

Written by Dwight Normile
Friday, 01 October 2010 10:57



From comebacks to program cuts, injuries to age flaps, plenty is happening in the gymnastics world right now. Following is a weekly roundup of sorts.

Bridget Sloan: The defense rests?

With the U.S. women's team for the Rotterdam worlds to be named next week, the fate of defending world all-around champion **Bridget Sloan** (shown here) remains a mystery. At the Visa championships in August, where Sloan protected injuries and competed only on balance beam, U.S. national team coordinator

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a Karolyi

assessed Sloan's chances of making the team as such: "She's right at the almost impossible situation."

Marvin Sharp, Sloan's coach, told IG today, "It is just going to be a matter of time. Is there enough time to get in world routine shape? We are giving it a try, but have to keep the future in mind, as well, and not risk pushing beyond a reasonable level."

For a top team like the U.S., the Rotterdam worlds represent bragging rights only, since the top 24 teams advance to the 2011 worlds in Tokyo. So reading between the lines, it doesn't sound like Sloan is prepared to make a serious challenge as an all-rounder. We'll find out next week if she goes at all.

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"We are hoping to be on the world team," Sharp added. "We are hoping to help in any capacity that will assist the USA in a successful world championships."

Cal Gymnastics

The men's and women's gymnastics teams at **UC-Berkeley** were dropped Sept. 28, along with baseball and women's lacrosse. Rugby will be reduced to a club sport. The timing was odd, considering former Golden Bear gymnast

Tim McNeill

was hired in August to coach the team.

Barry Weiner

retired earlier in the summer, having coached the team to NCAA team titles in 1997 and '98.

Cal gymnastics has a rich history, and 2012 would have been its 100th year in existence. Its first national championship was in 1968, under coach **Hal Frey**, who won another in '75. For more about the Cal tradition, visit

CalGymnasticsForever.com

, the site that was launched to help save the program.

"We are extremely disappointed in the decision that was made, and are very saddened by this outcome," said former Cal gymnast **David Kruse**, who said that \$400,000 in pledges over three years was raised via Cal Gymnastics Forever.

McNeill, meanwhile, says his contract goes through Aug. 24, 2011, "so both the team and I will continue on until then." Athletes from the dropped sports have the option of keeping their scholarships or transferring without sitting out a year of competition.

McNeill, who was petitioned to the U.S. team in August even though he did not compete at the Visa championships, told IG that his own training is under way. Strong on pommel horse and parallel bars, two critical events for the U.S. men's program, McNeill has an excellent chance of picking up where he left off last year at the London worlds, where he placed seventh all-around and fifth on pommel horse.

Germany's Predicament

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The German men's team took a big hit when it lost national champion **Marcel Nguyen**, who fractured his right fibula while tumbling at a meet against Switzerland and Romania on Sept. 25. It's never good when a tune-up for worlds knocks out your top all-arounder.

German star **Fabian Hambüchen**, who did not compete on floor or vault at the German championships or the tri-meet, is hopeful that his sore Achilles' tendon will be 100% for worlds. With Nguyen out, the team really needs him.

"My doctor and I are very optimistic about competing in the all-around in Rotterdam, but it just depends on the healing process," Hambüchen told IG. "I'm in shape on four events and just need to wait for the 'go' of the doctor for floor and vault."

Hong Su Jong/PRK

With a birth date of March 9, 1989, currently registered with the FIG, North Korean **Hong Su Jong** would have been 15 at the 2004 Athens Olympics, where she was registered with a 1985 birth date. She was her team's third-best all-arounder in Athens, placing 50th in prelims. Nullifying her team's results, which is what recently happened to the Chinese women for the 2000 Olympics, would hardly make a difference. North Korea finished 12th out of 12 teams in Athens, and won zero medals.

The odd thing about this whole mess is that Hong's birth year changed for subsequent world competitions, while the birth date for **Hong Un Jong**, who we assume is Su Jong's twin, remained consistent at March 9, 1989.

"My staff is about to check the various documents we have in our archives, and I am looking into the matter," FIG General Secretary **Andre Gueisbuhler** told IG today. "The further procedure to be taken in this case will be decided in the forthcoming days."

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Stay tuned. Will the North Korean federation claim it was all a clerical error?

Shawn Johnson/USA

If you want to see **Shawn Johnson** back on *Dancing With the Stars* this season, you can vote her on. DWTS will be bringing back 10 former couples, and the Cha-Cha and Freestyle dances of Johnson and partner **Ma**
rk Ballas
are up for vote on the DWTS
[website](#)

Science of Gymnastics Journal

This free online technical magazine, edited by Slovenian **Ivan Cuk**, just celebrated its one-year anniversary with issue No. 4. To say that Cuk is merely a student of the sport would not be accurate. He's *extremely*
passionate about gymnastics, and smart, too.

The journal is mainly composed of contributed articles, with submission guidelines available on its website. Each issue is downloadable in PDF format. Click [here](#) for more information.