

Written by Dwight Normile
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2010 has been an interesting year for gymnastics, and now we look ahead to 2011. Following are a few story lines that we should follow in the coming year(s).

Kohei Uchimura/JPN: The two-time defending world champion (pictured here) will make men's gymnastics history if he wins the world all-around gold next October in Tokyo. If he does, what an incredible moment for the sport. If he doesn't, I just hope it's not because of an injury. Am not sure if he is flashing the peace sign (which he did after his first world all-around title in 2009), or if the gesture signifies his second win in Rotterdam. Guess it could mean both.

Mattie Larson/USA: Yes, she bombed floor exercise at the Rotterdam worlds, but her mistakes were overblown because the U.S. team did not win the gold medal. Truth is, the U.S. women had absolutely no margin for error in Rotterdam. They placed third in prelims, so taking the silver was an improvement. Russia self-destructed too, but with higher Start Values, it could afford to.

Prediction: With a few talented juniors becoming seniors in 2011 (**Jordyn Wieber, McKayla Maroney, Sabrina Vega**), Larson, who was still training at All Olympia in December, needs to assert herself at every opportunity she gets.

Yuri van Gelder/NED: By now, it is hard to believe who is telling the truth in the sad saga of the 2005 world rings champion. Suspended for a year by the Dutch Federation after testing positive for cocaine at the 2009 Dutch championships, van Gelder returned to winning form a year later and made the world team. Apparently, the pressure of competing at home at the Rotterdam worlds had become too great, so the 27-year-old gymnast purposely got himself kicked off the team by saying he had used cocaine again, even though he didn't. To some, a false self-incrimination might be worse than the original offense.

So, why would the Dutch Federation take him back? Could it be that **Jeffrey Wammes'** 14.40 on rings at worlds was the team's highest score on the event?

Amanar Vault: With one word, I recently created a heated discussion concerning the rarely seen 2.5-twisting Yurchenko vault, which is worth 6.5 compared with a 5.8 for a double twist. I

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called it "overvalued." All the arguments had good points. But with such a high premium placed on a single skill (which determines 25 percent of the women's all-around), I worry that gymnasts all over are going to risk their knee ligaments to learn it. And who can blame them?

I agree that the increment between a 1.5 and double twist should be smaller than from 2-2.5. But following the existing pattern, a triple-twisting Yurchenko should be worth 7.4.

Following are the current values, followed by what I think they should be worth:

Yurchenko-full: 5.0/5.0

Yurchenko-1.5: 5.3/5.2

Yurchenko-2: 5.8/5.5

Yurchenko-2.5: 6.5/6.0

This would make more sense when you consider that on women's floor exercise, the difference between a triple twist (E) and 3.5 twist (F) is 0.10.

FIG President: We're still two years away from FIG elections, but behind-the-scenes campaigning is surely going on. In an interview that appeared in the September IG, FIG Men's Technical Committee President **Adrian Stoica** did not mince words when asked if he was interested in becoming FIG President: "Yes, I will candidate for the position."

So who is likely to run against Stoica? One of my sources believes that FIG Gymnastics For All President **Margaret Sikkens Ahlquist**, a native of Sweden, could be that person. Stay tuned.

Will **Nastia Liukin** or **Shawn Johnson** compete on an event or two at the 2011 Visa Championships in St. Paul, Minn., next August? I think at least one of them will.

Paul Hamm

can't be the only former Olympic champion to return!

For a complete recap of 2010, from A to Z, check out the January-February issue of IG. In the meantime, here's to a happy and healthy new year to the entire gymnastics world.