaled his own school record with a tally of 9.80 to place first on the high bar. He also won the parallel bars with a 9.55 (just shy of his school record of 9.6) and the vault with a 9.450. His score of 9.15 on the still rings was just off his career-high of 9.2 and good for fourth place. Spring now owns the top 10 floor exercise scores and the top five high bar scores in program history. The Virginia native led Illinois to a team score of 221.550, the second-highest in the nation this year behind the Illini's school-record 221.575 performance against Illinois-Chicago two weeks ago. He has now claimed Gymnast of the Week honors four times in his career, all in the past six weeks.

February 25

Justin Laury, SO, MICHIGAN

Marietta, Ga./McEachern Laury established a school record to win the all-around against three other top-10 programs and collect a share of Big Ten Gymnast of the Week honors. The Michigan sophomore produced a career-best score of 55.150 to claim the all-around crown against No. 3 Oklahoma, No. 8 Nebraska and No. 9 Minnesota while boosting the Wolverines to a season-high tally of 218.225 to place second in the event. He also rated among the top four in the pommel horse (3rd at 9.45), still rings (3rd at 9.50) and floor exercise (4th at 9.30). Laury, who earns his first weekly Big Ten award, is the first Michigan gymnast to be honored this season.

Chad Buczek, SO, PENN STATE

Bridgewater, Mass./Bridgewater Raynham Buczek shares Conference weekly accolades after placing among the top three in four of six events to lead the fifth-ranked Nittany Lions to an upset of No. 4 Ohio State. The PSU sophomore tied for first on the parallel bars with a career-high score of 9.300 and also tallied career-bests to place second in the all-around (54.250) and seventh on the high bar (9.050). In addition, he finished second on the still rings (9.550) and floor exercise (9.350) and tied for third on the vault (9.350). Buczek collects his first weekly Big Ten honor and is the second Nittany Lion to be chosen in the last three weeks along with teammate Kevin Tan (February 11).

February 18

Justin Spring, SO, ILLINOIS

Burke, Va./Lake Braddock Spring established career-highs in three events and broke a pair of school records in the process to earn Big Ten Gymnast of the Week accolades, as he led Illinois to the highest team score in school history. The Illini sophomore shattered his own program records to win the parallel bars (9.600) and high bar (9.800) crowns, set another career-high to finish fifth on the still rings (9.200) and placed first on the vault (9.450). Illinois' tally of 221.575 points against Illinois-Chicago marked the highest score in the nation this season and propelled the team to the No. 1 spot in the latest national rankings. The last time the school appeared at the top of the national poll was in 1989, which was the last year the Illini won the Big Ten and NCAA titles. Spring collects the third Conference weekly award of his career, as he has been honored in three of the past four weeks.

February 11

Kevin Tan, SR, PENN STATE

Fremont, Calif./Mission San Jose Tan earns Big Ten Gymnast of the Week honors after becoming the lone Conference student-athlete to claim an event title at the prestigious Winter Cup Challenge, which features nearly 100 of the country's top elite gymnasts along with several foreign competitors. The Penn State senior placed first in the still rings competition for the second straight year in this meet, posting a score of 9.875 in the event finals. In the preliminary round, he registered a career-high tally of 9.925 in the event. The defending Big Ten and NCAA champion in the still rings also compiled an all-around score of 52.875 to place 17th among all gymnasts. In his final season on campus, Tan is aiming to become the first three-time All-Big Ten selection in school history after earning All-League honors in both 2002 and 2003. The two-time Academic All-Conference pick has claimed the last two still rings crowns at the Big Ten Championships, as he could become just the sixth three-time winner in that event and the first since Michigan's Darrell Yee collected three straight titles from 1979 to 1981. Tan nabs the third Big Ten Gymnast of the Week award of his career, as he was chosen once in each of the past two seasons.

February 4

Justin Spring, SO, ILLINOIS

Burke, Va./Lake Braddock Spring set career-highs on each of his five events and claimed four titles against No. 1 Ohio State to earn a share of his second straight Big Ten Gymnast of the Week honor. Under a new scoring system, he set school records in each of his four triumphs, winning the floor exercise (9.750), vault (9.650), parallel bars (9.300) and high bar (9.750) while also establishing a career high to place fourth on the still rings (9.100). Spring boosted the Illini to a school-record score of 219.000, which is the highest road score in the nation this year.

Randy Monahan, JR, OHIO STATE

Elizabethtown, Pa./Central Pennsylvania Academy of Gymnastics Monahan claims a share of the weekly Big Ten award for the third time in four weeks after winning the all-around and leading the top-ranked Buckeyes to a season-best score (220.200) to knock off No. 3 Illinois. The OSU junior won his fourth straight all-around title with a score of 55.350, his second-highest tally this season behind the NCAA record of 56.500 he set earlier this year. Monahan posted career-high scores to claim the still rings title (9.700) and tie for the top spot in the floor exercise (9.750), while also placing among the top four in the high bar (3rd with 9.550) and vault (4th with 9.300).

January 28

Justin Spring, SO, ILLINOIS

Burke, Va./Lake Braddock Spring finished among the top three in four events, claiming titles on the floor exercise and parallel bars, to lead the Illini to a school-record team score of 218.900 in their victory over No. 8 Minnesota. The Illinois sophomore, who is the nation's top-ranked performer in the floor exercise, won his third floor title in as many meets with a score of 9.5 while also placing first on the parallel bars with a tally of 9.1. The two-time All-American added a second-place finish on the vault (9.425) and a third-place result on the high bar (9.35). Spring earns the first Big Ten Gymnast of the Week award of his career and is the first Illini to be honored in nearly two years, as Bob Rogers was the last Illinois gymnast to collect the accolade on February 11, 2002.

January 21

Randy Monahan, JR, OHIO STATE

Elizabethtown, Pa./Central Pennsylvania Academy of Gymnastics Monahan earns his second straight Big Ten Gymnast of the Week award after leading Ohio State past Minnesota while winning the all-around, high bar, vault and still rings. The defending Conference Gymnast of the Year compiled a career- and national-high score of 56.500 in the all-around while posting career-highs in four events -- the high bar (9.850 - 1st), still rings (9.600 - 1st), pommel horse (9.550 - 3rd) and parallel bars (9.150 - 3rd). Monahan was also victorious on the vault (9.500) while placing second on the floor exercise (8.800) to finish among the top three in all events. The 2003 All-Big Ten First Team selection is the first gymnast to earn back-to-back Conference weekly honors since Minnesota's Guillermo Alvarez accomplished the feat last season on February 5 and 12. Monahan now has three career Big Ten Gymnast of the Week awards, as he was also selected on January 15, 2003.

January 14

Randy Monahan, JR, OHIO STATE

Elizabethtown, Pa./Central Pennsylvania Academy of Gymnastics Monahan opened the 2004 campaign by placing first in three events, including the all-around, to lead the top-ranked Buckeyes to victory over four other top-10 League squads at the Windy City Invitational. The defending Conference Gymnast of the Year won the all-around competition with a score of 54.150, just .35 points shy of his career high (54.500) which he set while claiming the all-around crown at the Big Ten Championships last season. Monahan also captured two other titles last week, setting career-highs on the rings (9.50) and high bar (9.65), while tying for third on the floor exercise (9.30) and fourth on the vault (9.25). The 2003 All-Big Ten First Team selection collects the second Conference Gymnast of the Week award of his career, as he was also honored after the opening week of action last season on January 15, 2003.