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EMU Women's Gymnastics: Jessica Santos Added to EMU Gymnastics Coaching Staff

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Jessica Santos Added to EMU Gymnastics Coaching Staff

Santos will serve as assistant coach to EMU Head Coach Jay Santos

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YPSILANTI, Mich. (EMUagles.com) – Eastern Michigan University Head Gymnastics Coach Jay Santos announced Monday, July 21, the hiring of Jessica Santos as the Eagles' new assistant coach. Santos comes to Ypsilanti after spending three seasons as a volunteer assistant coach at the University of Illinois to go along with previous coaching stops at Iowa State University, the University of Pittsburgh, and West Virginia University.

"I am thrilled to have Jess officially on the staff," noted Head Coach Jay Santos. "She brings a wealth of knowledge with her not only as a former Elite gymnast, NCAA athlete and coach, but also as a judge and choreographer. Jess has a tremendous amount of passion and energy for our sport, and I'm sure everyone will soon see what an enormous asset she will be to this program. We are both very excited to start working with the EMU athletes and get this year started."

During her time at Illinois, her duties included coordinating floor music and choreography along with assisting on beam, floor and vault. Last season, Santos helped the Fighting Illini to their third trip to NCAA Championships in four seasons and their first back-to-back appearances in school history. The squad recorded a 195.8 for its highest score ever in the NCAA semifinal session, resulting in the program's best finish and final national ranking of No. 11. Moreover, Santos helped coach Sarah Fielder, who took the beam title at the NCAA regional meet with a score of 9.9. On floor, Giana O'Connor and Erin Buchanan earned All-Big Ten Second Team accolades under her guidance. In addition, Illinois ended the season in the top 25 for the ninth straight season. The 2014 Illini 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, March 8. Illinois placed five total scores on the all-time top-10 list, including three of the top-four.

In 2013, Santos assisted on both vault and floor, and her impact became quite evident on Senior Day. On March 10, the Illini posted a season-high 49.425 on floor, which was the fourth-highest team score in school history on the exercise. Illinois finished the season ranked 13th nationally on floor with a RQS of 49.235. In addition, the Orange and Blue walked away with nine individual floor titles in 2013. Amber See ranked 20th on floor while Alina Weinstein ranked fourth in the country. Weinstein ended the year as a First Team All-American on floor as she qualified for the floor finals at the NCAA Championships. Finally, Santos' coaching on vault could not be overlooked, as Weinstein recorded the first perfect 10.0 on vault in Illini history.

In her first year at Iowa State, Santos' beam squad was ranked as high as No. 8 nationally, and Ashley Kent was the ninth-ranked beam performer in the country for a period of time. Kent went on to place sixth and seventh at the Big 12 Championship and NCAA West Regional, respectively. Santos' first season also saw the Cyclones earn their highest team score (196.225) and team national ranking (No. 13) since 2007.

Santos joined Iowa State after spending three years at Pittsburgh from 2006-09, where she was named the 2007 NCAA Northeast Regional Co-Assistant Coach of the Year. She focused on vault and floor at Pitt and oversaw Dani Bryan, who won the league vault crown in 2007. Santos had four other gymnasts earn all-league recognition on vault during her tenure at Pittsburgh. She also served as the co-recruiting coordinator for the Panthers.

Before joining the Pittsburgh staff, Santos was a volunteer assistant at her alma mater, West Virginia, during the 2006 season. In one season coaching the Mountaineers, she saw WVU take third in the East Atlantic Gymnastics League (EAGL) and place fifth at the NCAA Southeast Regional.

While competing at West Virginia, Santos put together the third-highest all-around score (39.625) in program history. Additionally, she was a First Team All-EAGL honoree in the all-around and on bars in 2005. In 2004, she tied for the league vault crown and was a second team all-league recipient in the all-around and vault. Santos is the last Mountaineer to score a 10.0, a feat she accomplished on vault in 2004.

The Jess Santos File

Name: Jessica Santos
High School: Gov. Thomas Johnson High School
College: West Virginia University - Bachelor's of Science in Athletic Coaching Education - 2005
West Virginia University - Master's of Science in Athletic Coaching Education - 2007
Family: Husband - Jay
Coaching/Playing Experience

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