

Eli Rodriguez

August 31st, 1966 – February 15th, 2016

“A good coach can change a game, a great coach can change a life.”

- John Wooden



On Monday, February 15th, 2016 NorCal Gymnastics lost one of its most beloved, influential, and captivating members of its community. Eli's heavy heart and passion for gymnastics enabled him to inspire and influence many lives throughout his career. He will be missed, but his legacy and spirit will continue through everyone who had the privilege to work with him. For those who did not have the opportunity to know him, his professional record and reputation shed a faint light on the amazing person that he was.

Starting gymnastics at the age of 8 at Byers Gymnastics in Sacramento, Eli's hard work and commitment enabled him to become a member of the USA National Team from 1983 to 1987. His success as a junior gymnast secured him a full scholarship to CSU Fullerton where he met his future spouse and business partner Debbie Broderick. Debbie and Eli went on to take ownership

of Byers Gymnastics Center in 1997 and have two beautiful children, Lillian and Luke, whom both participate in competitive gymnastics.

Professionally, Eli's record stands as one of the most successful in Northern California history. During his tenure, Eli led Byers Gymnastics, Sacramento (now Elevate Gymnastics) to produce 7 elite female gymnasts and 30 (male and female) collegiate gymnasts. As a club owner, his inclusive philosophy helped grow Elevate from an enrollment of just over 400 students in 1997 to over 1500 students today; a remarkable accomplishment by any standards. However, his biggest contribution to our sport was his commitment towards growing the Elevate community and producing great people first and great gymnasts second. Eli had a gift for making every member feel like part of a family and his technical expertise and ability to articulate gymnastics concepts with passion and enthusiasm made training sessions enjoyable.

For those who knew him personally, Eli will always be remembered as an entertaining and funny individual who was extremely passionate about life, gymnastics, and his students. Admittedly flawed and aware of his shortcomings, he was an advocate for continuous growth and improvement. His tortured soul and admitted imperfections epitomized what it means to be human. In a sport designed to chase perfection, Eli's teaching philosophy paralleled his personal life. Simply, "to err is human...". We simply get back up and try again. I'd argue that Eli produced such beautiful gymnasts because he valued the imperfections in each of them and allowed them to find their artistic voice through gymnastics.

It's a rarity in our sport to find a person who could make you laugh hysterically, but also make you work hard enough to make a USA National Team or achieve a college scholarship. But, that was his gift and his brilliance. He knew, at its very core, what gymnastics is. When I first worked for him in 1998, he told me that his gym was a modified playground and that the great ones play. It took me years and experience to understand what he meant. I grew up with the mindset that gymnastics was hard, your competitors were your enemies, being serious was the only way to get things done, and that chasing perfection was the ultimate goal of all gymnasts. Now, I understand his intent. Gymnastics and life is a giant playground. Like the great coaches of the past, Eli just played and made coaching gymnastics look easy. Like his personality, his legacy speaks loud and clear. Simply enjoy the company of others, have fun, make mistakes, get back up, live with passion, and most importantly, never forget to play.

A Celebration of Eli's Life will be held on
Wednesday, February 24th, 2016 from 9:00am to 10:00am (Reception to Follow)
9189 E. Stockton Boulevard, Elk Grove, CA 95624
For more information about the services go to www.legacyofeli.com