

A SPORT DEFINED BY THE 10.0

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What do you think of when you hear the number 10.0? We in gymnastics have been able to take a mere number 10.0 and have the entire world associate that number with perfection. I don't know of a ruling body that has developed a concept of such magnitude. People understand that a 10.0 is a symbol of perfection. People use the 10.0 all the time in humor and judgment of non-gymnastics related concepts to denote striving or achieving perfection. Each association relates to the concept that gymnastics has developed, and we benefit by people associating the 10.0 with gymnastics and perfection. First and foremost the 10.0 defines our sport. Are we willing to give all that up because we feel the need to fix the rules but are not creative enough to fix them within the parameters of a 10.0? This abandonment of the 10.0 will not serve gymnastics well.

The gymnastics world has determined that artistic gymnastics needs to change their rules. I agree, but I differ on one important point. My difference revolves around the concept of an open-ended code versus a 10.0 code. To rid us of the 10.0 is not the solution to make all of our judging problems magically disappear. The concept of a 10.0 is not the problem; arriving at the score is the problem. If your car has a flat tire, you change the tire, you don't redesign the tire.

At the recent Olympic games, the crowd booed and whistled for a better score for Alexander Nemov. I view that as a positive for our sport. How many times does the crowd boo at a diving event when the score comes up? We in gymnastics have an advantage that with a defined score of a 10.0, all spectators know what

the best score is and can feel they have a reason to relate to the performer and the other audience members. Do we think the audience not knowing or understanding our basic scoring would better serve us? Would it allow the judges to hide their mistakes and ineptness? It is very difficult to complain about a score if you do not understand the system. We in gymnastics engage the audience by giving them the parameters of the scoring system. Do we need to be better? Absolutely! We give the spectators a reason to be engaged in the scoring, that being the knowledge of how to achieve perfection by scoring a 10.0.

Gymnasts and their struggles to achieve a 10.0, and thus achieve perfection, have defined the Olympic games of the past. We need to ask those in our sport who have achieved the symbol of perfection how it defined them and their relationship to the audience. Nadia Comaneci, Nellie Kim and others can speak to that issue. I strongly feel it gives us an advantage in the public eye over other judged sports. Are we concerned about improvement in

judging or just eliminating the audience's understanding of our scoring system? We should be proud of our development of the 10.0.

We can find creative solutions to our problems without the loss of the 10.0. Are we willing to abandon the most important symbol developed by a sports ruling body to achieve an open-ended code that is understood by no one but the people involved in the sport? The concept of the 10.0 is what I believe creates involvement by our audience and thus allows more spectators to understand and view gymnastics as a measure of perfection.

