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EMU Women's Gymnastics: Jay Santos Named Head Gymnastics Coach at EMU

Eastern Michigan University

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Jay Santos Named Head Gymnastics Coach at EMU

Santos will be the third head coach in the program's history
YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUagles.com) – Eastern Michigan University Vice President and Director of Athletics Heather Lyke announced Tuesday, June 17, that Jay Santos has been named the Eagles’ head women's gymnastics coach. Santos comes to Ypsilanti after spending three seasons as associate head coach at the University of Illinois. Just the third head coach in program history, his first official day at Eastern Michigan will be June 23, 2014.

Santos, who owns 15 years’ experience of coaching and competing at the Division I level, recently completed his third season as the associate head coach and fourth year overall in Champaign, Ill. The Bridgewater, Mass. native arrived at Illinois in 2010 following stints at Iowa State University and The Ohio State University. At UI, he served as the head bars coach while assisting and spotting on the other events. He also had an integral role in recruiting, along with overseeing all equipment-related matters.

"We are thrilled to welcome Jay and his wife, Jessica, to Eastern Michigan University," Lyke said. "Jay's coaching background and competitive experiences along with his passion to positively impact our gymnastics student-athletes make him an ideal person to lead our program. He has studied our program, student-athletes and is prepared to guide our team to great heights."

"I could not be more excited to be the next head coach at Eastern Michigan University" added Santos. "I am looking forward to the challenge of trying to improve this program and take it to new heights. I can't wait to get the team back on campus to begin a new era for Eastern Michigan Gymnastics. I would also like to thank Director of Athletics Heather Lyke for this amazing opportunity."

Last season at Illinois, the 42-year old Santos helped the Fighting Illini to their third trip to NCAA Championships in four seasons and their first consecutive trips in school history. The squad recorded a 195.8 in Birmingham, its highest score ever in the NCAA semifinal session; and as a result, the Orange and Blue tied the program’s best finish and final national ranking of 11th. In addition, Illinois ended the season in the top 25 for the ninth consecutive year.

The 2014 Illini placed their name into the record book and rewrote history more than any other squad in school history. They set a new team total record and the program’s first score above a 197 with a 197.1 at Gym Jam. Illinois placed five total scores on the all-time top-10 list, including three of the top-four. On bars, Illinois achieved the third (49.400), fourth (49.375), sixth (49.250) and seventh (49.225) best scores in program history. In addition, Sunny Kato took home the NCAA Regional Championship on the uneven bars with a career high 9.925

In 2013, Santos mentored senior Alina Weinstein to three bars titles while coaching Kato to two bars titles. On Feb. 16 against the University of Iowa, the Illini scored the fourth highest bars score in program history with a 49.250. The Orange and Blue ranked No. 20 nationally in the event, as both Weinstein and Kato finished in the Top-50. In addition, the Illini scored a 49.025 on bars at the Big Ten Championships along the way to their season-high score of 196.475 and their fourth place finish.

In 2012, Santos guided Weinstein and senior Kelsey Joannides to top-25 national rankings in the all-around. Altogether, Santos coached five different Illini to uneven bar titles for a total of 10 individual bars titles, which ranked as the second most for an event on the team. The highest bars score of the season by the team came at the Big Ten Championships when the Orange and Blue tallied a 49.100.
In his first season at Illinois, the Illini notched their highest final ranking in school history, as they concluded the season No. 11 in the country following the squad's second-ever appearance at the NCAA Championships. After arriving in Champaign in the midst of preseason training, Santos made an immediate impact on the Orange and Blue. Santos' bar team tallied two of the top-10 scores in school history while two gymnasts placed in the top three on the event at the Big Ten Championships under his guidance. The Illini also broke the school record for team score in his first year on staff.

At Iowa State, Santos served as the recruiting coordinator and bars coach for the Cyclones. He helped guide the Cyclones to four-consecutive NCAA Regional appearances, a co-runner up finish at the 2007 Central Regional and second-place showing at the 2008 Big 12 Championships. Santos tutored three Big XII Conference bar champions and six top-four conference finishers on the apparatus during his tenure at ISU.

Before his arrival in Ames, Santos spent two seasons as an assistant coach at Ohio State. While at OSU, he coached bars and floor and was a major factor in recruiting. He also coached five Buckeyes to All-Big Ten honors.

Prior to Ohio State, Santos spent eight years coaching at Somersault Gymnastics Center in Stoughton, Mass., serving as the women's team director and head coach for his last four years. At Somersault Gymnastics, he was responsible for all facets of the women's program and produced several Junior Olympic national and regional qualifiers, and many state champions. Santos served as a nationally-rated men's gymnastics judge from 1997-2001, working numerous college dual meets as well as Junior Olympic state and regional championships.

Santos graduated from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Mass. in 1995, earning a business degree in operations management. He competed for the men's gymnastics team for four seasons and during his stay at UMass the Minutemen won the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference (ECAC) team championship in 1995, and the New England regional championship from 1992-95. Individually, Santos was a three-time co-captain for UMass.

**The Jay Santos File**

**Name:**     Jay Santos

**High School:**   Cardinal Spellman H.S. - Brockton, Mass.

**College:**   University of Massachusetts at Amherst - Bachelor's degree in Operations Management - 1995

**Family:**   Wife - Jessica;

**Coaching/Playing Experience**
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>School/Company</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td>Associate Head Women's Gymnastics Coach</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td>Visiting Women's Gymnastics Assistant Coach</td>
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<td>2006-10</td>
<td>Iowa State University</td>
<td>Assistant Women's Gymnastics Coach</td>
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<td>Ohio State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996-01</td>
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<td>Women's and Men's Team Assistant Coach</td>
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<td>Student-Athlete</td>
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