

How to Improve Technique by Using Bungee Rope Device on Rings

By Dmitry Kolodyazhny and Juris Aleksejevs



Have you ever wondered how to make learning swings and giants on rings more comfortable for gymnasts? Have you ever observed a situation where someone is learning swings or giants and they lose resistance on the rings on the downward drop? They may experience a jerk or snap at the bottom of a swing or giant that very often causes back injuries along with fear and discomfort. This is an important issue for many gymnasts. Learning giants or dismounts on the rings can be difficult because of the fear



of peeling off the rings or injury. At USA Gymnastics World in Bountiful, Utah, we have found a solution to this problem by using a bungee rope device. This device has been made and used by our coaching staff for teaching swings, backward and front giants, dismounts and other skills on the rings. It has also been used as a helping tool in teaching acrobatic skills such as: back-handsprings, "whip," backward tucked, piked or layout salto, front handspring, "bounder," and front salto tucked or piked. This device has proven to be very valuable and useful in helping students to learn skills on the rings and floor faster and more efficiently.

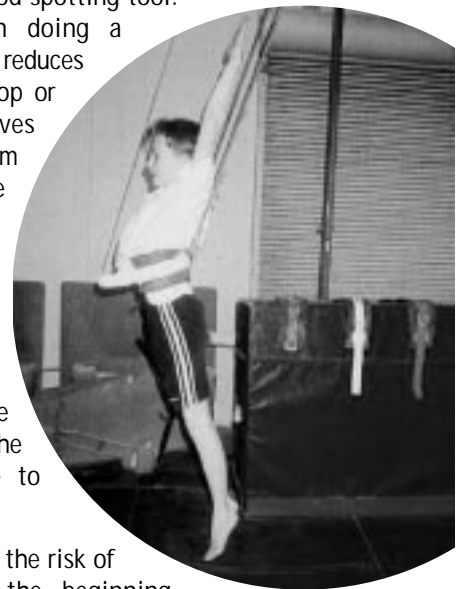
The device consists of: two bungee ropes, a belt, and two metal fasteners or karabiners (See picture). As a bungee rope, we use Theraband resistance tubes. There are several varieties depending on the tube resistance. We use the green style of tubing mostly, which is a heavy resistance type for the rings, and the blue style, which is an extra heavy resistance type for teaching acrobatic skills. The tubing comes in 25 feet lengths. We cut the tubing in half and use the folded halves for the bungee ropes. We use Spring Link karabiners and AAI brand of belt. It doesn't matter what brands you use, as long as they are good quality and serve the purpose.

BENEFITS Some of the benefits for using the bungee rope device are as follows:

1. It eliminates the need for manual spotting and allows the coach to observe the skill from a distance. With the traditional method where the coach is personally spotting a gymnast, he/she is unable to see the big picture as well as all details, because the coach must stand so close to the gymnast. By using a bungee rope, the coach is able to analyze the exercise by observing it from a position where he/she can see every detail and the gymnast is able to complete his skill safely. The coach can then make a thorough technical analysis of the student's skill.

2. It serves as a good spotting tool.

For example, when doing a giant, bungee rope reduces the speed of the drop or bail and gives additional momentum and speed on the rise. On the dismounts, it allows the gymnast to gain additional height and reduce the falling speed. This is very valuable because it gives the gymnast more time to accomplish a skill.



3. It greatly reduces the risk of

injuries. Often in the beginning stages of learning swings, especially giants, gymnasts don't extend their bodies enough on drop or bail, which causes them to lose pressure on the rings. When a gymnast doesn't maintain pressure on the rings during the drop, he experiences a snap or jerk at the bottom of the giant rotation. This often causes back or shoulder injury. Because it reduces a gymnast's weight, the bungee makes it easier for the gymnast to maintain the pressure on the rings and avoid the snap at the bottom, thus preserving the gymnast from the injuries.

4. It quickens the process of learning. Gymnasts feel comfortable using the bungee rope device because it reduces their fear of peeling off the rings and their fear of injury.

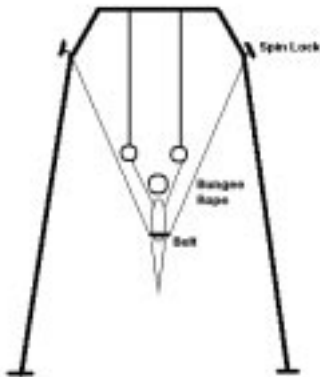
Because gymnasts feel more comfortable, they are more willing to learn new skills and improve existing ones. It makes the process of learning easier and faster.

5. It can be used as an effective tool in learning acrobatic skills such as front and back handsprings, "whips" and front or back flips. The bungee rope reduces the weight of the gymnast and, therefore, makes it easier for a gymnast to practice these skills using correct technique. It is much easier for a gymnast to do a technically correct jump and arm swing, hand block and snap using a bungee rope.

6. It is inexpensive and simple to use. It consists only of two main components—bungee ropes and a belt. These are inexpensive and are most likely already in the possession of most gymnastics clubs around the country. If the club doesn't already have bungee ropes and belts, they can be easily obtained. The benefits of using the bungee rope device greatly exceed the investment.

HOW TO PUT TOGETHER AND USE THE BUNGEE ROPE DEVICE

The process of putting together and using the bungee rope device is very simple. All that needs to be done to use it is to fasten a belt to bungee ropes and then attach the bungee ropes to the spin locks that are on the ring foundation. (See picture). Metal fasteners or karabiners are used to attach the bungee ropes to the belt. The belt is then situated and fastened on a gymnast's waist. The coach needs to make sure



that the belt is tight enough, but comfortable for the gymnast. The gymnast then is ready for the exercise. The length and elasticity of the rope can be adjusted depending on the level of readiness and the goals of the gymnast. The less help the gymnast needs, the longer and less resilient the bungee ropes should be.

By introducing the bungee rope device and method, the staff at USA Gymnastics World hopes that it will be beneficial not only to gymnasts in our club, but also to other gymnasts around the country and even the world. We hope that our device will be very helpful to both gymnasts and coaches in that it will reduce the learning time, improve skill quality, and prevent injuries. We also hope that by using the device, gymnasts will feel more comfortable learning new skills, which will make a beautiful sport such as gymnastics more enjoyable for them.

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