

INTERNATIONAL 3 ON 3 GYMNASTICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

MARCH 8, 1998 ★ FORT WORTH, TEXAS

By Craig Bohnert

Led by newly-crowned Visa American Cup champion Viktoriya Karpenko, Team Ukraine won the gold medal of the International 3 on 3 Gymnastics Championships, held at the Fort Worth Convention Center March 8.

Karpenko scored a 9.75 on floor in the final event of the competition to give her team a score of 28.80, edging past the Russian squad's 28.690. Karpenko received support from current rhythmic gymnastics world champion Yelena Vitrichenko, who scored the only perfect 10.0 of the weekend with her ribbon routine in the championship round.

"I'm happy about winning today, especially after yesterday," said Karpenko, 16, who claimed the women's all-around title in the Visa American Cup on Saturday. "It is fun to be able to compete as a team."

The U.S. team, led by two-time Visa American Cup champion Blaine Wilson, was tied for second in the qualifying round, but slipped to fourth in the finals.

"This is a fun event, and I went into it with the idea of having fun," said Wilson. "I was a little tired after the last two days, but I was surprised at how good I felt on rings (in the qualifying round). My legs were killing me in the final round, and I watered down my floor routine a bit."

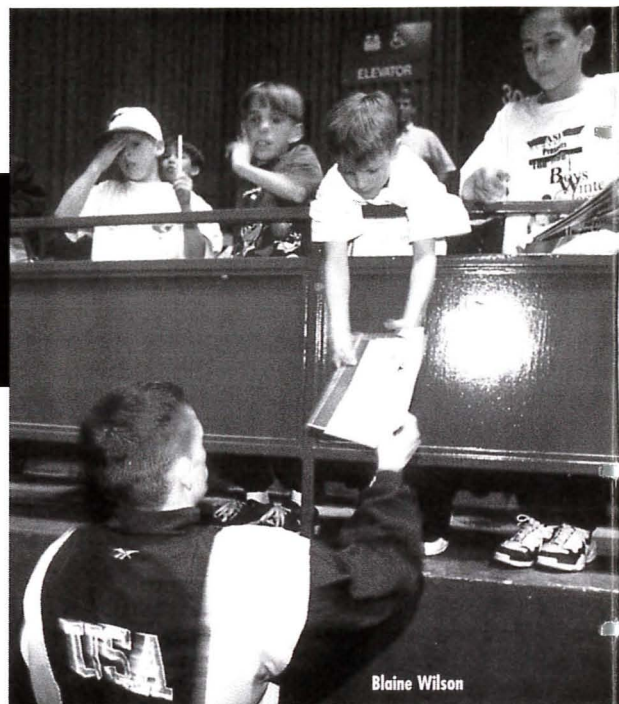
Natalie Lacuesta, the current U.S. Rhythmic National Champion, wasn't surprised by the perfect score

UKRAINE TAKES INTERNATIONAL 3 ON 3 GOLD

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Vitrichenko received. "The Ukrainians are perfectionists," said Lacuesta, who along with Lindsay Wing rounded out the USA squad. "No matter how many times you see their routines, they're perfect."

"I didn't feel fully in control," said Wing, who suffered two falls on beam in the final round. "I was a little off with my key thoughts and wasn't completely in tune."



Blaine Wilson

USA GYMNASTICS PHOTOGRAPHY © DAVID BLACK

RESULTS

PRELIMINARY ROUND (TOP FOUR ADVANCE TO FINAL ROUND)

1. Viktoriya Karpenko	UKR	28.730	5. Kristy Powell	USA 2	28.015
Valeriy Goncharov			John Roethlisberger		
Yelena Vitrichenko			Kate Jeffress		
2. Lindsay Wing	USA 1	28.555	6. Meng Fei	CHN	27.800
Blaine Wilson			Yang Wei		
Natalie Lacuesta			Pu Yun Fei		
3. Anna Kovaleva	RUS	28.555	7. Denisse Lopez	MEX	25.562
Alexei Bondarenko			Rafael Garcia		
Ekaterina Fokina			Karemina Gutierrez		
4. Elvire Teza	FRA	28.155			
Dimitri Karbanenko					
Eva Serrano					

FINAL ROUND

1. Ukraine	28.800
2. Russia	28.690
3. France	28.415
4. USA 1	25.880