

Soviet Union Edges America

In 1986 McDonald's International Mixed Pairs

By Susan Polakoff

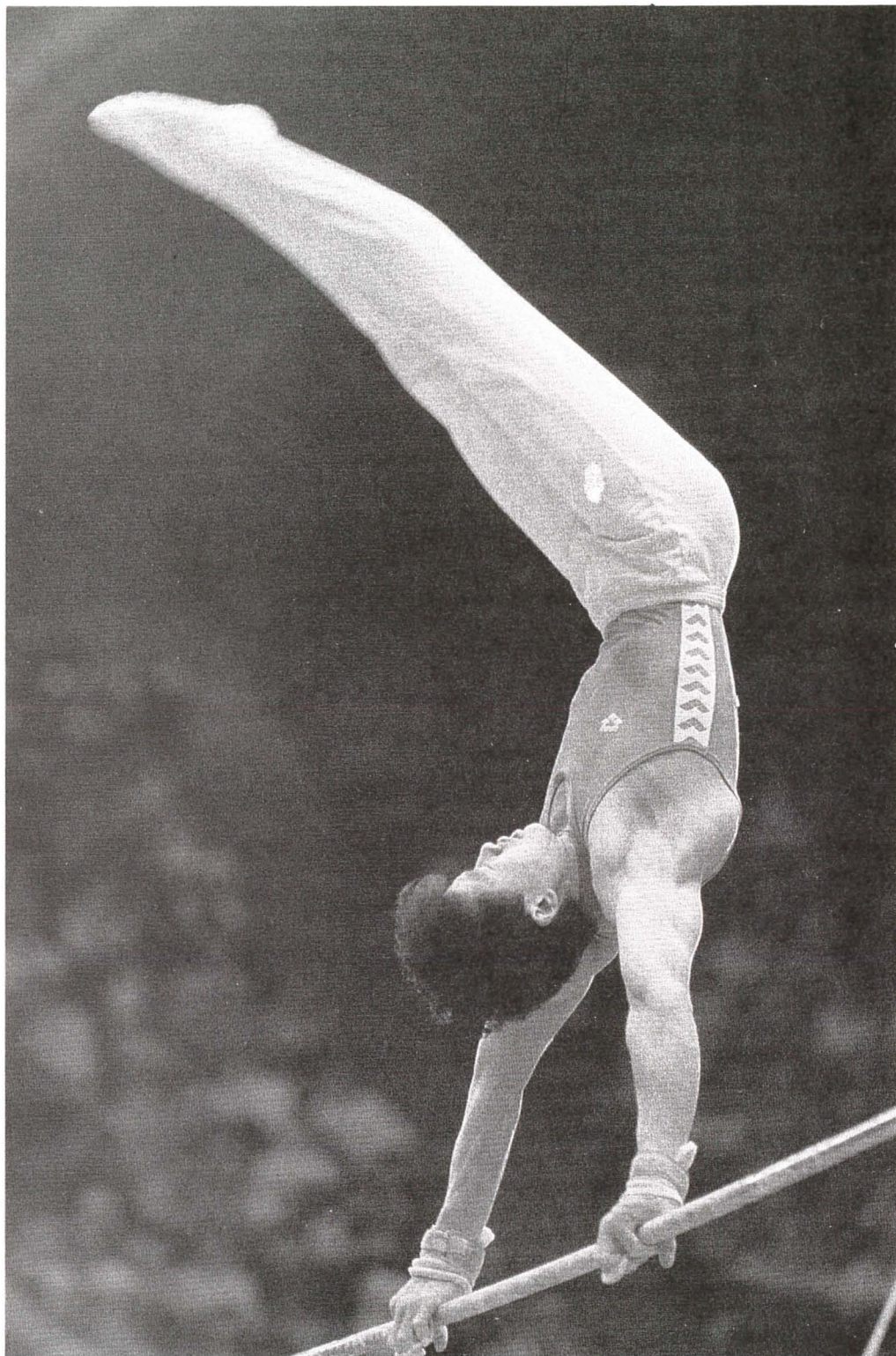
Experience paid off — but not by much. Alexsei Tikhonkin and Irina Baraksanova, members of the 1985 World Champion Soviet Union team, won the 1986 McDonald's International Mixed Pairs title, March 7, in Hampton, VA, but the USA's youthful pair of Kristie Phillips and Brian Ginsberg gave the Soviets a true test of their skills.

Phillips and Ginsberg finished in second place with a score of 57.70, while the Soviet pair scored a 57.95 before the sell-out crowd of 8,891 in the Hampton Coliseum.

Ulf Hoffman and Simone Harperath of the German Democratic Republic took third place with a score of 56.900. Twenty pairs of gymnasts from 19 countries competed in the seventh edition of this unique contest. The field was cut to eight teams after the first round, then to three for the final gold medal round.

Leading the pack through three rounds were the Soviet duo, but Phillips and Ginsberg seemed to be within reach throughout the contest. Phillips saved her strongest event, the balance beam, for last. Unfortunately the 13 year-old blonde from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, slipped off the beam, scoring a 9.35.

Later that evening in a press conference, Phillips said, "I was just over confident and I wasn't thinking what I was doing. I should have concentrated more. I'm sorry. I just didn't stick it," she said.



China's Wang Chongsheng was impressive during the McDonald's International Mixed Pairs. For example he used a flair to handstand pirouette sequence during his pommel horse routine and scored a 9.70 for his efforts. (USGF photo © 1986, by Dave Black).

An average beam performance would have given Phillips and Ginsberg the lead. The Americans trailed the Soviets by .15 of a point going into final round. The suspense was heightened when Baraksanova fell out of bounds during her last event, the floor, to receive a 9.25.

The Soviet's strategy proved to be the successful combination. Tikhonkin preformed his weakest event, rings, first while his teammate Baraksanova chose her strongest event, the vault. Tikhonkin earned the highest mark of the competition, a 9.8 on high bar, in the final round.

1986 McDonald's
INTERNATIONAL MIXED PAIRS

03-07-1986
Hampton, VA.

INDIVIDUAL SCORES

		A.A.	
1	IRINA BARAKSANOVA	URS	28.750
	ALEXSEI TIKHONKIN	URS	29.200
	TOTAL:		57.950
2	KRISTIE PHILLIPS	USA	28.800
	BRIAN GINSBERG	USA	28.900
	TOTAL:		57.700
3	SIMONE HARPERATH	GDR	28.250
	ULF HOFFMANN	GDR	28.650
	TOTAL:		56.900
4	TRACY CALORE	USA	19.250
	TIM DAGGETT	USA	19.450
	TOTAL:		38.700
5	ZENG YINGZI	CHN	18.550
	WANG CHONGSHENG	CHN	19.300
	TOTAL:		37.850
6	PATRIZIA LUCONI	ITA	18.850
	PAOLO BUCCI	ITA	18.850
	TOTAL:		37.700
7	NOBUKO ITO	JPN	9.500
	MITSUAKI WATANABE	JPN	9.600
	TOTAL:		19.100
8	BORJANA STOJANOVA	BUL	9.550
	DIAN KOLEV	BUL	9.450
	TOTAL:		19.000
8	MARIANA TUDOR	ROM	9.700
	VALENTIN PINTEA	ROM	9.300
	TOTAL:		19.000
10	SANDRINE VILLANNE	FRA	9.400
	TONY PINEDA	MEX	9.500
	TOTAL:		18.900
11	CHRISTINE WETZEL	FRG	9.500
	JUERGEN BRUEMMER	FRG	9.350
	TOTAL:		18.850
11	ALENA DREJVANA	TCH	9.500
	DOMINICK MINICUCCI	USA	9.350
	TOTAL:		18.850
13	MELISSA MARLOWE	USA	9.400
	BRIAN BABCOCK	USA	9.400
	TOTAL:		18.800
13	HAYLEY PRICE	GBR	9.400
	TERRY BARTLETT	GBR	9.400
	TOTAL:		18.800
15	ANDREA LADANYI	HUN	9.400
	GYORGY GUCZOGHY	HUN	9.350
	TOTAL:		18.750
16	CHRYSTEL ROBERT	FRA	9.300
	LAURENT BARBIERI	FRA	9.300
	TOTAL:		18.600
16	DAYNERYS SANCHEZ	CUB	9.600
	RAUL TORRES	CUB	9.000
	TOTAL:		18.600
16	DRIANA MENDEZ	VEN	9.250
	SHAW BYNG	AUS	9.350
	TOTAL:		18.600
19	NICOLE STREULE	SUI	8.700
	MARKUS LEHMANN	SUI	9.400
	TOTAL:		18.100
20	LUISA RIBEIRO	BRA	8.800
	CARLOS FULCHER	BRA	8.600
	TOTAL:		17.400

USA's Tim Daggett and Tracy Calore were in third place after the second round, but did not compete in the final round since only one couple per country may compete in the finals.

Missy Marlowe, 14, and Brian Babcock, 25, paired to finish in 13th place while USA national junior team member, Dominick Minicucci, finished in 11th place with his Czechoslovakian teammate Alena Drevjana.

Marlowe, Talent Plus Character

By Susan Polakoff

Although soft-spoken Melissa "Missy" Marlowe may have dodged some of the limelight during the 1986 McDonald's Cup and the International Mixed Pairs contests, the articulate 14-year-old's efforts did not go unnoticed.

"She was excellent," said Robert Cowan, Men's Program Administrator of the United States Gymnastics Federation (USGF). "Even with her fall off the beam, she was 100 percent. Look out, she's tough."

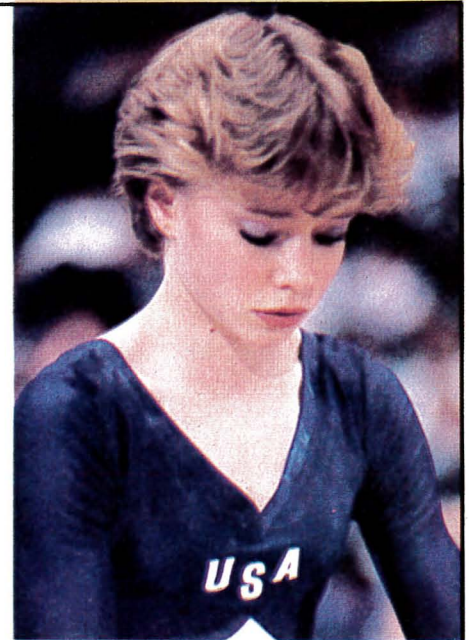
Coached by Mark Lee of Rocky Mountain Gymnastics in Salt Lake City, Utah, Marlowe finished in fourth position in Saturday's preliminary round of the McDonald's American Cup. Since no more than two Americans were permitted to compete in the women's finals, Marlowe was "bumped" out of Sunday's finals.

Marlowe watched her teammates, Kristie Phillips and Sabrina Mar advance to Sunday's finals. At the end of Saturday's round, Phillips finished first with a score of 38.70. Mar finished third with 38.60. Marlowe scored a 38.18.

During Saturday's news conference, Marlowe said even though she was disappointed, she still believed limiting the number of athletes per country "is a good rule. It gives other countries a chance."

A few days after the competition, Marlowe said she was still proud of her performance. "Except for the fall off the beam," said Marlowe, "I was happy. Especially my uneven bars routine—that was close to my best performance on bars I have ever done," she said.

Her bars routine earned her a scored of 9.71, the highest score on bars for the day.



A veteran of international competition abroad, the American Cup was Marlowe's first international meet in the U.S. "It was really different. It was great having the crowd pull for you. It was definitely worthwhile but I know I will have to work even harder for upcoming events," she said.

Marlowe said her coach and family were very supportive. "They were happy I did so well," she said.

Next on the ninth grader's agenda are the U.S. Classic meet in April and the Championships of the USA in June in Indianapolis. "I will try for a certain score, not for a certain place. Since I'm on the junior team, I haven't paid lots of attention to the senior team, so I'm going to try to get the highest possible score I can. Then I'll see how I do," she said. "I'm just going to take it one step at a time."

Marlowe, who maintains a B-plus average at Rowland Hall-St. Marks School in Salt Lake, says although her favorite subject is biology, she would like to become an architect. "I'm not doing so well in geometry," she laughed. "I think it would be neat to design my own house."

Marlowe says she admires Sabrina Mar and Marie Roethlisberger. "They are SO good," she said.

When not in the gym or in school, Marlowe enjoys swimming, biking, and playing tennis. She enjoys listening to music by the Beach Boys, Tears for Fears, Wham! and Whitney Houston.