



Courtney Gladys

5-1 Senior
Winter Garden, FL

Senior Courtney Gladys knows her days as a competitive gymnast are winding down.

“When I step into the gym, I soak up every moment, especially as a senior,” Gladys said.

“I appreciate every moment since I came here. From the beginning, it’s been a dream come true to be a part of this program and this team. I can’t thank Rhonda [Faehn] and the assistant coaches enough

for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to be on the team,” Gladys said of her time as a Gator.

Improving each routine remains a focus for Gladys.

“All the hard work and repetition you put in the gym has certainly built my confidence. I have to stay focused. The more repetitions we do, the better technique we will have. It is always a confidence builder to go up there and hit for the team,” she said

Fresh off a self-described, “Awesome, spine-chilling win,” over Georgia, the senior is doing just that. Last week at Auburn, Gladys turned in two of her best performances of the season. Scoring season-bests of 9.90 on the vault and 9.85 on the beam, she took home the two individual titles as the Gators defeated the Tigers. It was her second double win of the season, as she also claimed a share of the same event titles at Kentucky.

Gladys is no stranger to hard work. When she graduates, the advertising major is going to earn minors in business administration and leadership and has been on the Southeastern Conference’s Academic Honor Roll since walking onto the team three years ago.

As a teenager, her promising gymnastics career was put on hold due to an elbow injury. To stay busy, she picked up track and tennis in high school. Luckily for Florida, her heart did not lie with those sports. She started gymnastics training again as a senior in high school.

After enrolling at UF, she approached the coaching staff and convinced them that she could not live without the sport.

Gladys started from the beginning and had to re-learn skills that she was once so adept at. Fortunately, she was never alone throughout the process.

“During my freshman year, there were several girls on the team from my home gym, Orlando Metro,” Gladys said.

“After being out of the sport for three years, to come to Florida was an easier transition having known half the team and them knowing me. Ashley Kerr and Amanda Castillo have been so supportive over the years. When you’re having a bad day, they are always there to lift you up. From training together in the past, we created such a tight bond then, it carried over to college, which was a blessing. Not knowing anybody could easily have made things a different experience. It was very nice to have friends nearby.”

Gladys has been a part of the Florida family every step of the way since then.

“Each year, the chemistry has been great and the team always bonds well,” she said. “Last year, we started having poster making sessions, which we use to encourage each other. This year, we went to Lake Wauberg and did different team building activities. We do a lot of service projects and volunteer work and go to football games together. All of those things are great opportunities to get to know your teammates outside of the gym. To be able to get to know someone outside of the gym brings out the different personalities. The girls mean so much to me. I’ve made so many good friends and relationships here. The team is really one unit this year.”

Gymnastics has given Gladys tools she will take into her post-college life.

“Keep continuing to work hard and it will pay off,” she says. “You can apply that to your everyday life. Hard work does pay off. Once I’m done with gymnastics, I will bring that mantra to another part of my life. It will certainly benefit me in my career.”

“I do want to stay involved with sports, because it’s been such a huge part of me. I am open to a lot of things, anything where I’m out there meeting people,” she said of possible career pursuits.

For now, the real world will have to wait. Gladys is focused on doing the best she can for her team. She works to improve each week and will hopefully be putting a routine – or two – in when the Gators host the NCAA Championships in April.

“To have your last meet in front of your home crowd, with your friends and family able to attend really means the world to me. All the support and encouragement we receive from Gator fans is a dream come true. I couldn’t ask for more.”