

Written by dwight normile
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There are certain skills on women's floor exercise that are about as artistic as a toddler's finger painting. We can blame it on the open-ended Code of Points, which encourages gymnasts to throw their eight hardest tricks. There are times when they shouldn't have the right to chuck these skills, but they do anyway.

Few gymnasts do a glorious split leap nowadays because it's only an A-skill. It would be a disastrous strategy to sacrifice the sacred D-score. Why the difficulty score is immune to deduction remains a mystery, but the execution score is capped at 10.0. Nobody can actually earn a 10.0, and it's hard to receive even a 9.0.

Let's begin with the double (or triple) wolf turn, which often peters out whenever it chooses. The gymnast performing it really has little control. The push-off usually starts with a bent leg—the one that's supposed to be straight as the turn wobbles along. How many of these wolf turns finish after 360 degrees? Very few. (The wolf turns on balance beam, which tend to be more wobbly than on floor, force a gymnast to finish on a 180-degree turn. Come up short and the result is an awkward and unintentional dismount.)

It's the same with the **Memmel** turn on floor. While in a needle split, holding the leg for dear life, it finishes wherever it tilts. Again, the gymnast has little control as to where it lands.

Remember the Arabian front to prone fall, better known as a belly flop? Not pretty. Why would anyone perform such a skill, regardless of its difficulty value? Thankfully, that 'skill' no longer appears in the Code.

Consider the jump tucked-double turn, which has all the aesthetics of an eggbeater. But it's worth a C-value in the Code of Points. Same with the cat leap double turn.

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Romanian **Celestina Popa** can be blamed for her eponymous straddle jump with a full turn (C-value). I guess beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Any jump or leap with a full turn is bound to be disastrous.

Not sure I've ever seen a double-twisting tuck or layout to a prone fall (C), and not sure I'd really want to. But I have seen a half-twisting tour jeté (the tour jeté itself includes a half turn). Too many moving parts for my taste.

So many gymnasts cheat on these twisting jumps, anyway. They start nearly a quarter way around before they jump. So you wonder how many get full credit by the judges. I'm guessing fewer than half, unless you've got the spring of **Simone Biles**.

It would be prudent for the FIG to require a variety of skills instead of the eight most difficult. Give these gymnasts a breather, for goodness sake.

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