



Jeff Thompson

Head Coach • 10th Season

Thompson Profile

Full Name Jeffrey Allen Thompson
 Birthday Nov. 22
 Birthplace Ft. Thomas, Ky.
 Hometown Highland Heights, Ky.
 Alma Mater Kentucky, 1986
 Spouse Rachelle
 Children Parker (13), Griffin (11)

Flip Facts

- Played rugby for 15 years and traveled to England to play
- Can play a variety of musical instruments, is a skilled wood worker/wood carver and likes to cook outside of the gym
- Describes himself as a patient, technical and fun coach
- Likes to make really bad jokes and puns during practice
- Says the best thing about coaching at Auburn is the feeling he gets when a gymnast performs a new skill successfully by herself for the first time



The 2008 campaign saw Auburn’s gymnastics history turn another page with awards garnered, records shattered and a return to the NCAA Regional Championships. Highlighting the season was star-studded senior Julie Dwyer as she became the first gymnast in the program’s 34-year history to qualify for a fourth-straight NCAA Championships appearance. Junior Lindsey Puckett was named Central Region and co-SEC Gymnast of the Year. For the second time in his career, Thompson was named co-SEC and Central Region Coach of the Year. The Tigers closed out the regular season ranked 12th nationally.

It should be no surprise to say that Thompson is on the verge of taking his Tiger squad back to the NCAA Championships. For six-straight seasons Thompson has guided Auburn to the NCAA Regional Championships. In 2008, Thompson’s team entered the NCAA Regional Championships seeded second, the highest seed Auburn has received. The current streak is the most consecutive appearances at a NCAA Regional since the Tigers reeled off eight straight from 1987-94 under Robert Dillard.

Dwyer can easily be regarded as Thompson’s highest-acclaimed pupil. In his four years of guidance, Dwyer earned All-American accolades three times. She finished her collegiate career as the national vault runner-up and is the owner of two regional vault titles. She was named Central Region Gymnast of the Year in 2007, SEC Gymnast of the Year in 2006 and SEC Freshman of the Year in 2005. Dwyer holds the current top score in Auburn history on vault and all-around and she also ranks among Auburn’s top-10 all-time on beam and floor. Outside of the gym, Dwyer was a four-time academic All-American, four-time member of the SEC Academic Honor Roll and was named 2007 SEC Scholar Athlete of the Year.

Jeff Thompson enters his 10th season as the head coach of the Auburn gymnastics program. Under the tutelage of Thompson, the Tigers have appeared in six consecutive NCAA Regional Championships and one NCAA Championships. Thompson has coached five regional champions and six individuals to nine NCAA Championships appearances. The accomplishments of Thompson’s gymnasts have twice earned him SEC Coach of the Year and Central Region Coach of the Year honors. For his 10th year at the helm, he returns nine gymnasts from 2008 and brings eight new faces to the Auburn program.

Thompson’s Coaching Honors

- 2003 SEC Coach of the Year
- 2003 Co-Central Region Coach of the Year
- 2008 Co-SEC Coach of the Year
- 2008 Central Region Coach of the Year



Auburn Gymnastics



During the 2007 season, Thompson guided Auburn to a seasonhigh national ranking of 13th and a third-place finish at the NCAA Northeast Regional. The Tigers posted wins over nationally-ranked teams of Missouri (18) and Kentucky (25). Thompson's squad registered the then-team record on vault with a 49.400 against Illinois-Chicago. Throughout the season the squad contributed to Auburn's records twice more on vault, once on bars and registered a team high score against Kentucky.

The 2006 campaign saw Thompson's Tigers consistently ranked among the top-15 nationally in each event and cracked into the nation's top-10 ranked squads at ninth. Auburn won the Hearts Invitational and took fourth at the NCAA Northeast Regional. Dwyer and Puckett advanced to the NCAA Championships in the all-around and vault, respectively, with Dwyer earning All-American accolades.

Auburn just missed qualifying for the national championships in 2005 at Thompson's third-straight trip to the NCAA Regional Championship. The Tigers still advanced four individuals to the NCAA Championships. Highlighting the NCAA Championships was Dwyer, who was a freshman, earning All-American honors on the vault. Dwyer joined Courtney Puckett (2003) as the second All-American under Thompson.

Prior to Thompson's arrival as Auburn's fourth all-time coach in 2000, the Tigers had finished a dismal 3-14 and last in the Southeastern Conference.

In just three seasons, Thompson was selected as SEC Coach of the Year in 2003, after taking the Tigers to the NCAA Championships for the first time since 1993. Courtney Puckett became the first All-American gymnast under Thompson with a seventh-place finish on bars. That same season, Thompson was tabbed as the co-Central Region Coach of the Year after the Tigers placed second at the NCAA Central Regional Championship.

In 10 years at Auburn, Thompson's gymnasts have set all-time team highs in the vault (49.50 - 2008), uneven bars (49.50 - 2000), balance beam (49.60 - 2004), floor (49.60 - 2004) and total score (197.00 - 2004). In the 34 seasons of Auburn gymnastics, all 10 of the highest scores, events and team, in school history have come in the Thompson era.

Individually, Thompson's gymnasts have forever engraved their names into the Auburn record book. In all five individual events, at least four of the top-five all-time scores have come under Thompson. He has coached three gymnasts, Sarah Wentworth (bars - 2000), Sally Cantrell (beam - 2002) and Rachael Tarantino (beam - 2004) to the ultimate score of a perfect 10.

Thompson's work might begin in the gym, but it continues outside of competition. Thompson places a heavy emphasis in the classroom, which is why he produces true student-athletes. Thompson has had 29 Academic All-Americans, 42 gymnasts named to the SEC Academic Honor Roll, two SEC Scholar-Athletes of the Year and two NCAA Woman of the Year nominees. He has also coached two Leah Rawls Atkins Award winners, the highest honor for an Auburn female athlete and two H. Boyd McWhorter Scholarship nominees.

Thompson's coaching career began at his alma mater in 1986 as a graduate assistant at Kentucky, a position he held through the 1989 season. He later coached at Wisconsin and Illinois and then became Junior Olympic Program Director at the Cincinnati Gymnastics Academy in 1993. Thompson became an assistant at LSU in 1994 before coming to Auburn in 1999.

A native of Highland Heights, Ky., Thompson played rugby at Kentucky before graduating with a bachelor's degree in physical education in 1986, and earned his master's degree in biomechanics in 1995 from UK.

Thompson is married to the former Rachele Fruge of Baton Rouge, La. The couple resides in Auburn with their two children, Parker, (13) and Griffin (11).

Thompson's Numbers

- 42 SEC Academic Honor Roll Members
- 29 Academic All-Americans
- 8 NCAA Individual Qualifiers
- 6 NCAA Regional Championship Appearances
- 4 NCAA Regional Champions
- 4 All-SEC Team Members
- 3 All-Americans
- 3 SEC Gymnast of the Year honorees
- 2 SEC Scholar Athletes of the Year
- 1 NCAA Championship Appearance
- 1 SEC Freshman of the Year



Rachelle Thompson

Associate Head Coach • 10th Season

Thompson Profile

Full Name Robin Rachelle Fruge Thompson
 Birthday Jan. 30
 Birthplace Baton Rouge, La.
 Hometown Baton Rouge, La.
 Alma Mater Auburn, 2004
 Spouse Jeff
 Children Parker (13), Griffin (11)

Flip Facts

- Loves to work in the garden and decorate houses
- Describes herself as a tough, persistent and understanding coach
- Favorite thing to do during practice is coach beam and spend time with the gymnasts and talk about everyday life
- Says the best thing about coaching at Auburn is that it is a huge family of people from different backgrounds with common goals: to graduate student-athletes, to win and make Auburn a school that everybody wants to be a part of
- Loves that the city of Auburn bleeds oranges and blue



Rachelle Thompson begins her 10th season as part of the Auburn coaching staff and her fourth as the Tigers' associate head coach. She was previously a full-time assistant for three years and a volunteer assistant coach for three years. Thompson's primary responsibilities include coaching the balance beam and floor, and handling the choreography for both events. This past season, Thompson was honored as the NCAA Central Regional Assistant Coach of the Year.

With Thompson leading the way on beam, numerous records have been set individually and as a team. Every year, higher challenges are established from the season prior, only to be defeated during the season at hand. Thompson has coached Auburn gymnasts to all of the current top-team scores on beam and floor, including the majority of the individual high scores on her respective events. She has also coached two Tigers to perfection with a pair of 10.00 on beam.

The beam and floor scores during the 2008 campaign reflected what Thompson has accomplished in the past. As a team, three of the highest performances on beam came during the season, including a 49.425 at Denver. It was that same meet that Auburn legend Julie Dwyer earned the school's second-best beam score with a 9.950. Juniors Lindsey Puckett and A.J. Mills each notched a 9.925 in 2008 to put their names among the distinguished at Auburn.

All three were scattered throughout the national rankings. Dwyer was ranked second on beam for three straight weeks, while Puckett bounced around the top-10 for four weeks and Mills was listed among the top-20 nationally. As a team, Auburn closed out the season ranked fourth nationally on beam and 12th on floor.

Thompson coached Dwyer to a 9.950 on floor in 2007. Her efforts landed her name in the record books with the second-best score in Tiger history. Puckett also earned her spot among the best on floor in 2007 with a 9.925. The Tigers' maintained national prominence on beam throughout 2007, consistently being ranked among the top-10 nationally.

The trio of Dwyer, Puckett and Mills have found great success under Thompson's guidance. Combined, their names appear six times for best beam scores and three times on the floor. Dwyer earned All-American accolades in 2006 on beam, only the second gymnast in Auburn history to accomplish such a feat.

As a team in 2006, the Tigers were consistently ranked as one of the top-12 beam teams in the country, coming in as high as fifth. On floor, Auburn was rated as high as 10th and finished the season with a No. 11 national ranking.



Auburn Gymnastics



Thompson helped the Tigers qualify a school-record four individuals: Dwyer, Courtney Puckett, Rachael Tarantino and Aimee Goheen, for the NCAA Championships in 2005. Auburn produced the beam champion and runner-up of the NCAA Central Regional, in Tarantino and Julie Dwyer, respectively. Dwyer went on to earn All-American status on vault. For the second year in a row, Tarantino tied her career high on the floor with a score of 9.950 against Texas Women's University. Her scores of 9.950 rank second for the highest score in Auburn history.

During Thompson's tenure, the Tigers have set new school records on the beam and the floor. Both marks occurred during the 2004 season when the Tigers scored a 49.600 on the beam at Centenary and a 49.600 on the floor against Florida.

Thompson has coached two Auburn gymnasts to a perfect 10.0. Sally Cantrell recorded a flawless score on beam against Centenary. Two years later against Centenary, Tarantino mirrored the feat with a 10.0 on beam.

The seasoned coach and former competitor brings a wealth of competitive and coaching experience to the Tigers' staff. Thompson's knowledge of the sport and reputation as a choreographer have been visible with the scores posted by Auburn gymnasts.

Her vast experience in meet management has helped enhance the image of Auburn gymnastics' home events. In 2003, 2004 and 2006, the Tigers ranked fifth nationally for highest home meet attendance.

Thompson was a three-year letterwinner and All-American for LSU from 1988-91. She won the Southeastern Conference All-Around Championship in 1991, the vault and floor titles at the 1991 NCAA Regional vault, finished fourth in the all-around at the 1990 NCAA Championships and was a finalist for the Honda-Broderick Award. Thompson was the first gymnast in LSU history to score a perfect 10.00, doing so on floor against Florida in 1991.

A native of Baton Rouge, La., Thompson completed her college degree at Auburn University, graduating *summa cum laude* with a bachelor's degree in education. She is married to head coach Jeff Thompson. The couple resides in Auburn with their two boys, Parker (13) and Griffin (11).



Thompson family (clockwise): Jeff, Griffin, Rachelle and Parker



Auburn Gymnastics



Kurt Hettinger

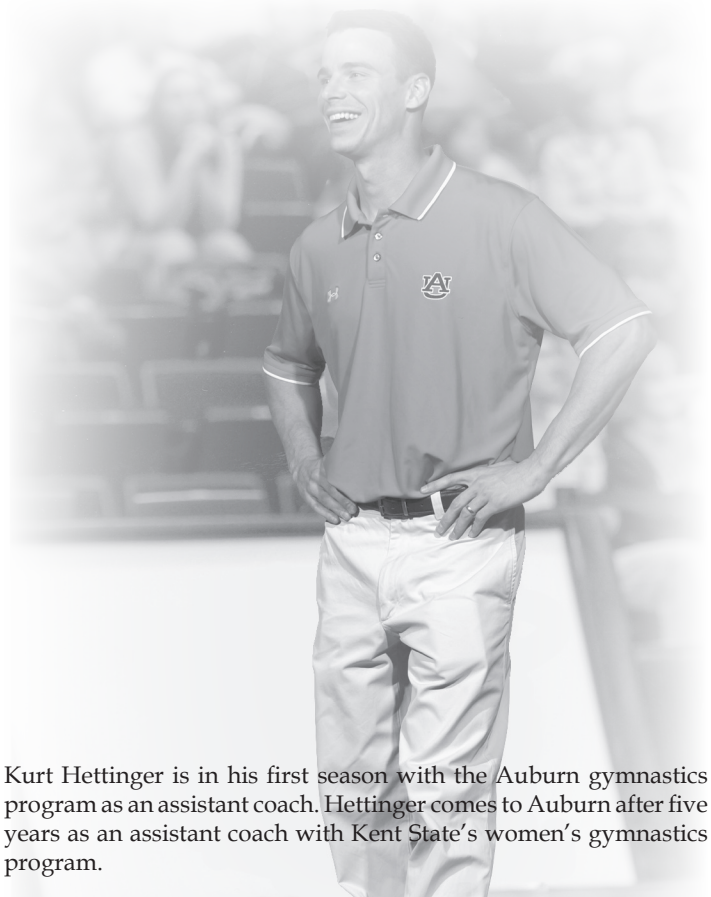
Assistant Coach • First Season

Hettinger Profile

Full Name Kurt Allen Hettinger
 Birthday Sept. 11
 Birthplace Urbana, Ill.
 Hometown Tuscola, Ill.
 Alma Mater Illinois, 1999
 Spouse Katherine

Flip Facts

- Says people would be surprised to know that he is a history buff, especially World War II
- His out of the gym talent is playing the drums
- Describes himself as an enthusiastic, detailed and funny coach
- Coaching is his favorite part of practice
- The best thing about coaching at Auburn is training great student-athletes with great coaches in the best facility in the country
- Enjoys the city of Auburn for the friendliness and says that it has everything that you need



Off the competitive floor, Hettinger served as Kent State's recruiting coordinator and summer camp manager.

Hettinger returned to his alma mater for the 2002-03 season as an assistant coach for the University of Illinois men's gymnastics program, recruiting and preparing daily workouts. The Fighting Illini finished the season with five All-Americans and placed fifth at the men's NCAA Championships.

Prior to his stint at Kent State, Hettinger spent five years at the Champaign, Ill., County YMCA, assisting with the development of Levels 8-10 girls for two years. He also spearheaded the development of the junior boys program, shaping Class VI through Elite level gymnasts and was a two-time member of the USAG Region V Junior Elite Boys Team coaching staff. Hettinger worked as an optional team coach for Flytz Gymnastics in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, for two years.

Hettinger was a four-year letterwinner on the University of Illinois men's gymnastics team from 1996-99. He was a part of the 1998 squad that placed third at the NCAA Men's Gymnastics Championships.

Hettinger, a native of Tuscola, Ill., graduated from Illinois in 1999 with a bachelor's degree in history and earned a master's degree in education from Kent State in 2005. He married his wife Katherine in July 2006.

Kurt Hettinger is in his first season with the Auburn gymnastics program as an assistant coach. Hettinger comes to Auburn after five years as an assistant coach with Kent State's women's gymnastics program.

During his tenure from 2003-08 as an assistant at Kent State, Hettinger served as the head bars coach and assisted with vault and floor. He guided the Golden Flashes to three team records and four individual top-10 scores on bars and eight individual titles on his respective events at Mid-American Conference Championships. Hettinger played a role in Kent State's three NCAA Regional Championships appearances, two MAC Championship titles and three consecutive regular season titles in his five years on staff. The 2007 campaign saw Kent State spend the entire season ranked among the top-25 nationally on bars.

Hettinger's Coaching Experience

- 2003-08: Women's Assistant Coach, Kent State
- 2004-06: Optional Team Coach, Flytz USA Gymnastics
- 2002-03: Men's Assistant Coach, Illinois
- 1998-2003: Boys' Head Team Coach, Champaign County YMCA



Auburn Gymnastics



Jackie Gifford
 Volunteer Director of
 Operations
 • First Season

Smith enters her first year as volunteer director of operations and her second year as an Auburn gymnastics staff member.

Smith competed for the Tigers on beam and bars from 2004-07.

Smith graduated from Auburn in May 2008 with a Bachelor's of Art degree in Art. She is married to Eric Gifford.



Dawn Schueller
 Volunteer Coach
 • First Season

Schueller is in her first season as a volunteer coach for Auburn gymnastics, helping with conditioning and nutrition.



Will Stokley
 Student Coach
 • First Season

Stokley enters his first year as a student coach for Auburn gymnastics.

Stokley is a senior from Montgomery, Ala., majoring in exercise science.

Support Staff



Dr. James Andrews
 Orthopaedic Surgeon



Rachael Alexander
 Manager



Tim Chabliss
 P.A. Announcer



Amanda Dahl
 Media Relations



Elizabeth Hammer
 Volunteer Manager



Kayla Gies
 Student Coach



Dr. Michael Goodlett
 Team Physician



Donna Kennedy
 Academic Counsler



Rich Levy
 Strength Coach



David Mines
 Assistant Athletics Director



Kelly Rush
 Statistician



Janet Taylor
 Athletic Trainer