



## Ashley Kerr

5-4 Senior  
Plant City, FL

When the Florida Gator gymnastics team hits the road for a meet, senior gymnast Ashley Kerr says the most important thing for her and the rest of her teammates is that they act as one unit.

“When we’re at meets we stay as one unit, because we’re louder when we’re together. When we are at a place with a crowd as big as ours, we have to transform the crowd into our own. A team beats with one heart,” Kerr said.

Acting as one and sharing the same goals creates a special bond between the gymnasts, who focus on keeping up the positive energy in whatever venue they compete. Kerr says keeping up the same energy allows them to have confidence in each other, especially when a mistake is made.

“We have definitely had our highs and lows this season, but it’s the way you step up and the way you act after a mistake is made. It really shows a person’s character,” Kerr said.

Kerr has quite a character of her own. As one of the team’s floor captains, Kerr’s job responsibilities include being loud, spirited and keeping the Gator focused.

“I guess the peppiness and team spirit is just my personality, it’s kind of unexplainable, it’s engrained in me,” Kerr said. “I just have to be loud and peppy. It’s a part of me.”

Kerr believes her role extends beyond motivating her teammates during meets or just showing the freshman what it’s like to compete in college. She also believes in being a helping hand for the underclassmen and taking them under her wing with the other upperclassmen is just as important. Remembering how confusing and overwhelming being a freshman was, she also remembers that having upperclassmen who showed her the ropes made the transition so much easier.

“I was really blessed coming in, because there were girls on the team who were juniors who helped make the transition easier. I’m really close to my family, so at first, living on my own was a tough switch,” Kerr said.

Kerr wasn’t the only one in her family who had to make some adjustments. Kerr’s father was a huge Florida State Seminole fan before his only daughter committed to his team’s rival, but he has since transformed into an even bigger Gator fan. Kerr says her parents have always supported every decision she’s made, and as

much as she's dedicated her life to gymnastics, so have they. Growing up in Plant City, Fla., Kerr's parents made the decision to commute the long drives for their only child to live out her dream.

"They would drive over an hour away to school in Orlando, and then to [Orlando] Metro to train. They've always been there, supporting me. They have really made me the person I am today," Kerr said.

During high school, Kerr's club team would travel to Gainesville for the gymnastics meets, which she says is when she fell in love with the Gator Nation.

"I fell in love with Florida before I came here, and not just because of the athletics and the spirit and passion of the athletes and teams here. I knew UF was academically one of the best schools in Florida. When I came to visit, I just knew this was the place I wanted to be," Kerr said.

Since coming to Florida, Kerr feels she has not only grown as an athlete, but as a person. A team like Florida's, with so much talent and competition to get in the lineup, has made her realize just how much the coaches and the rest of her teammates over the years have done for her. More importantly, Kerr says, is seeing how strong this team is when faced with hardships. Right before the championship portion of the 2009 season, the team had to overcome not only one, but four injuries.

"How the team acted with all of the adversity and how we came together was a great feeling. I felt like the heart of the team really grew last year, and it has definitely extended to this year," Kerr said.

Keeping the energy up and always looking for the best in each situation, Kerr continues to show passion and love for the sport that she began at 7-years-old.