

Written by John Crumlish
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Shilese Jones told IG that that finishing fourth all-around at the recent U.S. Classic behind 2016 Olympic champion **Simone Biles**, 2017 U.S. bronze medalist **Riley McCusker** and 2017 World Champion **Morgan Hurd** put her in a comfortable spot as she readies for this week's U.S. championships.

"I felt like I belonged there," said Jones of her performance at the U.S. Classic, a qualifying meet for the U.S. championships, held July 27-28 in Columbus, Ohio. "It felt great knowing my hard work was finally starting to pay off. It was an honor being alongside champions. Those girls are all great gymnasts."

Jones, a first-year senior who won the all-around title at the American Classic (another U.S. championships qualifying meet) held July 6-7 in Salt Lake City, Utah, said her U.S. Classic performance left her with an "exciting overall feeling," especially since she missed last year's U.S. junior championships because of injury. Training on floor exercise a week before those championships, she hyperextended her right knee and fractured her right kneecap on an Arabian double front.

"What pushed me through was I knew it wasn't the end," she said of her recovery. "I also knew my coach and I had a great plan that I believe in."

Jones said her coaches at Future Gymnastics Academy in Columbus, Ohio, are united in their approach to her training.

"All my coaches really work together," said Jones, who turned 16 on July 26. "There is no one

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coach that trains me solely on one event. Our motto at Future Gymnastics is 'Trust the process and work as a team.' My head coach is **Christian Gallardo**, and the coaching team is **Tiffany McLean**

Mike Williams

and Brooke

Speas

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Jones said she is fine-tuning her routines for the U.S. championships that will take place August 16-19 in Boston.

"The main focus is to work hard on my landings on floor, and also clean up anywhere my coach feels there needs cleaning up," she said.

Based on her recent momentum, Jones has clear objectives for the U.S. championships.

"My goal is simple — go out and be consistent, listen to my coach and be on my A-game," she told IG. "An eight-for-eight finish and to enjoy myself."

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