

JACK KELLY RESPONSE TO ORIGINAL PROPOSED STRUCTURE

Good afternoon all, I have now had the chance to read the proposals more carefully and will resist repeating what has already been said by those of you who have deeper knowledge of the possible regional impact. My points are as follows:

1. I totally understand the explanation put forward to justify a need for change. No results.....no money!
2. How much of the money was seen by the lower echelons of the sport? Why should the regions care if funding is lost?
3. Did funding do anything to raise the international standing?.....maybe, but hard to evaluate. Perhaps GBR would have achieved the same results without it.
4. No question that money spent on medical, analysis, rehab and conditioning gave added value to the top few and it's doubtful the old unfunded BTF couldn't have supplied these benefits.
5. Did the payment to national coaching staff make a difference to international results? Highly questionable!
6. Every single world ranked performer we've had since the first Worlds in 1963, up to and including the overrated 'Olympic' achievements of Lee and Gary, were achieved by the work of individual club coaches NOT the national system.
7. This is still the case and only the athlete awards and support services have given added value. Our silver medal winning women were produced in the clubs by Jay, Sue B, Sue L, Paul G (after Nigel Blundell).
8. It is naive to think that a 'structure' will produce the goods because this is simply a form of social engineering designed to change people's behaviour. This will only work IF people engage with it or are forced into compliance by some means. However, we know that compulsion doesn't lead to engagement and so the process is likely to fail in its objective.
9. One potential positive for this region is that it may make some coaches working with gifted gymnasts but doing only a few hours a week, realise that getting to a National Final as presently structured, flatters to deceive. We have potential top gymnasts languishing in what are largely recreational settings. I have nothing against 'recreational settings' but it won't produce top quality performers. Maybe, just maybe, someone will change their approach and decide to offer the commitment required or be far sighted enough to transfer promising gymnasts to a more conducive environment. (Parents and gymnast willing of course)

Now my serious technical worries:

1. I know the idea of making the armset compulsory is well-meaning but sadly misguided showing a lack of true technical understanding. I have identified at least three different timings of the armset and there will be intermediate timing and methods between the ones I have categorised. Which one is 'right'? Several people have already asked "how do you judge and arm set?" ABSOLUTELY!!!
2. Now here is a sinister implication:- Because it is to be 'judged' AND be part of the routine it will be treated as a 'cosmetic' aerial exercise instead of an effective technical platform from which to deliver the routine. There is far too much 'cosmetic coaching' already!!
3. One simply has to look at the World's best to realise that there is a whole range of idiosyncratic armsetting but the common factor is upright posture and arms in line with the body on the descent. BUT how long that lasts on the descent varies enormously and a world star like Ueyama (JPN) allows his arms to swing behind his body line as he descends. This is for a sound TECHNICAL reason which I won't bore you with. (writing too much already.)
4. The restriction to 6 jumps in the lower groups is again, well-meaning but misguided. Of course we want balance and control at this development level, but to plant the idea of low jumping (which will be the likely outcome) when the prime requirement is height with control leading to air time and the opportunity to display good form and DD. It is outrageous to propose a judges deduction for ANYTHING other than 6 jumps followed by a statutory arm set on 7. If a limit to the number of jumps is to be imposed it should allow for up to 12 with no lower limit.
5. The number of performers already 'bouncing' not 'jumping' and failing to bend their knees to work the bed is like an epidemic and needs to be 'stamped out.' (pun intended!) The proposal will make this even harder to change. We should be planting the idea of Time of Flight as early as possible, commensurate with balance and control of course!

As a nation and as a region we have a vast 'talent pool' from which we should be developing a higher level of achievement but without knowledgeable coaches prepared to dedicate themselves to raising the standard, no amount of tinkering with the structure will make much difference. Indeed it may act as a disincentive to many. I hope there is a chance to change some of the technical proposals at least.

Sorry to go on a bit everyone, but the proposals could actually backfire if some sensible changes are not made.

Cheers

Jack

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