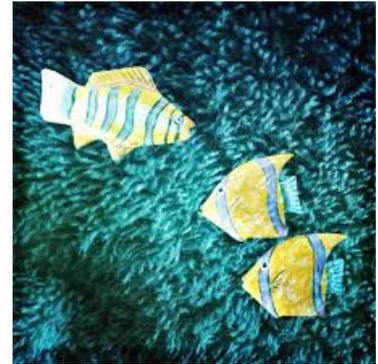




This is Water

There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, "Morning, boys, how's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, "What the hell is water?"



Perhaps you've heard of the now famous commencement speech by David Foster Wallace at Kenyon College in 2005 in which he presented this story to the graduates. As with many philosophical discussions there are many interpretations, most of which probably don't belong in an article about Gym Care. The reason I bring it up here is that I think one point that we can take from this story is that many of the most obvious and important realities are often the ones that are the hardest for us to see or talk about because we are just too close to them.

I'm lucky to visit many beautiful gymnastic clubs all over the world and as amazed as I am at the beauty and functionality of the gym and the equipment I'm frequently amazed at some obvious oversights. I see gyms that have spent \$4,000 or more for a set of bars and have anchored them to the floor with \$10 anchors. I see gyms that spend thousands of dollars for in ground pits and yet see the cube level dangerously below the unpadded concrete rim of the pit. And my list could go on.



I am pointing this out not, because I think any gym owners are purposely ignoring safety issues, but because I believe the gym has become their ocean and like the fish they are swimming through oblivious to the water.

I'm proud to say that I've seen the gymnastic club industry mature at tremendous speed over my career in gymnastics. And we are burgeoning on the next breakthrough that will include mega gyms, multi-sport facilities, combination training / competition gyms, and inclusion of technology for training and medical facilities for treatment and rehab. We should take none of this lightly as we embrace the change and the growth of our sport. We do need to keep our eyes wide open every day we walk into the gym.



Here's just a small sampling of things the you should check in your gym:

- Do you have foam cubes that are shedding dust that children could be inhaling?

- Are all the stop nuts on turnbuckles holding your cabled equipment in place fully tightened?
- Do you have any mats that can depress to the point of feeling the floor beneath if you were to jump on them individually (not stacked on another mat)?
- Has anyone removed a spring from a vault board and not identified where it came from and needs to return to?
- Are there separations or cracks between mats that could be a trip hazard for a child, coach, or parent?



There are simple cures for all of these changes, but first we need to recognize our surroundings.

There was recently an NFL game scheduled to be played in Mexico. After inspection by representatives of the NFL and the players union, they decided that the turf was not safe for the athletes and the game was moved to another venue. Imagine the problems with scheduling, ticket holders, employees, and travel; yet they made the correct decision. They recognized their "water" and they reacted. We need to be willing to change our venue if it's not suitable or safe. Like the NFL we need to regularly inspect our turf.

How's your water?



Steve

Steve Cook – AAI National Sales Director
Steve.Cook@fotlinc.com

