



World Gymnaestrada 2011

Perspectives from our club's Gymnastics Professionals

DeVeau's School of Gymnastics was proud to send a performing group to the 2011 World Gymnaestrada in Lausanne, Switzerland. The World Gymnaestrada is the premiere event in the Gymnastics for All discipline and is conducted by the FIG once every four years. In July of 2011 more than 20,000 athletes from over 50 countries came to the home city of the International Olympic Committee to perform group gymnastics routines showcasing everything from tumbling and acrobatics to dance and rhythmic to swinging rings and other large apparatus.



The group from DeVeau's consisted of eleven performers including one boy's team coach, one tumbling specialist, one Nationally rated judge, one Level 9 competitive athlete. Rounding out the group were a former professional cheerleader and family (dad – soccer player, son and daughter – students of DeVeau's), one six-year old gymnastics student, and a professional magician. One of the main purposes of bringing this diverse group to the Gymnaestrada was to return with information to share with the gymnastics community. We hope these insights will be inspiring for other coaches and that we can educate the gymnastics community about the many benefits of participation in Gymnastics for All activities.

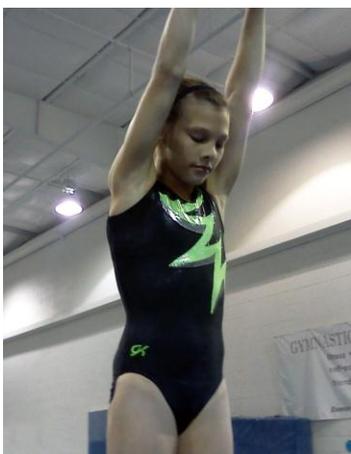


Coach Aaron (boy's competitive team coach)

This being my first Gymnaestrada I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I was almost immediately struck by the power of basic gymnastics movements. As a boys coach I always strive to teach my students strong basics, knowing those basics will lead to secure high level skills. At the WG I saw highly skilled gymnasts perform simple skills in unison with amazing speed and strength. That helped me realize there is so much more to teaching basics. Complete mastery of the cartwheel is a process that can take a lifetime. I will make sure to include as many different variations of basics like cartwheels...front, side, traveling series, single arm, power, flight, etc....into my lesson plans for all of my boys from preschoolers though our national competitors.

Coach Brian (founder of Power Kids program for kids on the autism spectrum, tumbling specialist)

I was personally moved by all the groups which utilized athletes with special needs. The amazing integration of athletes in wheelchairs and highly skilled acrobatic gymnasts or the unified choreography of athletes with cognitive challenges was a definite highlight. My experience really proved the point that age and ability level are not limiting factors for participation in gymnastics. What is truly important is that we are all blessed with the ability to move. Everyone should celebrate this gift of movement regardless of one's gifts or challenges. As a coach of both typical and challenged students, I now realize that there are no limits. Every student can and should strive to set and attain personal goals.



Mia (competitive athlete)

Being at the Gymnaestrada helped me to realize that the world of gymnastics is much bigger than just my personal training and competition schedule. I was thrilled to show off my own skills in front of people from all around the world, but I was even more excited to see what the rest of the world considers gymnastics. I loved seeing the dance moves, the interactions of the group members, the incredible tumbling of the Danish teams, and the fabulous strength of the Swiss girls on swinging rings. I can honestly say that the experience gave me renewed excitement to continue my own training, and I'm anxious to see my Gymnaestrada friends again in Helsinki 2015.

Lynn (gymnastics judge)

I was so happy to see that participants with "struggling" cartwheels were able to be part of one of the most dynamic and inspiring routines of the Gymnaestrada. The performance by a Japanese group in the

FIG Gala utilized more than 60 college age gymnasts whose routine included nothing more difficult than headsprings and cartwheels. I would have judged the execution of the individuals as simply average, but the speed and synchronization of the skills performed by so many athletes in perfect harmony with the music created an amazing visual experience.

Coach Paula (body preparation and dance coach)

This was my first time attending the Gymnaestrada as a small group leader, having previously directed and choreographed for the USA in the English Speaking Nations Evening, the PAGU National Evening and the FIG Gala. I was unsure what could be new to me in this experience. What I found was it is the people who make the experience different each time. As a group leader I was able to tell my group where to go and what to do...I couldn't tell them how to feel or what to get out of the experience. That was the fun part for me. Each of our group members came away from the Gymnaestrada with a renewed love for GYMNASTICS.

Now I can face the daily grind of classes and workouts knowing that while I am sharing the same basic activities with my students, they are experiencing it as something new. Allowing my students to have their own experience and not trying to force them to feel or react in a certain way will help me be a better coach. It will also allow my students to be happier and more excited about their gymnastics participation.

NOTES: Three weeks after our return, we have been working in the gym and new revelations continue to arise:

Aaron: My new perspective regarding basics has helped me get my students excited about basic training as well. I now have a broader spectrum of the sport and all it entails. The World Gymnaestrada was a great celebration that opened my eyes to very wonderful people and their forms of movement.

Brian: After attending the World Gymnaestrada I have gained a greater appreciation for creative choreography and its implementation in large group routines. Our unified performance team has begun training for the 2011-2012 season and we have found quite a few new ways to get the group members working together. Not only have our typical athletes become better leaders, but our athletes with special needs are learning skills we never thought possible... cartwheels, split leaps and detailed movement combinations! I am also looking forward to aiding in the creation of new choreography myself!

Paula: As a choreographer and movement teacher I sometimes struggle to stay fresh and come up with new ideas. The stimulation of the Gymnaestrada opened me up to new ideas and I am excited for the routines we have planned for the upcoming season.

