

Written by Dwight Normile
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It is both interesting and encouraging that the next version of the **Code of Points** will likely include input from those outside the International Gymnastics Federation. By soliciting suggestions from gymnasts, coaches and others, the FIG is essentially waving a white flag of futility. It also means that after the 2012 Olympics, a seven-year experiment will have finally come to a close. Or so we hope.

Among the various proposals for the 2013 Code: ditching the 3-up-3-count team finals format, increasing the value of execution scores, and expanding the difficulty tables. And for those who preferred the old Code of Points, a source very high up at the FIG told me recently that the Executive Committee has mandated that the Code will not go back to the 10.0. That surprises me given the common complaint that scores in the teens are meaningless to spectators.

Personally, I believe the FIG made the wrong score open-ended under these rules. Or at least the difficulty score should not be completely immune to deduction.

One of my proposals to the FIG was to subtract the execution deductions from both the E- and D-scores. Such a formula becomes a great equalizer. Artistic gymnasts actually have a fighting chance against sloppy acrobats.

When legendary Russian coach **Leonid Arkayev** visited the IG offices during his induction into the International Gymnastics Hall of Fame, I asked him about the new Code of Points. Here is one of his responses: "My personal opinion is that I was never in favor of limiting the difficulty of exercises, but at this particular time it kind of backfired. The intention was very, very good, but it didn't work the way they intended." (Complete interview appears in the July/August issue of IG.)

2011 Worlds Draw

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The world championships in Tokyo will break from tradition and qualify only eight (instead of 12) men's and women's teams to the 2012 Olympics. The remaining four teams will be decided Jan. 12-13, 2012, in London at the Olympic test event. The countries that ranked 9-16 in Tokyo will battle it out at the O2 Arena for the final four Olympic team berths.

While past Olympic test events have usually lacked relevance, I am not sure the 2012 version will be much better. It is likely that the top four teams at this competition will be afterthoughts at the Olympics, anyway, except for an individual who makes it to an event final. And if the **British** men's and women's teams finish in the top eight in Tokyo (they were fourth and fifth, respectively, at the 2010 worlds), then what kind of crowd will show up to watch an event that does not even include the home team.

In Tokyo, the first of eight subdivisions of the men's draw includes the **U.S., Puerto Rico and Japan**. With no more 10.0 hovering in the back of the judges' minds, there is no reason to keep scores conservative in the morning session. So these teams can actually relish the fact that they get to compete first for a few reasons: 1) there will be no need to wait nervously for a later session; 2) there will be no posted scores to surpass; 3) they will have plenty of time to rest for team finals, should they advance.

Barring a disastrous effort, **Japan** and the **U.S.** should have little trouble making the top eight, but **Puerto Rico** will be sweating it out until the final subdivision is complete the following evening. Though

Puerto Rico

was 12th in 2010, it was only 1.024 behind eighth-place France. That's approximately one fall separating

France

,
Romania

,
Italy

,
Spain

and

Puerto Rico

, respectively.

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Ukraine and **Canada** were 13th and 14th in 2010, respectively, but both have more ground to gain to challenge for the top eight.

The women's field in 2010 was more spread out between eighth and 12th, with **Japan** securing eighth over the

Netherlands

, 218.895-217.286. In Tokyo, Japan drew the 10th and final subdivision, so its pursuers can only hope that the home advantage turns into immense pressure.

France

, 11th in 2010 without

Youna Dufournet

, also is in the final session, so

Japan

will definitely have to earn its place. If

Japan

indeed benefits from competing at home, then look for

France

to bump a team like

Italy

out of the top eight and on to the test event.