

"User Friendly", More Than Just A Catchy Phrase

by: Gary Anderson, National Elite Program Chairman

During my 30 years of coaching, I never had problems motivating my athletes to learn or try new tricks. Getting them to do BASICS and CONDITIONING is another subject! I have worked with very few athletes who were not coordinated enough to accomplish most skills and found that, in most cases, the lack of skill development was mostly due to poor basics or the lack of strength and flexibility to accomplish it.

Did you realize that Physical Abilities (strength and flexibility testing) count 20% of the National Elite's All Around ranking at the Challenge meets? What better extra-added incentive for girls to not only "do" their conditioning, but to do it correctly! After placing in the top five in optionals, what girl wants to drop to 12th place because of a deficiency in her Physical Abilities testing?

At the National Elite Level, basics/compulsories count for another 20% towards the final rankings. With the new compulsories built entirely around BASIC skills (those necessary to accomplish more difficult ones), our young athletes should have extra incentive to spend quality time on these "boring" (according to them) routines in order to prevent an even further deterioration in her All Around final placement at National Challenge meets.

This whole process sounds very "user friendly" for the coaching community. "You don't want to do your basics correctly? You don't want to do your conditioning today? It's OK with me, just don't be upset when you finish in 6th after optionals then drop to 18th in the final All Around standings!" Another "user friendly" aspect to the National Elite Program is the multiple chances the athletes have to qualify for a National "ranking" type of meet. I personally have had girls work all year with the dream of making it to the Level 9 East/West or the Level 10 Nationals, only to get injured or become ill the week before the meet. This is not to mention the girl who falls twice on beam, her first event at Regionals, and has to finish the meet knowing she has NO chance of qualifying for her year long dream.

Our National Elite Program is split into two seasons. The winter season ends in late March with the American Challenge and brings together all qualified elites for a national ranking meet. After some "down time" to work on improving skills, execution or developing some more consistency, the second Elite season starts in late May and is concluded in mid-July with the U.S. Challenge. To make things even better, these meets are held in conjunction with the American and US Classics (for International Elites), so your girl(s) may even get to share a chalk box with Tasha or Krystal!

Not only do you have TWO national ranking meet opportunities at the Elite Level, but there are also multiple chances to qualify to get to these national meets. There are usually TWO regional Elite qualifiers prior to all Challenges and Classics, certainly "user friendly"!