



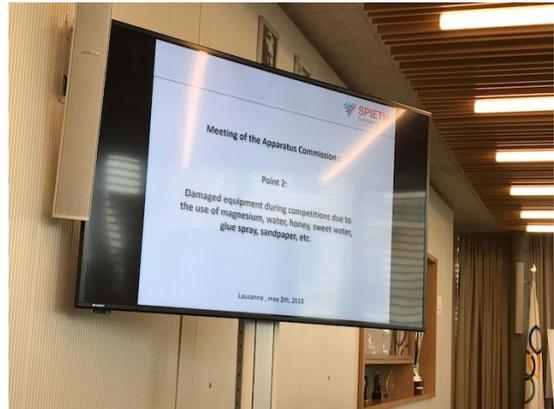
Use or Misuse?



I recently had the privilege of representing AAI at two very interesting and informative meetings and sat at this table in Switzerland for two days. As you may know, Lausanne Switzerland is the home of the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) offices. Once a year, representatives from the top 8 – 10 gymnastics equipment manufacturers are invited to meeting with FIG officials to discuss equipment updates, specification changes, and trends in all disciplines of gymnastics that may affect the equipment or be affected by the equipment. For those that can remember, it was at this meeting that the discussions started on replacing the vaulting horse with the vaulting table.



Prior to the meeting with the FIG there is a preparation meeting of an organization known as Gymnastics Equipment Manufactures Association (GYMEMA). This is a select group of manufactures that although we compete with each other, we gather to discuss issues that we feel need to be addressed for the good of the sport. This organization is self-funded and we all pay our own expenses. We are not officially connected to the FIG although we are recognized by them.



There were two issues on this year's agenda that I feel should be very interesting to most gym club owners.

1. Damaged equipment during training or competitions due to the use of magnesium, water, honey, sweet water, glue spray, sandpaper, etc.
2. Tension measurement device – The FIG wishes to regulate the maximum and minimum tension on all cabled apparatus. Tension that is too low causes instability and over tension can damage the equipment.



Equipment damage at events has increase dramatically in recent years. We understand that products and material are used to prepare the equipment to enhance the safety and performance of the athlete. The discussion went everywhere from voiding warranties to changes in the code of points and scoring deductions. Uneven bars is one area where many foreign materials are used, honey and water being the most prevalent. While honey does assist in the grip, it also very quickly can damage the wood laminate that covers the bar.



These concerns were shared at the FIG Manufacturers' meeting that was chaired by Ali Al-Hitmi, Apparatus Commission President. The FIG representatives agreed with the concern and one suggestion was that substances be restricted to a limited amount of water (applied first to the hands of an athlete, coach, or trainer) and

magnesium (powdered, liquid, or spray). The manufacturers also informally agreed to limit warranty exposure and or charge back damaged equipment to the event host. These would be dramatic changes that would affect the way we train our gymnasts.

The underlying point to my sharing of this information is that the damage to the equipment doesn't just happen in major international events. It happens in every day in gyms just like yours. Those that have heard me speak of gym equipment care know that I repeat "Equipment doesn't just break!". There are signs and causes. Things that damage equipment include chemicals and liquids, sand paper, emery cloth, and files. All of these things can change the integrity of your equipment and its lifespan. I know you want your equipment broken in, but to rush the process by sanding the bars, filing the pommel horse, or over chalking the beam causes damage and devalues your investment. Just as chalk serves to keep hands dry, an excess amount will dry out your synthetic beam top or pommel horse quickly.

Keep your eyes open for changes or notations to the code of points, manufactures instructions, and meet registration forms. What has been consider "use" may soon be considers "misuse".

I will discuss the proposed tension measurement device next month.

Keep your gym safe. Protect your gymnasts and your equipment.

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