

Presented by the FIG Technical Committee

Notes: Tabulated by Mary Wright

As a coach at the World Championships, I attended the WAG Forum and took notes. These were sent to the USECA to be distributed to the coaching community to further assist them in their coaching duties. After the comments I saw on the Gymnastic Facebook page, Jessica and I decided it would be helpful for the gymnastics community to understand the rationale behind the Judges assessment of the judicial process. My comments are under Comments. The rest are my notes directly taken from the FIG Technical Director's presentation at the Forum.

FORUM notes:

The goal for this WAG Forum was to avoid any misunderstandings of scores and to explain the scoring process to the coaches.

There will now be a .5 penalty for the following infractions of rule 2.4

- . Chalk is used outside of the box by athletes. The boxes will be placed 1 on vault, 4 on floor, 1 on beam, 1 on bars.
- . Coaches may use tape to place on the vault runway for board placement but not chalk.
- . Do not leave chalk on mats after chalking bars. Bring a towel and wipe the chalk off the mats.
- . No water is allowed to be sprayed on the beam
- . Face painting is not allowed on floor. It's sport, not theater.
- . Compression socks on legs can be used in warm ups and training but NOT during the competition

COMMENTS: by Mary

This rule 2.4 has been in the code for a long time and the FIG has decided to enforce it based on the following:

1 The girls and coaches tend to get a little crazy and the vault runway becomes adorned with lines,(straight, squiggly and curved) to remind the athletes where to place their hands, where to start their run, etc. It is a little distracting especially when an athlete is running down the runway ready to vault and can't figure out which is "her" marking on the runway. Some

athletes want to make sure that their feet are completely covered in chalk and the chalk is not only ground into the runway, but bits of chalk are left scattered over the runway. Again, some athletes like this, but many do not. To compromise, boxes will be provided on every event so that the athletes may cover their feet with chalk, as much as they want, without grounding chalk into the mats.

2 Tape is allowed beside the runway for athletes and coaches to lay down markings for board placement, Round Off mat placement, etc.

3 I have to admit, the bar chalking has become almost an event in itself. Some like no chalk on the bars and prefer the honey/water mix so all chalk is scraped off the bars. When the next athlete approaches, she and her coaches then need to totally drench the bars with water, then use blocks of chalk to chalk the bars as they like it. This process leaves water all over the mats, chalk parts and powder mixed into the chalk and generally a very messy area. Plus, it doesn't look good for television coverage. The compromise was to bring a towel to wipe up the mess as quickly as possible as there are time constraints at World Championships on setting the bars etc. It was welcoming to see that the USA coaches were already on top of this before the Forum was even held. Laurent and Maggie had their towel and wiped up their mess between each athlete and had it down to a fine art....an event, within itself.

4 No water is to be sprayed on the beam. I've never seen this done in meets in the USA as we (club owners) all know what constant water does to our beams....they become slippery and we have to replace the beam covers ALOT. In addition to that, in competition, we then have to rub masses of chalk on the beams to counteract the slippery surface. Most athletes do not like this so the compromise was.....small amounts of chalk to mark the beam for foot placement etc is fine, but no water.

5 Face painting is not allowed on floor.

During the 2018 Floor Finals of the European Championships, one of the athletes from the Netherlands performed her floor routine to Cats and her face was painted to signify the cat. It was exceptionally well done and embraced by many. I too, thought that it was fantastic but realized, it was a "once in a lifetime" chance taken, and it worked. However, imagine a World Championships where you have 11 subdivisions of 25 athletes per subdivision and they all have their faces painted to characterize their floor routines. Now do you paint them right before floor, then clean your face off, or do you have them painted throughout the entire meet. The judges really

appreciated the “once in a lifetime” performance but decided that it was more appropriate for Cirque de Soleil than a World Championships competition. Hence the comment....this is Sport not Theater.

6 It was brought the attention of the FIG Technical Committee as to whether or not “compression socks” could be worn by the athletes in competition. The decision was made by the Athletes Rep, Oksana Chusovitina, that compression socks can be worn in training, on podium, in the 30 sec warmup, but taken off for the competition itself. There was no dissension from any of the coaches from the attending countries.

FORUM Notes

Additional infractions:

- . Entering the floor to compete your routine must NOT be done with choreography. Some athletes use the green light time (30 secs) to dance onto the floor and inadvertently use a turn, which now becomes an element and is NOT allowed. You may step or take a few steps, nicely to your beginning pose but no choreography such as turns, jumps etc.

- . Music. Some human voice may be used as a musical instrument, which is not clearly a song or part of a song, is acceptable. The music though, MUST match with the choreography of routine

Fall Timing:

- . If a gymnast intentionally remains off of their feet or lays on the ground, in order to avoid the 30 sec fall clock (resting, adjusting grips, talking to coach, receiving chalk from coach etc) is deliberately delaying the competition without justification and WILL receive a .3 deduction.

COMMENTS: by Mary

1 Entering the floor to compete your routine must not be done with choreography. The rationale from the Technical Committee is that they appreciate the “grand entrance” onto the floor, but some athletes perform SUCH a “grand entrance” that they inadvertently perform a skill from the COP such as a turn, body wave etc. As you know, we cannot enter the floor area prior to the green light being displayed. Once the athlete addresses the judges and starts walking onto the floor, the judges eyes are on her. The TC suggests a “less of a grand entrance” with nice presentation is a better compromise. I have to admit, most athletes performed a very small and beautiful entrance on to the floor, while others did encompass a turn to

get into their starting pose. To be clear, a “PRESENTATION” entrance onto the floor is completely acceptable, just be wary that if a skill is used in your entrance, your time could start from that point, and you could incur a time deduction.

2 Sometimes the music that is heard, does sound like human voices trying to sing but failing miserably. Other times, the human voice is so overbearing and leaves the audience and judges as to wonder, whether or not a “death” has occurred in the family. On fewer occasions, the human voice may (to a small degree) assist in the theatrical presentation of the routine. Frankly, I’m of the opinion, that the human voice is more distracting than assisting the athlete, and usually is randomly boring.

3 FALL Timing. I completely agree with this rule. It was initiated so that if an athlete fell and needed time to shake off the fall because they incurred pain because of the fall, then they could remain in that position, (for up to 30 seconds) without incurring a deduction. However, the Hollywood style of laying flat and we think you’re dead, that we see at soccer games, has been used, and this is considered flagrant abuse of the rule and will incur deductions.

FORUM notes:

VAULT

The athlete gets 3 attempts on vault if they are competing 2 different vaults, and 2 attempts on vault if they are competing 1 vault. ANY running on the runway towards the judges constitutes an attempt and will be considered as an attempt. If you do a step down timer off the table, that will be considered as an attempt. If, after the presentation to the judges, you run back towards the beginning of the runway, it will NOT be considered an attempt. ANY run towards the judges, even if its a few steps, will be considered an attempt.

Body Shape: A layout position must show a layout position off the table as well as the layout position must pass through and after the vertical line. The hips MUST be OPEN throughout this process. If the layout position is not shown PAST the vertical position it will be classified as a pike. Therefore, the D judges will give the value as a pike and the E judges will deduct for not enough pike.

Group 3 Vaults: a 1/4 on or a 1/2 on is permitted in preflight placement on the table. If the gymnast does NOT show a sideways repulsion off the table, then continue to turn (Kasamatsu) it will be considered another vault.

COMMENTS: by Mary

1 The athlete gets 3 attempts for 2 vaults and 2 attempts for 1 vault. Again. I completely agree with this rule. I did not witness flagrant abuse of this rule but apparently, athletes have jumped up onto the table and done a step down back layout and then proceeded to take their allowable 2-3 attempts. They did not realize that this is considered an attempt and part of the 30 second warmup. Others performed a roundoff back tuck down the runway not realizing that this also constituted one of your 2-3 allowable attempts. The intent was to make sure that the coaches and athletes knew the rules and acted accordingly.

Bodyshape:

This rule did result in questions from the coaches and everyone appreciated the feedback from the judges. Not all agreed with the decision on when the turn or layout position occurred and when the deduction would take place. But as Donatella said....it's the rule!!

1 To achieve a layout position when calling a "layout" positioned vault, the body must show a layout position off the table which usually occurs just prior and through vertical. What the judges also want to see is that the vertical position be maintained during the initial flight stage OFF the table....so past the vertical line. If the body shape changed AFTER this point, then a layout position would be given and a deduction would occur if piking occurred on the way down. If the body shape of the vault was NOT in a layout (stretched) position at the vertical and past the vertical, then a pike position would be awarded and further deductions would occur for not enough pike in the vault. The D judges either give the layout or pike and then the E judges take the necessary deductions for shaping in the post flight. As you can see, this means that vaults not being given the intended D Value, also will be given double deductions as the E judges adjudicate solely on the EXECUTION of the vault.

2 Group 3 vaults: The judges have decided that any vault that is a 1/4 on or a 1/2 on WILL be given the D value of that vault as long as the body position off the table shows a side position in the post flight before additional turns occur in that vault. Again....a very good and clear clarification for everyone.

FORUM notes:

UNEVEN BARS

Preparation of chalking the bars may be done as soon as the warm up music starts and the athletes are marching to their next event. Two people may be up on the podium preparing the bars. It may be 2 coaches, a coach and a gymnast...it doesn't matter.

Root Skill

If an athlete falls while performing a skill from a toe on root skill, gets up and repeats the skill, then later in the routine competes 2 other skills from the same root family, the 3rd root skill from that family will have no value. The athlete must show a grab, then a fall for the skill to be given. Brushing the bar, will not pay the flight skill.

COMMENTS: by Mary

1 The preparation of the bars was a great clarification. A very cool story about this rule happened at the 2017 World Championships in Montreal. NZ and Germany were in the same group. We alternated Teams starting on each event. It was an Apparatus World Championships. Germany was first up on vault and NZ (who had only 1 gymnast on vault) was last up on vault and competed two different vaults. She also happened to be the only NZ gymnast on Bars and would be going up first on Bars. This gave her and her coaches, absolutely NO time to finish vault, march to bars and have the time necessary to chalk up the bars and set the tension correctly on the bars, in the allowable time. The German coaches went down to the Bar area while NZ was still competing and jumped up on the podium, chalked the bars and set the tension, as soon as the march music started to walk to the next event. By the time NZ got to Bars, they were already prepared for the NZ athlete. What AWESOME coaches from Germany.

2 The root skill tabulation of notes here.....I GOT WRONG. Donatella suggested that its best to have only 2 root skills from the same family, in case you had to repeat a skill from a fall or an interruption in the flow of the exercise being performed. If the athlete has to repeat a skill from the same root family and later on in the routine, the athlete performs a D or E skill from the same root family, then that E or D skill would not be given, causing a .4 to .5 loss in the D value of the routine.

The rules state that you may do 3 root skills from the same family.

FORUM notes:

BEAM

Layout with two feet, must show layout line on the takeoff position and in the inverted vertical position. If not, the skill is given a pike.

Side salto must show BOTH legs tucked and both hands touching the legs during the salto. Otherwise it will be classified as a side aerial and deducted for form. If a side aerial is performed later in the routine, then that side aerial is not paid as its considered repeating the same skill.

Ring Leap

To be paid the ring leap you must show the following positions:

- . Upper back arched with complete head release
- . 180 degree split
- . legs must show a horizontal split with BOTH legs
- . Back foot must be to crown.

The Ring position Deductions are as follows:

- .1 Insufficient arch in back
- .1 for small deduction if front leg is below horizontal
- .3 for larger deduction if front leg is further below horizontal
- .1 if back foot is only at head height and not at crown height
- .3 if back foot is at shoulder height

Note: the crown position is 2-3 inches above the top of the head. If it is not at crown, then the skill becomes a C.

COMMENTS: by Mary

1 The layout to land on two feet must show a layout position on the take off with open hips, AND a layout position at the inverted vertical position with hips open. This is great clarification on where they determine the stretched positions in the layout to land on two feet.

2 Side salto must show both legs tucked and both hands at (some point) on the sides of both legs. This clarification was brought to the attention of the coaches because many athletes were doing a side salto with one or two legs straight, or not touching the legs on the side salto, then later in the routine, performing a side aerial. Because the side salto did not attain the necessary body shapes to define it as a side salto, it was adjudicated as a side aerial. Therefore, the side aerial which was performed later in the routine was also clarified as a side aerial which meant that the same skill was repeated so the second side aerial received NO value.

3 Ring Leap. The ring position in the switch ring, ring jump or ring leap, was rarely given because it did not achieve all of the necessary body shapes as laid out by the TC. This clarification was good to hear as the coaches were still reeling from Beam Finals at the 2017 World Championships in Montreal where the Gold medal athlete received an E score of 8.3 and the Silver medal athlete received an E score of 8.0. Everyone else received E scores in the 6's and 7's. I was one of the loudest voices in recriminating the judges for their severe judging. I have since understood why their E scores were so low, and I actually agree with their adjudication. However, whoever in their infinite wisdom, decided to change the deductions from .05 to .1 to .15 to .2 etc.....and decided that the deductions would now be .1 or .3 or .5 with nothing in between. This is where, as a coach, I disagree with that infinite wisdom. That is why the parity between the gymnasts, in my opinion, is not always accurate. The athlete who does achieve the correct positions in the ring jumps or leaps, should definitely be rewarded for doing so, as it is VERY RARE. I specifically watched Beam finals to check off which of these athletes achieved the desired positions. There were very few. So coaches: If your athlete does not meet the required positions in the ring jump or leap.....don't do it. The athlete WILL be deducted and the skill not given. So you were going for .5 D value in the routine. Instead, you got a C value .3 from the D judges and accrued .5 deductions from the E judges.

FORUM notes:

Jumps/Turns in Side position

Presently, the split can be in the middle or at the end of the turning jump. In the next cycle this will change so that the split will be at the height of the jump, then the turn occurs. Therefore the D judges downgrade the jump from a D to a B, and the C jump becomes an A, as the turn is occurring before the takeoff. The deductions for the early turn are also taken by the E judges.

Problems with this skill are

- . Start by moving one or both feet before jumping off the beam
- . Turning head in the preparation...cannot look at the beam on takeoff
- . If knees start to turn in the plié before jump
- . If shoulders start to turn in the plié before jump
- . If hips start to turn in the plié before jump

My suggestion is that ALL Jumps from the side position show the full 180 split in the jump and THEN, execute the half turn.

COMMENTS: by Mary

This skill, the split 1/2 jump from take off in side position to landing in side position, is the easiest D in the Code. BUT....I don't know if ANYONE was given the D value for this skill. After clarification of deductions of this skill were given at the WAG Forum at the 2017 World Championships, it became apparent that this skill would rarely be achieved. They showed a few athletes on video who competed this skill at former meets, and the deductions were huge. One athlete had the skill downgraded from a D to a B by the D panel and then the same athlete was deducted an additional 1.1 by the E panel. The reasons being:

- . The head looked at the beam on the take off
- . The shoulders, hips, knees and ankles were slightly turned before the jump off the beam
- . The split position was not 180
- . Posture in the air of the split (shoulders were not above hips)
- . Balance error on landing
- . Landing occurred with butt out, and shoulders forwards resulting in a closed hip angle on the landing

A few coaches were surprised at this last deduction. (Not verbally discussed in the forum but afterwards at the arena) Their reasoning was that the men land ALL of their tumbling with their butts out and their shoulders way forwards which allowed them to control their landings on floor, resulting in no wobbles. I explained that the landings of acro skills are different from dance skills. Dance skills land in a pli  and in a correct pli , you do not stick your butt out and you do not let your shoulders come forward at any part of the jump or leap. Now, the judges have emphasized that deduction.

Again, my suggestion is that we make the change now for this skill. Jump from the side position, complete the full 180 split in the air, and THEN execute the half turn to land in a side position.

FORUM notes:

Connections

- . If you perform a leap to immediate turn, you cannot plié into the turn
- . The turn must be from a straight leg, not a plié
- . If there is any balance issue, the connection to the next skill will not be paid.
- . If there is any foot movement in the connection, it will not be paid.

COMMENTS: by Mary

I was not clear with these notes. If you perform a leap to an immediate turn, you land the leap in a plié, then the step into the turn must be from a straight leg. The rationale for this is: Most athletes who perform this connection, plie into the connecting turn, and as they releve, they inadvertently start the turn on their foot early and consequently are not getting credit for the value of the turn. The judges are making it easier for us, by requiring that the turn starts in a releve.

FORUM notes:

Mixed Connections

Rhythm: for example a front aerial to dance skill. You may finish the front aerial fast and show completion of the skill with the arms back high oblique, then use the down swing of the arms to initiate the power into the jump. You must show a continuation of the plié as the arms move from a stopped position high and back, to show a continued body movement.

Body Shape Deductions are .1, .3 or .5

- . Insufficient split
- . Leg separation when required to be together
- . Legs bent
- . Toes not pointed
- . Specific Element Body Shape

The example they showed was a side jump in forward split position. She incurred a deduction of 1.1 for a skill that was downgraded from a D to a B. The deductions taken were from .1 to .3 and were for

- . Shape - not enough split
- . Height- not enough height
- . Not precise enough in execution
- . Legs apart on the landing

- . Balance error on the landing
 - . Excessive preparation on take off with shoulders turning before jump
- Another gymnast used as an example performed a switch ring leap and received .5 in the shape of the skill alone.

COMMENTS: by Mary
Same as above

FORUM notes:

Transitional Movements

- . if there is any walking between choreography and a skill, this is classified as adjustments or extra steps. EVERY part of the beam routine MUST be a performance. There should be NO part of the routine where the body relaxes, slows down to a stop, or the arms and head are not a part of the performance.

COMMENTS: by Mary

I completely agree with this. The Beam Routine IS a performance from the moment the athlete mounts the beam until the athlete lands on the floor after her dismount. As such, there should be no time whatsoever in the routine, where the body is in a relaxed state. Every part of the routine should be choreographed, just as it is on floor.

FORUM notes:

Down On The Beam Requirement

There must be TWO DIFFERENT BODY PARTS down on the beam. This does NOT include a cross sit as its a transitional movement from one body part touching the beam to another body part touching the beam. The judges expect creativity and will judge accordingly.

COMMENTS: by Mary

Again, this has become a very boring part to the routine. I understand that its hard to be creative down on the beam as there's only so much that you can do. When Donatella described this dilemma to all of us, there were many chuckles from the coaches in attendance, as we all agreed with her.

FORUM notes:

FLOOR

There is a complete lack of variety in the choreography in the corners before each tumbling pass. If its the same “flamingo” position that most athletes perform, there will be a

- .1 deduction for showing the same basic position twice.
- .1 deduction for feet adjusting from the pose to the start of the run. This occurs each time there is adjustment of the feet
- .1 for insufficient choreography after the last tumbling pass. You must show a change of level in the body movement and transitional movement from the landing of the tumbling pass to the finishing position of the routine and this must pass through two feet.

COMMENTS: by Mary

1 I again, agree with this. Unfortunately, the “powers that be” decided that all except 1 tumbling pass must take off from 1 foot and encouraged a turn or creative engagement of movement to begin this 1 footed tumbling pass. The FLAMINGO has dominated the event. As choreographers, we cringe when we see the lack of creativity in the corners, but then again, how much can you do when you begin your tumbling pass from one foot, and all you’re thinking about is competing that double twisting double layout, (well at least Simone is thinking about that). I started to count the number of “flamingos” I saw just in Floor finals. There were WAY to many. Coaches, I’m not sure what we’re going to do, but perhaps pick another bird to emulate.....just kidding.

2 I had not thought much about what the feet do before the athlete starts their tumbling passes. Unfortunately, most of the athletes do some form of feet adjustments (I’m sure they’re not trying to tap dance) so I can also understand this deduction. It really looks inadequate, especially at a World Championships.

3 I think a gymnast who can do an incredibly powerful last dramatic pose after their last tumbling pass, to immediately complete their floor routine, then kudos to you. Unfortunately, it rarely pays off in the elite arena. I’ve seen college athletes who definitely can do this, but the few who attempted this at Worlds in Doha....failed to engage anyone, let alone the judges. The TC are encouraging us to show a dramatic finish at the completion of the routine and showed various video examples of this. This is your time to shine.....just in case you made mistakes during the routine.