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**Critical Analysis of 2023 Xfinity US Gymnastics Championships:
Senior Women's Night 2**

A Concerned Fan

President of the Concerned Fan Affiliation of my Kitchen

Author Note

I would like to thank my cat cAtticus Finch Finnycat Cat'n No No Bad Kitty AssFace for his unyielding support during this endeavor. Without him keeping me safe from my own feet I don't think this would have been possible.

Abstract

The replay of the 2023 Xfinity US Gymnastics Championships: Senior Women's Night 2 was analyzed by the time spent on the following categories: Actual Gymnastics, Dead Eyed Stare, Commercials, Fluff, and extraneous BS. The hypothesis being that this broadcast was not only a significant improvement over previous broadcasts, but that it was actually good. This report will use quantitative data to determine if this perception is based in reality or Stockholm Syndrome.

Critical Analysis of 2023 Xfinity US Gymnastics Championships: Senior Women's Night 2

Television coverage of Artistic Gymnastics has long been the woe of every gymnastic fan on earth. From ignoring the existence of any non-US teams at any international event, the hysterical coverage from Bela declaring everything a conspiracy, outright objectification of children, seemingly hours long fluff pieces interspersed between seconds of actual gymnastic coverage, coach mics, constantly declaring the rules to be utterly indecipherable; one could go on and on. Recently, NBC has made some changes to their coverage and to the delight of gymnastic fans, they are showing more gymnastics and less garbage. This analysis will delve into the coverage to ascertain whether fans should be as delighted as we are or if we're so accustomed to utter crap that we would rejoice in any improvement no matter how pathetic and to identify future space for improvement.

Methodology

2023 Xfinity US Gymnastics Championships: Senior Women's Night 2 was observed on playback. A stopwatch was used to assess the time spent on each gymnast for various categories throughout the broadcast. The data was entered into excel for further analysis. The categories assed were:

- Actual Gymnastics: this included showing of routines, replays, and approximately 10s of kiss and cry/wave/etc. This was further broken down into each event.
- Dead Eyed Stare: this included showing gymnasts standing, sitting, searching through their bag, etc. This was further broken down to pull out any ankle taping vignettes.
- Fluff: stories of parents, tragedies, and or life that have nothing to do with the competition at hand
- Commercials: because someone is paying the bills
- BS: camera time for commentators, time spent with charts explaining what Red, Yellow, Green mean, time spent on the fainting couch after trying to comprehend the rules.

In addition, any instances of gratuitous butt or crotch shots were noted and the circumstances described.

Several shortcomings of this analysis were identified and should be taken into consideration. First, the replay broadcast included the first rotation, while the live broadcast did not. Second, the replay broadcast had 60s commercial breaks, while the live broadcast commercial breaks were longer. Often much, much longer. Third, the data has not been assessed for consistency or accuracy because while the author clearly has too much time on their hands, there are limits to their dedication to this project.

Composition

In this section we assess the composition of the coverage starting high and working down to a low level of granularity

Figure 1. Top Level Composition of Broadcast

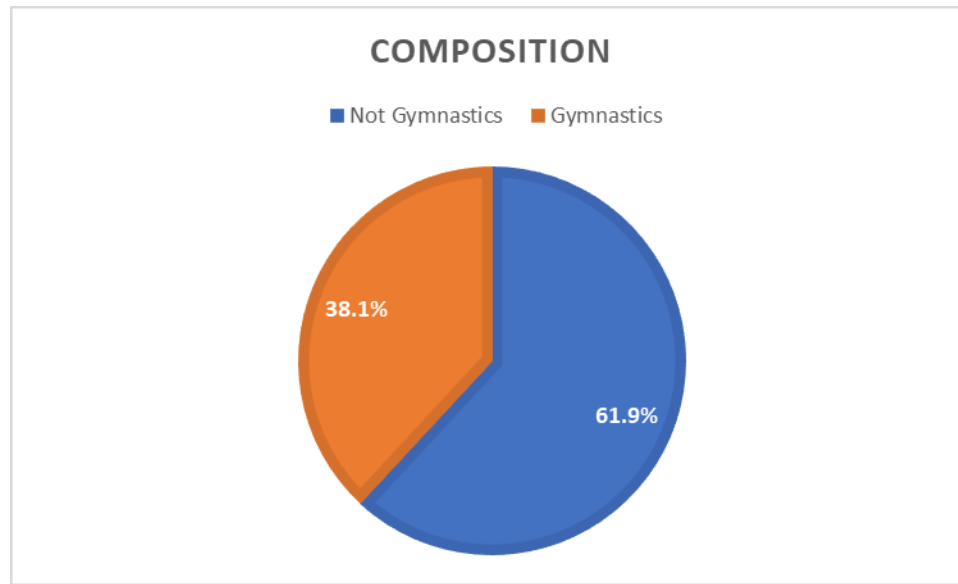


Figure 1. breaks the composition of the broadcast into two categories: gymnastics and not gymnastics. "Gymnastics" included all the time included in the Actual Gymnastics category for all gymnasts. The "Not Gymnastics" was all other time in the broadcast, including commercials. Note that because of the shortcomings identified in the methodology section, the amount of "Gymnastics" is overstated relative to the live broadcast because of the inclusion of the first rotation and the amount of "Not Gymnastics" is understated due to the shortened commercial breaks.

Figure 1 shows that only 38% of the broadcast was actual gymnastics. One might suggest that in order to be fairly referred to as a "Gymnastics" broadcast, the actual gymnastics should be at a minimum, more than half of the content. One might also wonder how little the Actual Gymnastics piece of pie was in previous broadcasts such that we all think 38% is a dramatic improvement. Figure 2 breaks the composition down into each of the assessed categories.

Figure 2. Composition breakdown by category

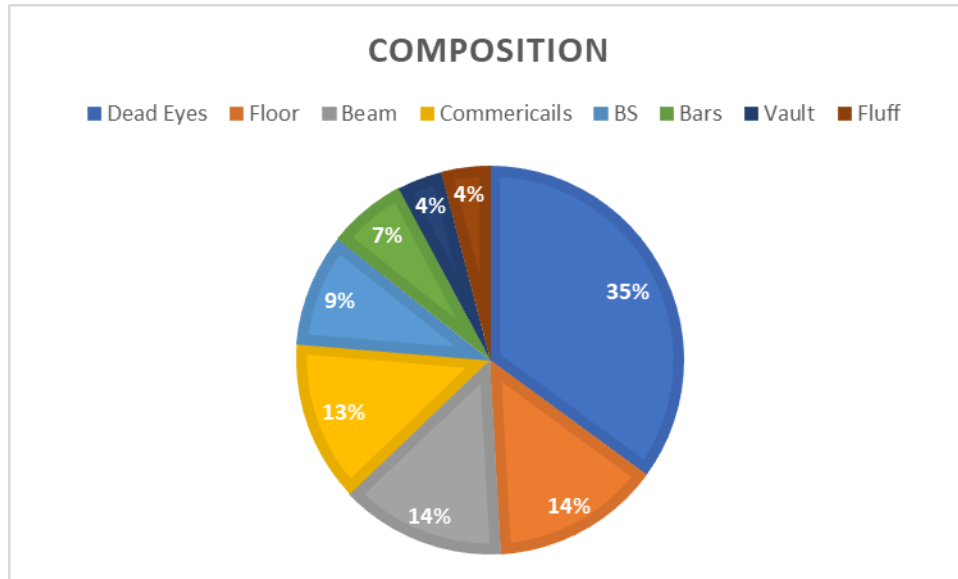


Figure 2 shows that by far, the largest chunk of time was spent on dead eye stares. More than twice the time of any other category. Note that the total of the Actual Gymnastics, at 38% just ekes out the dead eyed stare category (35%) as far as portion of coverage. The difference in time spent on Actual Gymnastics is a pretty pathetic 3 minutes more than dead eyed stares.

Figure 3. Event Coverage by number of routines

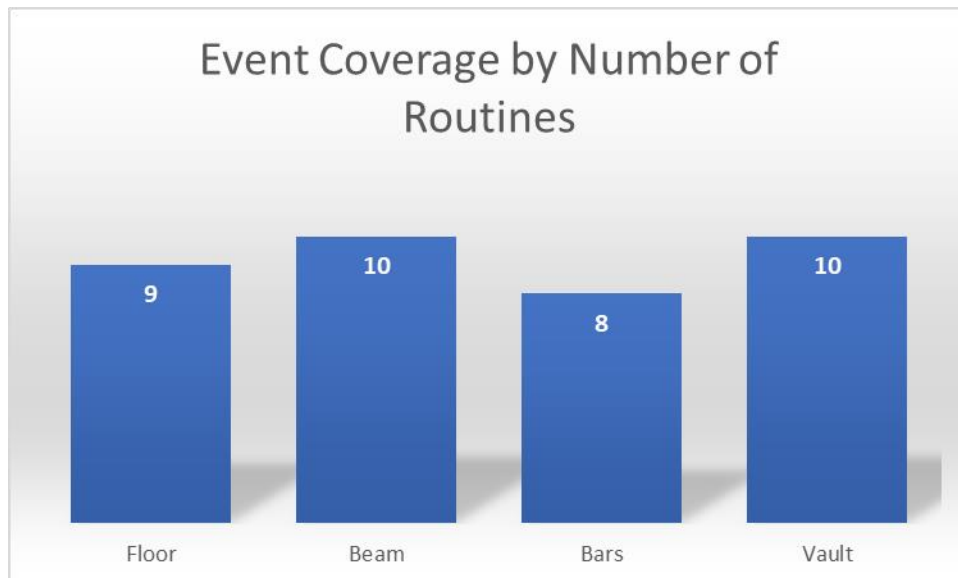
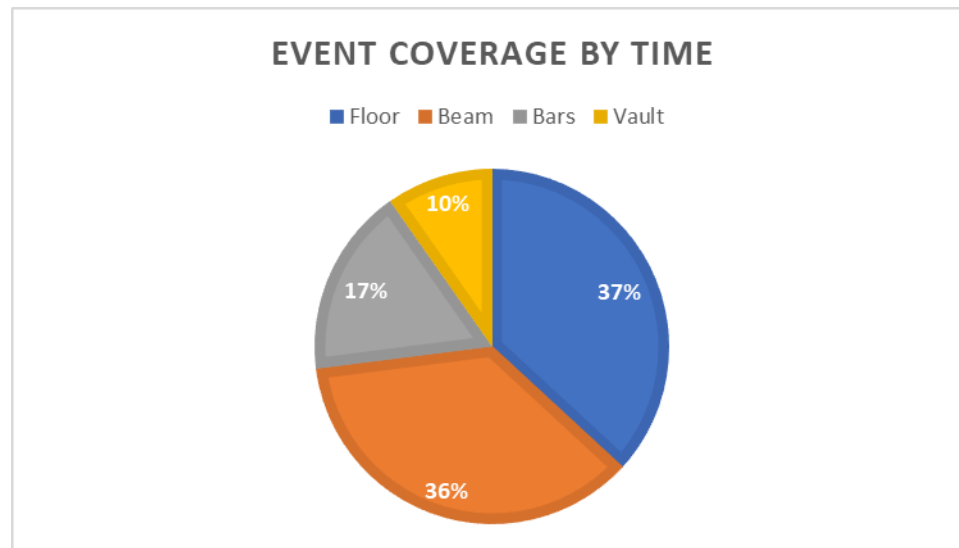


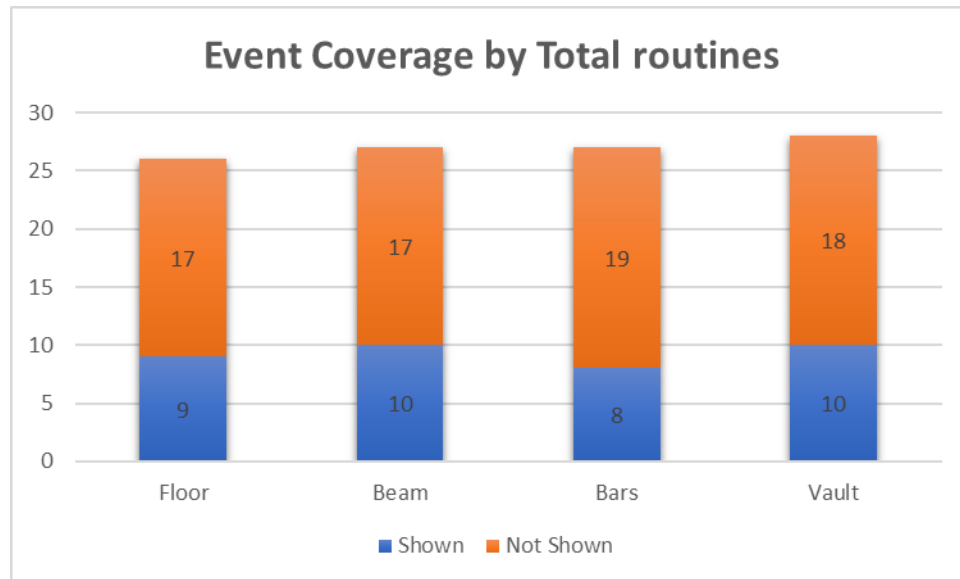
Figure 3 shows that the number of routines shown on each event are relatively balanced – 8-10 routines on each event feels reasonable. Wait, how many participants were there? 28? Oh dear.

Figure 4. Event Coverage By Time



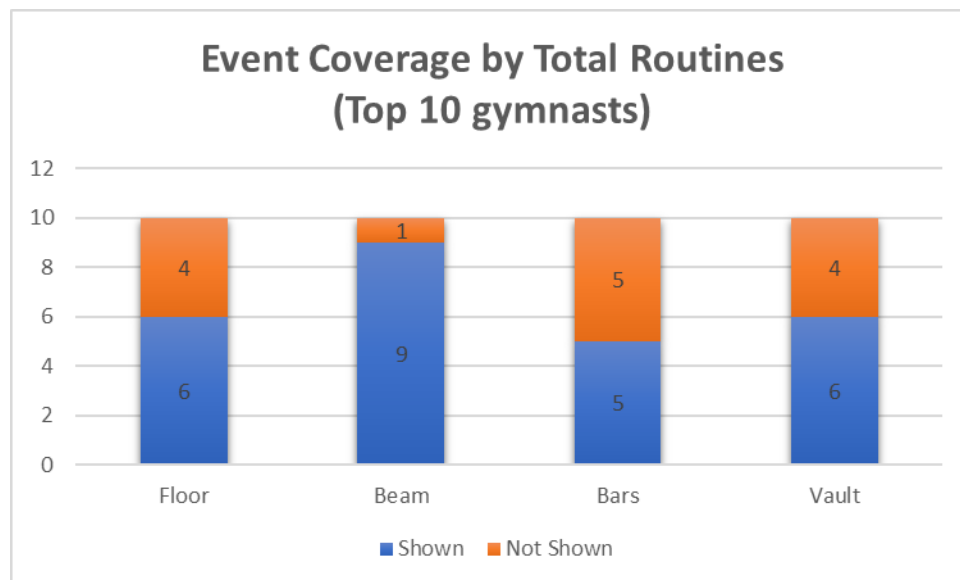
In Figure 4, the time spent on Actual Gymnastics was broken down by event. Since the number of routines shown on each event was relatively similar, this was not normalized. The chart shows that floor and beam were shown about the same amount of time, which makes sense as both are 90s routines and that they were more time than bars and vault, which also makes sense as bars and vault are much faster than floor and beam. Vault had the least time, as the fastest event. Though it was not tracked specifically, there were very few (if any) of the 2nd vaults shown. In all, the amount of time spent on each event makes sense based on the number and timing of routines.

Figure 5. Event Coverage by Total Routines



A total of 28 gymnasts competed at US Nationals: 26 in the all-around and 2 competing in only two events each. Figure 5 shows the number of routines shown in the broadcast and the number not shown. In general, about 2/3 of the routines were not shown. Figure 6 breaks down the routines shown of the top 10 gymnasts.

Figure 6. Event Coverage by Routines in top 10 finishers in all around



Coverage of top 10 finisher routines is about half of the floor, vault, and bars, and almost all of the beam routines.

One might claim that it's too difficult to show all the routines, or that there isn't time to show them all (as opposed to every minute of every football, baseball, basketball game ever, but digression). Assuming that each floor and beam routine are 100s (1:40), bars is 40s, and vault is 15s, multiplying by the total number of routines on each event results in 113 minutes. The broadcast was 2 hours 13 minutes, which exceeds the time required to show all routines by 20 minutes. Is that enough time to show all the routines, probably not because commercials n'shit. But it does seem to indicate that only showing 1/3 is rather... unimpressive. Even showing 2/3 of the routines (75 mins approx.) would allow a full hour of other crap, which should be plenty.

Simone Watch

Obviously, Simone Biles is the star of this show, as she should be. How much time did we get to see Simone? And what was she doing at that time?

Figure 7. Simone Watch

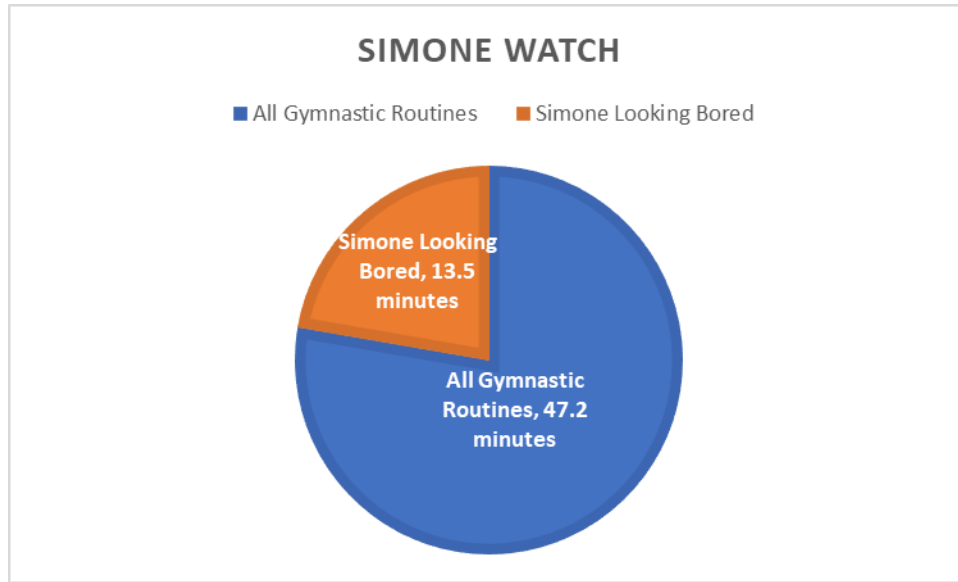
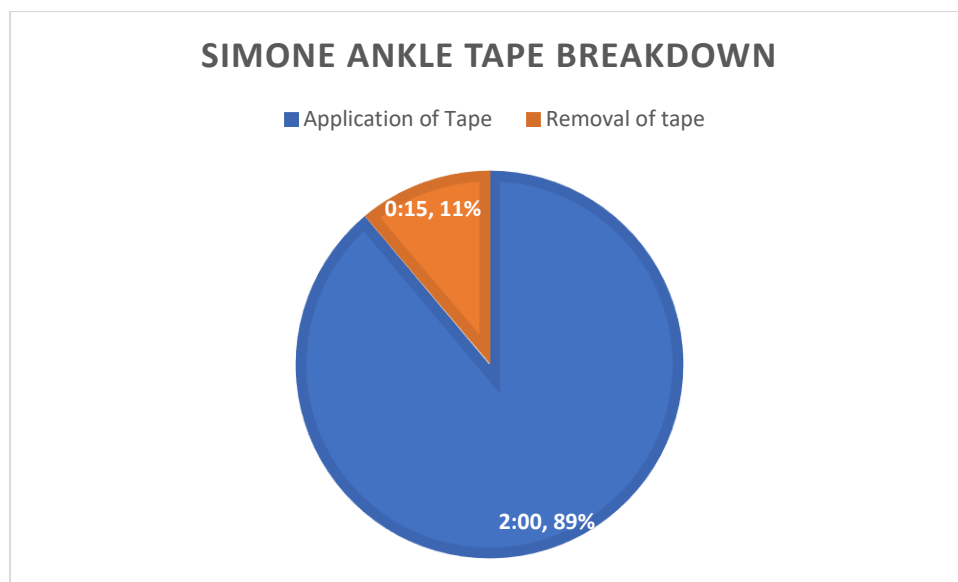


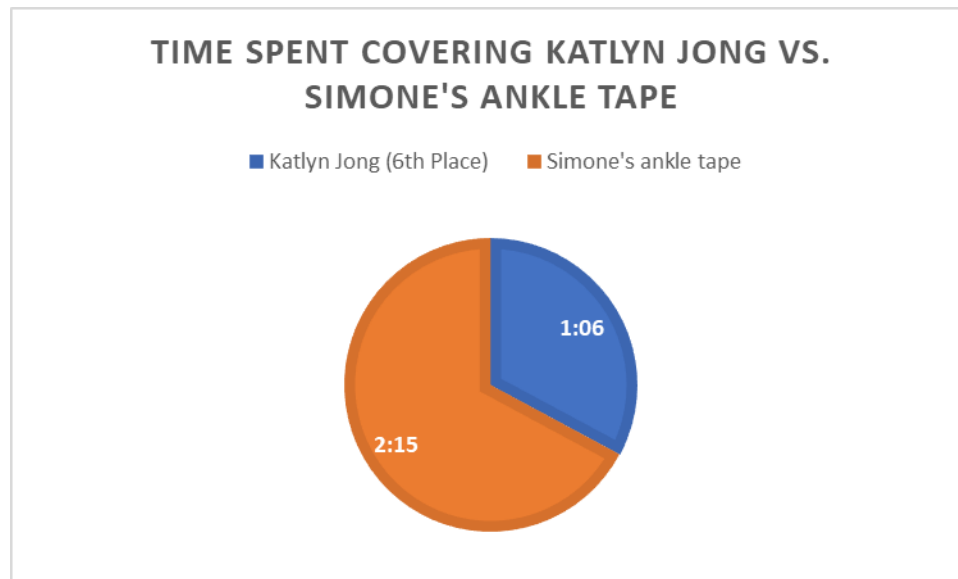
Figure 7 shows that we had a full 47.2 minutes of gymnastic routines of Simone and 13.5 minutes of Dead Eyed Stare Simone.

Figure 8. Ankle tape breakdown



We spent a full 2:15 seconds watching various phases of Simone's ankle taping: 0:15 removing and 2 minutes applying. Le'Raut was clearly applying Achilles bracing across the back of her ankle. Anchors were applied from the outside in, which is not ideal especially as this was an achilles reinforcement that inclines an ankle to point as you're landing (increasing likelihood of turning) and having the anchors also go inward will further incline the ankle to turn. Is this criticism a bit much? Yes, but this is the GOAT we're taking about here. In addition, multiple times his achilles reinforcing bands were pulling away from the anchors. Sub Optimal. We give his taping skills a B+.

Figure 9. Simone's ankle vs. 6th place finisher Katlyn Jong



To denote the importance of Simone's ankle, we compare the coverage of her ankle taping vs. total coverage of 6th place finisher and national team member Kaitlyn Jong. You'll note that Simone's ankle received more than twice as much coverage as the woman who placed 5 slots behind her. While we single out Kaitlyn here as a point, Simone's ankle also got more coverage than the gymnastics of Zoe, Tiana, Nola, Skye, Katlyn, Lexi, Kayla, Amelia, Alicia, Eveylynn, Madray, Addison, Michelle, Marissa, Dulcey, Myli, Ashlee, Charlotte, Levi, and Kelsie. For what it's worth, while Simone's ankle tape got more coverage than Kayla's gymnastics, Kayla's

ankle tape got more coverage than the gymnastics of Lexi, Amelia, Alicia, Eveylynn, Madray, Addison, Michelle, Marissa, Dulcey, Myli, Ashlee, Charlotte, Levi, Kelsie, AND HERSELF.

All Those Other People Watch

There were other people at nationals other than Simone. Take a moment and let that sink in. Figure 10 shows the minutes of dead eye time per gymnast, spectator, mom. Note that Dead Eyed Simone time is almost triple the next closes Dead Eye gymnast, Jordan. Figure 11 shows the total time per person broken down into categories.

Figure 10. Dead Eye Time by Person

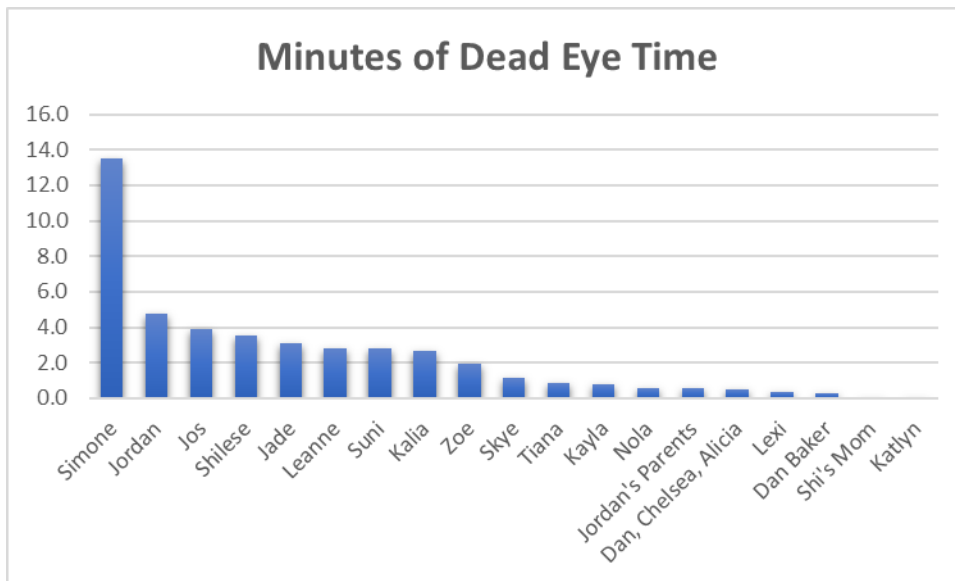
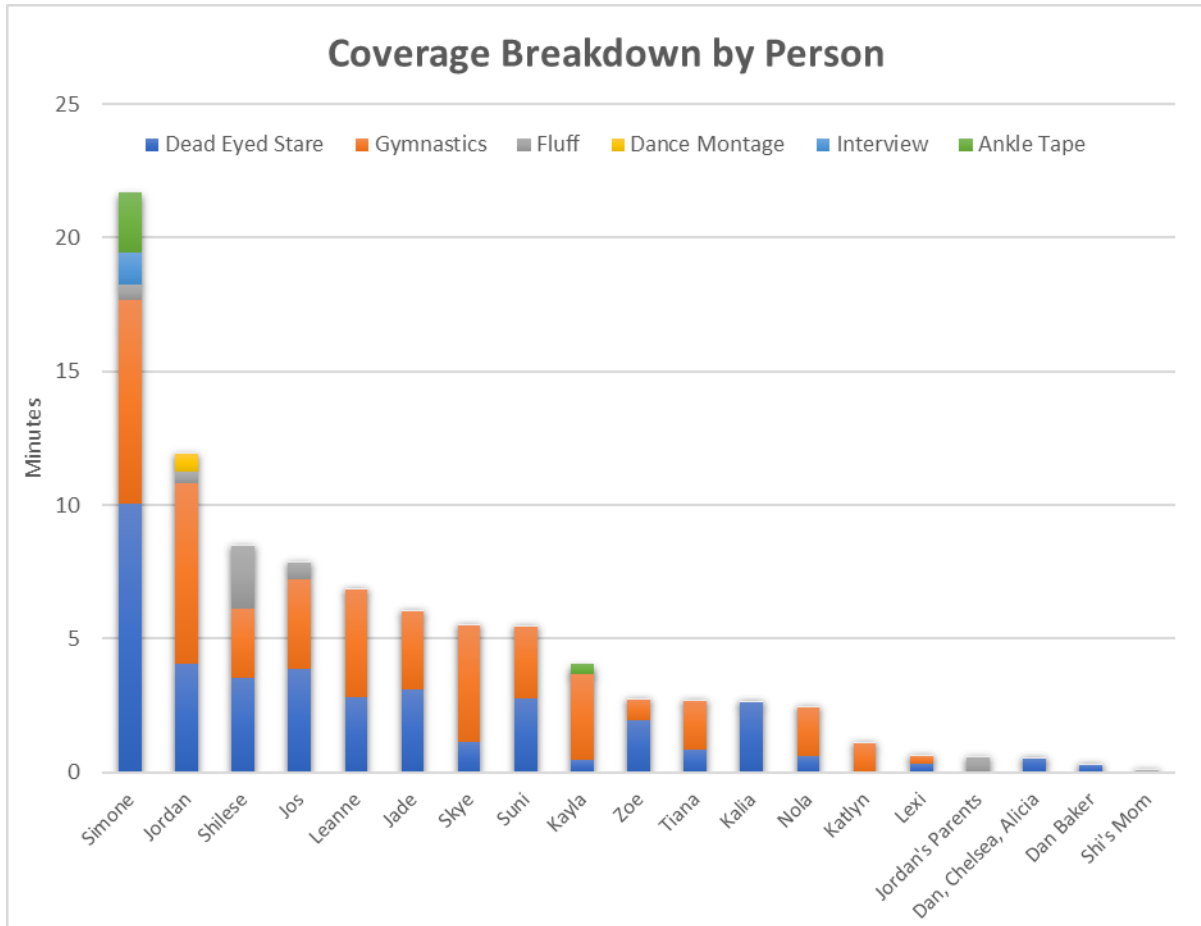


Figure 11. Coverage Breakdown by Person



As expected, Simone gets the lions share of the coverage, followed by Jordan in a comfortable second and Shilese just squeaks by Jos boosted by her fluff piece. Simone gets twice as much air time as 2nd place Jordan.

Fluff n'Stuff

A total of ~4 minutes was spent on Fluff pieces, the vast majority that piece on Shinese's dad. The other fluff shown was Michelle Obama congratulating last years' champions via text, Simone looking at cute baby Jos x2, a Jordan dance montage, and Jordan's parents watching her night one bars.

The author has mixed feelings about the Shilese Fluff piece. On the one hand the death of her father is undoubtedly a huge impactful life changing moment. On the other hand, it has nothing to do with gymnastics, it has been mentioned on every single broadcast since he died that the date on her leo is in honor of him, and there's something ironic or maybe completely lacking in self awareness to do a whole piece on the colossal impact of losing a parent so young while completely ignoring the existence of the other parent, who we're pretty sure is still alive and probably deserves a freakin parade in her honor for juggling all this alone. Shinese's dad died. Suni's dad was paralyzed. Both awful, but at the same time, it feels a little icky bordering on exploitive to keep bringing it up at every single meet.

Here's what this author does NOT want to see in a fluff piece:

- Gymnast driving to gym
- Gymnast pretending to work out at gym
- Gymnast's immaculate bedroom with a wall of trophies and salad bowls
- Gymnast pretending to do school work

Here's what this author DOES want to see in a fluff piece:

- Candid moments like the day 2 of selection camp interview where Simone was all "oh there was no real plan just flying by the seat of our pants." To which Ceciél says "we had a plan, we just didn't tell her about it." That's the shit we want to hear if we have to hear anything.
- Zoe and Simone's tic toks.
- Actually maybe just Zoe and Nola interviewing people a'la UCLA
- Hot mics on Simone, Zoe, Nola, Jordan, Ceciél.

Crotch Watch

The author is fully supportive of body positivity and crotch pride, and this section has nothing to do with what these women (and minors) choose to wear. However, the camera angles used can be exploitive or even damaging to the gymnast when it focuses too hard on the bootie and the cootie. It's one thing to be body positive, it's another for a close up of a full straddle (of a MINOR!) in high def to be broadcast on national (or international) tv. Broadcasts have improved greatly, but there is still room for improvement. The assessment will be broken down into Red, Yellow, and Green categories since the broadcasters seem to think this makes everything that should be simple, even easier to understand.

RED: Absolutely Not – egregious, adding no value, no content, no information, just up close and bootie.

✗ long close shot from behind of Shilese bent over and rummaging her bag. This shot lasted what felt like 15 days but was only (only?) 15s. Go ahead and stare at a wall for 15s to get the feel.

✗ Simone leaning down to get a wet wipe after bars. A full 5s of nothing but her butt in close up HDTV.

✗ When WCC team walked up onto the podium for floor the camera was on the ground looking up at the steps onto the podium. Nothing but butts to see here.

YELLOW: C'mon Man! Do better!

~ As a generalization, slow motion shots on beam should be from the side or the front of the gymnast

~ Bars should be shown from the side or at best an oblique angle. Too many press ups and stalders. At least we appear to have stopped doing a close up of reverse hefts from the gymnast's front.

~ Suni's mount. There are cameras on the other side of the beam, FFS. Show us her face not her butt.

~ I personally do not like the line under the gymnast to show how split they are. It appears to be underlining their crotch. I like the idea, but maybe put it through their waste or through a leg. Or use fancy graphics to move her legs where they should be and toggle back and forth. This technology exists. Not rocket science¹.

GREEN: Not problematic but please just don't

★ On bars, multiple times the coach spotter blocked the view of the gymnast. The coach shouldn't be between me and the gymnast. Plus, I don't want to see their backsides. Or their fronts. I don't want to see them at all.

¹ I took advanced rocket propulsion in grad school therefore I am qualified to make this assertion.

Improvements

Things to improve the broadcast experience:

- ★ Never use the word “unique” ever again. Ever. They’re using it wrong both contextually (i.e. they are not the only human to do whatever it is they’re calling unique) and grammatically (unique can not have a modifier. Something simply can not be more, less, or so unique. It’s either unique or it’s not). Just. STAHP.
- ★ Use the jujitsu-fugitsu laser judging thing to track the gymnast’s center of gravity as they compete their routine. This would be super cool to watch on beam especially to show how often the center of gravity is not in their body and to compare how it tracks to the center of the beam. There could even be an award for the gymnast whose CG strays furthest without falling off. The award will be invisible like their ninja alter egos.
- ★ Stop explaining the rules. They aren’t complicated. There’s no higher mathematics involved. It’s addition. A first grader could do it.
- ★ Get rid of the Red Yellow Green flags. They’re nonsense, they’re annoying, they insult the intelligence of the viewers, and most importantly they don’t correlate to anything.
- ★ We need a count on how often they say “artistry.” If we made it into a drinking game no one would survive into the 3rd rotation.
- ★ Consider showing like 300% more gymnastics.

Conclusion

By no measure can this broadcast be considered acceptable, much less good. Over 60% of the broadcast was not gymnastics. Actual gymnastics just barely edged out dead eyed stare for total time. Barely 1/3 of all routines were shown and only 2/3 of the top 10 finishers' routines were shown. Analysis indicates that they could double or even show all of routines if they cut into the dead eyed stare, or dare we dream, eliminate it. There continues to be an unacceptable number of gratuitous butt/crotch shots and fluff pieces appear to be more interested in poking painful wounds than expanding our understanding of the person. The commentators continue to assert that the rules are undecipherable when they are actually quite simple. As if that's not bad enough because of the shortcomings identified in the methodology section, the amount of "Gymnastics" is overstated relative to the live broadcast because of the inclusion of the first rotation and the amount of "Not Gymnastics" is understated due to the shortened commercial breaks. If the live broadcast is considered the golden standard, the percentage of Actual Gymnasts and routines shown will drop even further.

Simone Biles by far had the lion's share of the coverage, but even though she is the GOAT and no moment of her life is unremarkable, the 13+ minutes watching her dead eyed stare could definitely be better spent watching other routines. Or if we must must must hang on her every blink, maybe a split screen.

And finally, the author knows perfectly well how to spell "Laurent" but chooses not to.