Thank you, John, for the introduction. This is a special day and I feel privileged to be here. I want start by thanking the Hall of Fame induction committee for recognizing my coaching accomplishments. I am honored and humbled by it. I also want to congratulate the other inductees who are here today. It’s an honor to be going into the hall with such an outstanding group.

By my count, this will be about my 25th USA National Championships coaching. So I feel very fortunate to be here in Indy doing what I love to do, you’ll have to excuse me for running off to the Jr. Competition right after this.

I’m going to spend the rest of my time today thanking the people who played a role in my coaching career because I truly believe I was blessed to have some amazing people a part of my story. From the very beginning of my gymnastics career, my family played a big role. Thanks to my parents, Ted and Janice Williams, and my sisters, Wendy and Robin, I was given opportunities to try my hand at many sports. They introduced me to gymnastics back in 1970 and gave me their constant support through the years. I remember Robin taking me to my first meet at Lyons Township High School that year and getting me hooked. I watched guys like John Arends compete that day and I wanted to be just like them. The flipping and twisting and performing in front of a crowd seemed exciting and motivated me to take my first class. So my journey with gymnastics started at a YMCA in LaGrange, Ill.

From the very first back handspring, I found a passion that has given me unlimited rewards. Gymnastics was a sport that I was more suited for because of my size. And after a while, I found I was better at it than the other sports I had been trying to do. Thus began the many years of my parents driving me to practices and meets and watching from the hard wooden bleachers. My dad and sister, Robin, are here with me today and I would like to thank them for helping bring me to this place.

Next, I would like to thank my high school coach, Paul Omi, for all the life lessons he gave me while shaping my dedication to gymnastics. During my junior and senior years in high school, he helped me gain a focus on my education through gymnastics. After being a very average student before gymnastics, I learned how to transfer my attention to details as a gymnast to becoming a better student academically. In the gym, Coach Omi often told us that hard training was mind over matter. He’d say, “I don’t mind and you don’t matter.” But he also gave me the groundwork to succeed in life. As I became a better student and gymnast, I now envisioned myself going to college and competing with a NCAA team.

To my college coaches, Francis Allen and Jim Howard, thanks for your expertise and patience while I attended the University of Nebraska. As funny as Francis could be, he was also the driving force behind some dominant teams from the late 1970’s through the 90’s. Francis was the genius technician who taught us the correct technique for skills and brought the newest trends in the sport back to Nebraska.
Jim Howard viewed our training from an all business approach. While Francis created the plan, it was Jim’s job to put it into motion and made us accountable for following the training plan. The combination for these two men led to many NCAA championships. My junior and senior years in college were the first two team championships for Nebraska. The following year I was a graduate assistant coach when we won a third title. That officially began my coaching career as one of the guys I worked with, Brandon Hull, made the Nebraska team and became an All American on the parallel bars as a freshman.

After college, I had several coaching stops at high schools and club programs. Along the way, I replaced Big Mark Williams at jobs he held twice, once at North Garland High School and later at the University of Oklahoma, as the assistant coach for the men’s team. Big Mark was the brother I never had who guided me through the discipline of coaching high school athletes and eventually creating my own program as the head coach at Oklahoma. Mark judged me as an athlete, mentored me as a young teacher/coach and helped me understand the relationships that help build your ability to coach. We shared a friendship that made us as close as our names. We were like the brothers in the Bob Newhart Show, “This is my brother Darrel, and my other brother Darrell” Thanks Darrell, you are missed.

In 1988, I began as the assistant coach at Oklahoma. In 1999, I got the chance to become the interim head coach and eventually the head coach the next year. I’d like to thank Oklahoma’s athletic director, Joe Castiglione, for giving me an opportunity of a lifetime. My dream job became a reality when President David Boren and Joe entrusted in me the responsibility to lead the Oklahoma team. With their help and leadership, we’ve now added 6 more national championships in Men’s gymnastics at Oklahoma. They also helped provide the financial support to expand and renovate the Sam Viersen Gymnastics facility in 2009 that made it into the best co-ed collegiate training gym in the country.

I’d also like to thank the assistant coaches who I’ve worked with and who have made so much of the Oklahoma program’s success possible. That starts with Guard Young, the guy who probably knows me better as a coach than anyone. Guard has worked with me since he was 12 years old. We started working together in 1991 when he was a Class 2 gymnast at Oklahoma Gold. Through his hard work and dedication we eventually made it to the 2004 Athens Olympics. Guard trained and worked as my assistant coach at Oklahoma from 2000-05 and again from 2011-15. During those times, he helped with the coaching of four NCAA championship teams in 2002, 2003, 2005 and 2015. It was an amazing run, Guard.

My other assistants in order were Doug Macey, Yuan Xiao, Daniel Furney, Rustam Sharipov, Nori Iwai and my newest assistants, Steven Legendre and Taqiy Abdullah-Simmons. I have learned something from all of these guys as they provided experiences from many parts of the world. These individuals shared their gymnastics experiences from Canada, China, Ukraine, Japan and even Texas. Thanks guys, I couldn’t have done things without your help.
Thank you also goes to USA Gymnastics for the opportunity to be a part of 4 Olympic teams, 12 World Championships and many international events. Thank you to Steve Penny, Ron Galimore, Ron Brant, Dennis McIntyre and Kevin Mazeika for your leadership and vision for the USA men’s team program.

Most importantly, I’d like to thank the many athletes I worked with through the years who trusted and believed in my coaching and training plans. Jon Steen, at Millard North High School in Nebraska back in 1981, to Darren Elg, the 1987 JO National Champion from Utah, to the many national team members and student-athletes from Oklahoma: Jarrod Hanks, Jeff Lutz, Tom Meadows, Jeremy Killen, Casey Bryan, Jamie Henderson, Jonathan Horton, Chris Brooks, Alex Naddour, Jake Dalton and Allan Bower to name a few.

Lastly, my love and thanks goes to my wife, Susan, and son, Cooper. They have been my support and strength through the many years of foreign and domestic travel, conferences and meetings, recruiting and the many practices and competitions. It has been an amazing journey. I thank you for being by my side and putting up with me during the good times and bad. Hopefully, I’m not done yet. I look forward to more years of success with the University of Oklahoma and USA Gymnastic.

Thank you and Boomer Sooner!