



The competitiveness of elite gymnasts during the Olympic cycle amid changes to competition rules

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Abstract

Objective of the study is to determine the impact of the new Competition Rules for men's artistic gymnastics for the 2025–2028 Olympic cycle on results at continental championships and the World Championships.

Methods and structure of the study. The first stage involved analysing changes to the Competition Rules for men's artistic gymnastics for 2025–2028 compared with the previous Olympic cycle. The second stage involved an analytical comparison of the results of leading gymnasts following the XXXIII Olympic Games in Paris and the 2025 World Championships. The third stage involved determining the competitiveness of Russian gymnasts following their admission to International Gymnastics Federation tournaments under neutral status.

Results and conclusions. It has been established that the gymnasts from the top teams at the 2024 Paris Olympics remain leaders in the post-Olympic year. They secured leading positions at continental championships and won a total of six gold medals out of seven at the 2025 World Championships. The modernisation of the competition rules for the 2025–2028 Olympic cycle has led to increased competition between elite gymnasts and less high-level athletes; however, the D score for programme difficulty continues to make a significant contribution to victory. Russian gymnasts managed to win one medal at the World Championships – a bronze for D. Marinov on the parallel bars – whilst demonstrating the team's high potential in the fight for victory and podium places at the next World Championships and the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Keywords: *international federation, Olympic cycle, elite gymnasts, competition rules (Code of Points).*

Introduction. The technical committees of the FIG (International Gymnastics Federation) present a new edition of the Competition Rules on the eve of each Olympic cycle. Unlike the women's rules, the men's rules for 2025–2028 have undergone radical changes. It is therefore relevant to examine how the world's leading gymnasts have adapted to these significant changes following the continental championships in Asia, Europe and the Pan-American Games, as well as the 2025 World Championships in Jakarta (Indonesia).

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period, compared with the previous Olympic cycle. The second stage involved an analytical comparison of the results achieved by leading gymnasts at the XXXIII Olympic Games in Paris and the 2025 World Championships in Jakarta. The third stage involved assessing the competitiveness of Russian gymnasts following their admission to FIG competitions under a neutral status (AIN).

Results of the study and discussion. The post-Olympic year in men's artistic gymnastics was marked, first and foremost, by the results of the 53rd World Championships in Jakarta (Indonesia), where, in accordance with the regulations, there was no team competition. At the same time, the strongest teams were determined at the three 'major' continental championships in Asia, Europe and the Pan-American region [4, 5, 8]. The top teams based on the results of the Paris Games [3]: Japan (1), China (2), the USA (3)

and Great Britain (4) confirmed their dominance at the 2025 continental tournaments (Table 1). However, in online competition, the Asian teams retained the upper hand. Given that three teams – the participants in the 2028 Games in Los Angeles – will be determined at the 2026 World Championships, the four teams mentioned above will be competing there for three team Olympic licences. Naturally, the Russian team could join them, provided they qualify for the World Championships via the 2026 European Championships. However, the European Gymnastics Union, contrary to the recommendations of the FIG, does not yet allow Russian gymnasts to compete in its tournaments. In the individual all-around, among the three winners of the continental championships, the title also went to the Asian representative S. Oka – the overall champion of the 2024 Olympics, who also competed in Jakarta but did not win a medal there (Table 2).

The results of the 2025 World Championships, both in the individual all-around and in the individual events, should be viewed in the light of the changes that the Technical Committee has ‘introduced’ into the Competition Rules for 2025–2028. The main changes to the Rules include, firstly, a reduction in the number of

elements counted towards the total difficulty score (D) from ten to eight [1, 2]. This requirement will, to some extent, level the playing field in the D score – and consequently in the final score for the performance – between elite gymnasts, whose results will be significantly reduced, and less high-calibre athletes. Take, for example, Zhang Boheng, the silver medallist in the all-around at the 2024 Games. At the Olympics, his total score was 86.599 points, with a total difficulty of 36.3 [6], which is significantly lower than the results he achieved (while also finishing second) at the 2025 World Championships (Table 3). Secondly, the desire to increase the difficulty of dismounts, thanks to the bonus for ‘special requirements’, which is equal to the difficulty (D) of the dismount. A typical example from the World Championships is D. Wittenburg’s (USA) victory on the rings. Although not a ‘specialist’ on this apparatus, he managed to beat three former world champions in the final. This was achieved in part thanks to an extremely difficult dismount – a bent-knee triple back somersault (D = 0.9 points). Here, we should also mention the Russian gymnast D. Marinov, who won the team’s only medal at the World Championships – a bronze on the parallel bars – also thanks to

Table 1. Results of the top national teams at the 2025 continental championships

Country							Total
2025 European Championship (Leipzig, Germany, 26–31 May 2025)							
1 United Kingdom (GBR)	42.699	40.199	41.699	43.132	40.433	39.366	247.528
2025 Asian Championships (Jeonju, South Korea, 5–8 June 2025)							
1 Japan (JPN)	42.133	40.799	41.466	42.065	43.098	43.432	252.993
2 China (CHN)	39.099	40.599	42.466	42.366	41.199	42.533	248.262
2025 Pan American Championships (Panama, 12–15 June 2025)							
1 United States (USA)	40.750	38.300	39.500	42.400	40.200	37.650	238.800







Table 2. Results of the top gymnasts at the continental championships and the 2025 World Championships

Gymnast, country							Total
2025 European Championship (Leipzig, Germany, 26–31 May 2025)							
1 Asil Adem (TUR)	13.466/ 4.9	12.833/ 4.5	14.766/ 5.7	14.300/ 5.6	13.500/ 4.8	13.533/ 4.6	82.398/ 30.1
2025 Asian Championships (Jeonju, South Korea, 5–8 June 2025)							
1 Oka Shinnosuke (JPN)	14.333/ 5.4	13.866/ 5.1	14.000/ 5.3	13.866/ 4.8	14.666/ 5.6	14.400/ 5.4	85.131/ 31.6
2025 Pan American Championships (Panama, 12–15 June 2025)							
1 Felix Dolchi (CAN)	13.650/ 5.5	11.850/ 4.2	13.000/ 5.2	14.200/ 5.2	13.550/ 5.3	13.900/ 5.7	80.150/ 31.1
The 53rd World Championships 2025 (Jakarta, Indonesia, 19–25 October 2025)							
1 Daiki Hashimoto (JPN)	14.000/ 5.3	13.966/ 5.7	13.566/ 5.2	14.466/ 5.2	14.433/ 5.6	14.700/ 5.9	85.131/ 32.9
2 Zhang Boheng (CHN)	13.600/ 5.4	13.700/ 5.2	14.600/ 5.5	14.200/ 5.2	13.933/ 5.2	14.300/ 6.0	84.333/ 32.5
3 Noah Zaifert (SUI)	13.866/ 5.0	14.000/ 5.6	13.066/ 4.2	13.733/ 4.4	14.066/ 5.7	14.100/ 5.7	82.831/ 30.6

Note: The denominator represents the difficulty (D score) of the programmes and jumps.



Table 3. Results in the individual competition and individual all-around events at the 53rd World Championships in 2025

Type of competition	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Individual all-round	Hashimoto D., JPN. [6] 85.131/32.9	Zhang Boheng, CHN. [2] 84.333/32.5	Zaifert N., SUI. [21] 82.831/30.6
	Jarmen J., GBR. [3] 14.866/6.3	Whitehouse L., GBR. [6] 14.666/6.1	Yulo K., PHI. [1] 14.533/5.9
	Hong Yangmin, CHN. [-] 14.600/5.6	Khachatryan M., ARM. [-] 14.600/5.8	Huups P., USA. [-] 14.566/6.0
	Wittenburg D., USA. [-] 14.700/6.0	Asil A., TUR. [5] 14.566/5.7	Lan Xinyu, CHN. [-] 14.500/5.9
	Yulo K., PHI. [1] 14.866/ 5.6, 5.2 (0.1)	Davtyan A., ARM. [2] 14.833/ 5.2, 5.2 (0.1, 0.1)	Chepurny N., UKR. [6] 14.483/ 5.2, 5.2
	Zou Jingyuan, CHN. [1] 15.300/6.0	Tsunoagai T., JPN. [-] 14.500/5.8	Marinov D., AIN. [-] 14.466/5.9
	Malone B., USA. [-] 14.933/6.4	Hashimoto D., JPN. [-] 14.733/6.2	Fraser J., GBR. [-] 14.700/6.3

Note: The denominator represents the difficulty (D score) of the routines and jumps.
In round brackets: bonus points for a clean landing ('on the board');
in square brackets: result at the Games of the XXXIII Olympiad in 2024.

a dismount such as a double back somersault in a tuck position with a 360° twist (D = 0.7 points).

Thirdly, there has been a significant reduction in the base value (D score) of the base jumps. For example, Olympic champion K. Yulo scored 15.116 points in the final in Paris (with a total difficulty score of 11.6 for his two jumps). At the 2025 World Championships, having won this event and performed the same two jumps, their total difficulty was 10.8, resulting in a correspondingly lower final score. Fourthly, these Rules also provide for a new bonus (0.1 points) for a precise landing on all apparatus (with the exception of the pommel horse). At the World Championships, only two gymnasts in the vault final (K. Yulo and A. Davtyan) can be said to have 'benefited' from this bonus. It is possible that this new bonus will be a decisive factor in the future when gymnasts of virtually the same elite level are competing.

Table 3 presents the results of the winners and medallists at the 53rd World Championships in the all-around and six individual events, from which key conclusions can be drawn regarding the performances of potential leaders for this Olympic cycle. Gymnasts from the four leading nations mentioned above won 62% of all the medals awarded. In terms of gold medals, this figure rises to 86% (i.e. six out of seven gold medals). The gymnasts from the USA are particularly noteworthy. For the first time since the 1979 World

Championships, two Americans have managed to win individual events. Moreover, B. Malone has become world champion on the horizontal bar for the second time (following 2022). It is worth noting the age range of the champions. On the one hand, 19-year-old Hong Yangmin is a newcomer to the World Championships, whose greatest achievement to date was second place at the 2025 World Cup stage in Doha. On the other hand, 31-year-old veteran D. Wittenburg, for whom this 'gold' is his third medal from World Championships. Moreover, he won his previous medal – a 'bronze' – ten years ago in the vault at the 2015 Championships. Long-standing leaders confirmed their top-class form: D. Hashimoto – world champion in the individual all-around in 2022–2023, overall champion at the 2021 Tokyo Games; Zou Jingyuan – two-time Olympic champion (2021, 2024), world champion in 2017, 2018 and 2022 on the parallel bars [7].

A significant factor in the victory of all world champions in the all-around and individual events, with the exception of the pommel horse, was the difficulty of the routines – a D score that exceeded those of the medallists. Consequently, the trend towards more complex routines, even though they consist of only eight elements scored by the judges, will dominate the 2025–2028 Olympic cycle. Furthermore, the World Championships clearly demonstrated a trend among a number of gymnasts to move away from 'versatility'



towards 'specialisation' in a single apparatus. For instance, the 2025 European all-around champion, A. Asil, competed in only one apparatus – the rings – to win a medal at the World Championships. M. Khachatryan and P. Huups have long been competing in a single priority apparatus – the pommel horse. It is worth highlighting the unfortunate situation involving A. Dolgopyat from Israel – the winner of the 2021 Olympics and the 2023 World Championships in the floor exercise – who could have been in contention for a medal in this event at the World Championships in Jakarta. However, the Indonesian government did not issue entry visas to the country for the entire Israeli delegation, including A. Dolgopyat.

Russian gymnasts, competing under neutral status, performed admirably at the official FIG tournament after more than three years of suspension from events such as the Olympics, World Championships and World Cups. The 2025 Russian champion, D. Marinov, achieved a respectable seventh place in the all-around despite being unable to perform all the difficult elements in the rings routine due to a shoulder injury. Although he had finished the qualifying round in a higher fourth place. In addition, D. Marinov progressed to the finals on three apparatus, where he finished: third on the parallel bars; seventh in the vault; and eighth on the horizontal bar. Two more Russian gymnasts earned the right to compete in the finals: M. Yakubov – sixth place in the vault; Vi. Polyashov – sixth place on the parallel bars, which demonstrates their high potential.

Conclusions. It is clear that the gymnasts from the strongest national teams at the 2024 Olympics remain the leaders in the post-Olympic year. They secured top positions at the continental championships and won a total of six out of seven gold medals at the 2025 World Championships. The modernisation of the competition rules for the 2025–2028 Olympic cycle has led to increased competition between elite gymnasts and less high-calibre athletes; however, the difficulty score continues to play a significant role in determining victory. Russian gymnasts managed to win one medal at the World Championships – a bronze for

D. Marinov on the parallel bars – whilst demonstrating the team's high potential in the fight for victory and podium places at the next World Championships and the 2028 Olympics.

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