

Written by Dwight Normile
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It's that time of year again when the spirit of giving fills our hearts. So I hereby present a brief wish list for the gymnastics world.

Code of Points

I really hope the 2013 version of the Code solves some serious issues. I keep hearing that the execution score might be doubled, to dilute the difficulty score, but that's just adding another step to the equation. FIG President **Bruno Grandi** wants simplicity, and there is an easier way to lessen the importance of difficulty.

Since there are hundreds of gymnastics skills of varying degrees of difficulty, it's time to expand the categories to accommodate them more accurately. So instead of doubling the E-score, the difficulty values should be cut in half. A-skills are worth .05 instead of .10, B-skills are .10 instead of .20, and so on. This achieves two goals: it lowers the overall D-score and creates more room to assign the correct value to a growing list of skills. For example, how can a tucked double-twisting double tuck (E, .50) on floor be worth the same as a 2.5-twisting tucked double? One is obviously harder than the other. There are numerous other examples in the current Code.

Limit the Roll-outs

I do not like the full-twisting front-1.75 roll-out that nearly knocked out **Yusuke Tanaka** at the Tokyo worlds, especially when it's done after something tricky like a 1.5-twisting back. When the punch angle is off by a few degrees, there is little margin for error. I hope the FIG is taking a hard look at skills like this. Six-pass routines on a time restraint is the perfect storm for serious injury right now. And many gymnasts are choosing multiple roll-out skills to avoid landing deductions.

Impose a Skill Limit

Danell Leyva won the world title on parallel bars with a total of 10 skills. Defending champion **Feng Zhe**

, who placed seventh, did 23 skills. Should a set of rules allow such routines to coexist? Shouldn't they encourage efficient routine construction? Again, here is where artistic gymnastics can learn something from trampoline, which requires 10-skill routines with no repetition.

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Three-Step Approach

If every gymnast learned to tumble from the beginning with a three-step approach into his or her roundoff, we'd see a lot fewer out-of-bounds infractions. Too many gymnasts take four, or even five, steps (**Jordyn Wieber**, **Alicia Sacramone**, **Lauren Mitchell**, **Yao Jinnan**, et al.), which leaves little room at the end of the tumbling run, especially when a punch layout front is tacked onto the end.

These extra steps are usually out of habit and really don't contribute to the final skill(s) in the pass. And in a routine that is supposed to be a performance, they are visual clutter.

Ksenia Afanasyeva won the world title on floor with powerful tumbling, and she used an efficient three-step approach.

It's a subtle detail, but something I always notice when I watch floor routines. It's also something that is hard (but not impossible) to change late in a career. If I am not mistaken, years ago it used to be a deduction to take more than three steps for men. For the record, **Valeri Liukin** took three steps into his historic triple back.

Stocking Stuffer

We included a poll in our special December world championships issue about whether **Kohei Uchimura** was the greatest male gymnast of all time. The opinions from various generations were enlightening to say the least. Results-wise, we seem to have already forgotten that **Yang Wei** won three consecutive major titles: two worlds and the Olympics. Also, **Viktor Chukarin** sandwiched two Olympic crowns around the 1954 world title. I don't think Yang was as good as Uchimura (not even close), but it's difficult to compare generations.

I think the venerable **Abie Grossfeld** put things in perspective when he quoted **Christopher Columbus** : "It's easy when someone shows you how." Grossfeld also recalled the accomplishments of various gymnasts that many of us have never seen in action.

Personally, I think Uchimura is fantastic, but superlatives are too unforgiving. That said, I will always remember the beauty, power and precision of **Dmitry Bilozerchev**, whose first world title came at age 16, in 1983. But I'm not saying either is the greatest of all time.

On that note, who is the greatest female gymnast of all time?

Happy holidays.