

Ahhh...

The Glide Kip

By Karen M. Goeller

It seems that in recent years many of the younger gymnasts are actually performing a swing to a kip, which is a long hang kip, rather than a glide kip. It is seen at most lower level meets, a coach setting up a spring board so their gymnast can get the best swing possible for their kip. Many of these gymnasts may not be performing the skill as required in their routines.

The difference is that, with the glide kip the gymnast must hold their legs up in front of them, whether together or straddled, throughout the hang or glide phase of the skill. With the long hang kip, the gymnast keeps her legs down and hips open until the leg-lift portion of the kip. One is a swing and the other is a glide.

Years ago coaches would explain a glide very differently than it has been explained in recent days. Back then, we asked the gymnast to “jump up and immediately pike” before they caught the bar with their hands. Many coaches even spotted the jump portion in order to teach their gymnast to lift their hips high enough to get the best momentum at the onset of the glide. We asked our gymnasts to hold the “L” or pike until they completely extended their hips at the end of the glide. Coaches really spent a great deal of time teaching the glide portion of the glide kip. Yes, we can all agree the low bar was actually low back then and there was not enough room for the gymnast to swing rather than glide.

Here are a few thoughts to help gymnasts with this skill.

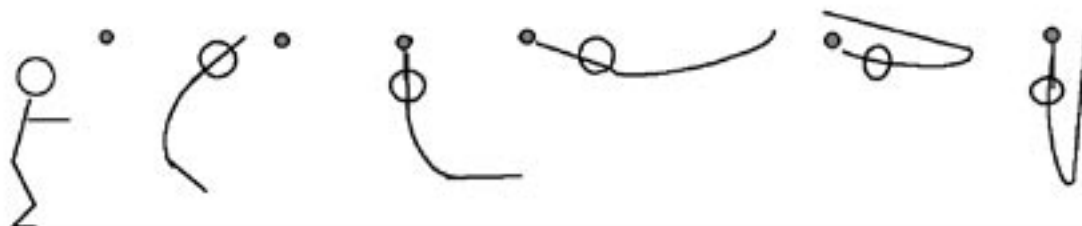
The muscles involved in lifting the legs in front of the body for the glide portion of the glide kip are the hip flexors. The hip flexors are very small when you look at them on an anatomy chart, but they have a big job. This one little muscle must lift the gymnast’s very long limb. As the gymnast’s leg grows, gets longer and heavier, there is more stress put on that little muscle, the hip flexor.

The coach must condition their gymnasts’ hip flexor muscles constantly because many children are growing rapidly. If the hip flexors are not conditioned properly or consistently other areas of the body must then attempt to perform the task of lifting and holding the leg up, which can lead to injury.

With that thought in mind, let us go back to the glide for a glide kip because it is one of the few skills that requires the gymnast to hold her legs up for a considerable amount of time. Besides asking the gymnast to perform one glide at a time, as in the glide kip, you may want to add a few simple drills involving the glide, such as multiple glides consecutively or octagon glides.



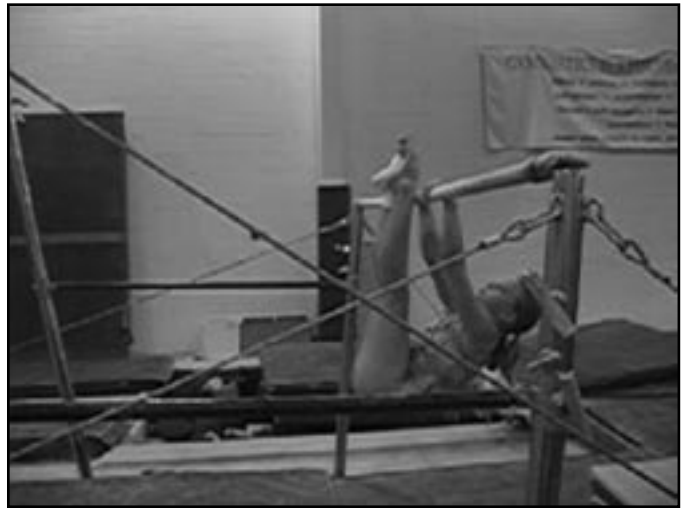
To teach the Glide and Toes to Bar Drill, instruct the gymnast to stand slightly further than arm’s distance from the low bar. Once in place, instruct the gymnast to jump, immediately lifting her toes forward and tucking her buttocks under while in the air. She must immediately grasp the bar, holding a hollow and slightly piked position. Once her hands are on the bar, she must glide forward, keeping her feet off the mat and reaching in an extended position. It might be easier for the gymnast if you remind her she must see her feet throughout the glide. Once extended, instruct the gymnast to bring her feet\ankles to the bar and hold them there, even when her body swings\falls (due to gravity) to the hanging position. Holding the feet up is not easy; gymnasts may need help with this drill. Once mastered, the gymnast can perform multiple glides before the leg lift portion of the glide kip.



Another very useful glide drill is the Octagon Glide, Extend, and Lift Drill. It involves the use of an octagon to teach the gymnasts how to glide with their legs in front of their body rather than below their body. This drill should also help teach the gymnast to extend her hips completely at the end of the glide and perform the leg lift from that extended position.



Here is how you would use an octagon for the glide, extend, and leg lift drill. The gymnast should grasp the bar securely. Place an octagon approximately one foot from the bar, so that your gymnast can see it. Once your gymnast is holding the bar securely, ask her to place her heels/feet on an octagon. Next, instruct your gymnast to hold a hollow and/or slightly piked position keeping her buttocks under. Once the gymnast is in the beginning position of the drill, a relaxed hang with their heels on the octagon, have them glide forward, literally rolling



the octagon forward with their calves and then return to the starting position. Once they have mastered rolling the octagon with the back of their legs, ask the gymnast to perform three glides consecutively. The gymnast must reach an extended position during each complete glide. When the gymnast is completely extended for the third time, instruct them to quickly bring their toes/ankles to bar and hold them on the bar even when their body swings/falls (due to gravity) to the hanging position (as if they just did a leg-lift) The octagon often rolls away when the leg lift occurs. (Be sure to remind the gymnast to hold on tight. Be ready to spot, if necessary.)

And one more note regarding the glide portion of the kip. If you ask the gymnast to think of throwing the bar back as soon as their shoulders and hips are directly underneath the bar, they may be able to glide more efficiently for their kip. The action of throwing the bar back should increase their momentum and extension of the glide, therefore, making the kip portion easier.

The few drills explained here should help gymnasts learn to completely extend their hips and shoulders prior to the leg-lift portion of the glide kip. Once they have mastered the leg-lift from the completely extended position, they may be on their way to performing a beautiful and efficient Glide Kip!

Remember, it is imperative that the gymnast perform these drills with the correct form and technique in order to learn the skills correctly, condition their muscles correctly, and prevent bad habits of form breaks or incorrect technique.

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