

Ballet influence to sports and artistic gymnastics

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Gymnastics no matter sports or artistic starts with ballet. Fine lines, pointed toes, straight legs are very important in these sports. To win it's not enough to have the most difficult routine with dangerous tricks, much more important is to perform all elements beautifully and clean like we say in gymnastics. Ballet will become the first "brick" on gymnast's way to the Olympic pedestal. What about ballet influence to sports and artistic gymnastics? There is no need to say that its influence is enormous, there can't be gymnastics without ballet. It's not just simple words but everything in gymnastics starts with ballet.

When girls only begin to go in for gymnastics, they start to attend ballet classes at the same time. Because to do even the simplest gymnastics elements such as roll over, handstand, fall over, the girls' bodies have to be prepared. And the ballet classes provide this preparation.

Some years ago in gymnastics there were compulsory and optional programs. Actually summer Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996 were the last ones to have them. Since then only optional programs were left. And in my opinion now it's much easier for the gymnasts to win the competitions without compulsory program. I'll explain: compulsory programs were very simple and the same for everybody. For the beam and floor exercises these programs were like small ballet dances. But you had to perform them perfectly, beautifully and without any mistakes. Therefore girls from all over the world showed the "school" of their gymnastics. And this "school" is the ballet background of each country.

So I think that ballet doesn't only influence sports and artistic gymnastics but it goes hand in hand with these sports.

The ballet basics in RSG like passive + active stretching, exercise on the floor and routines at the barre.

Usually the training for the girls who go in for gymnastics seriously lasts for about three or four hours. It consists of the warm-up, the work at the apparatus for the sports gymnasts and the work with subjects for the rhythmic gymnasts, physical exercises, choreography and stretching, of course. But it's important to notice that this schedule is mostly for those who already go in for gymnastics for at least one or two years. And for those who only started to do it, they spend almost all their time "at the barre" or stretching. The "school of the performing" is being prepared.

Stretching is the exercises when you have to overcome yourself. It only looks like that it is simply to sit in the split, than to do the double somersault. Not at all! But, you know, little girls learn to count really quickly, because when the coaches stretch them, they should count. When I was young we counted until one hundred.

So at the first stage coaches use very simple exercises for the stretching. They explain and, if they are able, they show the girls what to do themselves (I mean; certainly, only stretching exercises). Coaches pay a lot of attention to the toes to be pointed, to the legs to be stretched, to the arms to be straight and to the back to be flexible. That's why they use the exercises for the toes, for the knees, for the shoulders, for the back, because especially for the rhythmic gymnasts the back has to be extremely flexible.

Active and passive stretching. The definitions.

An active stretching is one where you assume a position and then hold it there with no assistance other than using the strength of your agonist muscles. Active stretches are usually quite difficult to hold and maintain for more than 10 seconds and rarely need to be held any longer than 15 seconds.

Passive stretching is one where you gradually ease into the stretch position and hold it with some other part of your body, or with the assistance of a partner or some other apparatus. The amount of time a static stretch is held may be anything from 6 seconds to 2 minutes. Often in static stretching you are advised to move further into the stretch position as the stretch sensation subsides.

Exercises on the floor.

So as you can see at the photos the exercise for the toes is very easy. Gymnasts sit on the floor, legs together and the toes pointed. And for the passive stretching - the coach or another girl pushes to the toes.

For the knees there is an exercise which we call "the pleat". It's when the girl sits on the floor, legs together or apart, and the girl bends till her chest touches the knees. The exercise to be more effective another girl pushes to the back for from thirty to sixty seconds.

For the back the exercise is called the "bridge". The bridge can be done legs apart or together. Rhythmic gymnasts also do one other kind of the "bridge". It's when they span back and hold their ankles. Actually for the back there are a lot of exercises. As you can see at the pictures, the girls lie on the stomach and span backwards. They can bend their legs and this position gymnasts call - "the ring". Also for the passive stretching, there is another example. One girl lie on the stomach, another takes her arms and spans the first girl backwards and hold for some time.

To stretch the shoulders is definitely very important as well. So as you can see at the pictures there are examples of the passive stretching. One girl lies on her stomach, another takes her arms and stretches them up. It would be perfect if the arms of the girl who lies on the floor are really very close to the floor. This exercise can't be done without a partner. There is also another exercise for the shoulders. One girl sits on the

floor another one sits on the chair. So the first one gives her arms to the second girl, who stretches them down.

And it goes without saying that different kinds of splits are used for the stretching in gymnastics. First of all it's the simple split on the floor. Then girls can bend forward or backwards, bend their back legs. Also gymnasts can bend backwards and at the same time bend their legs. There is the same jump position which is called - "the split to the ring".

So when the girls are good at splits on the floor they begin to use the chair or something else where they can put their legs and stretch from the rise. To the exercise be more effective other girls push to the front leg or take the arms of the girl who sit in the split and span her backwards. It's the example of the passive stretching. Good splits are very important to do good balances and flaps. And sports gymnasts also have to show perfect split when they do handstand on the floor or on the beam.

Also there is another example of the passive stretching. As you can see at the pictures one girl does a handstand and another pushes to her legs for some time.

And one of the most difficult exercise - it's when there are two chairs and both legs are put on them. That's really for those who are going in for gymnastics for quite long time.

Exercises at the barre.

Ballet classes last for about one hour and the training usually begins with them. Stretching exercises come at the end of the class when the girls are warmed up. Mostly these exercises are the examples of the active stretching. But of course the coach helps the girls to do the exercise properly.

So this is the stretching complex at the barre. Girls stay in front of the barre, hands on the barre and bend backwards. Usually they do "bend" ten times.

Then gymnasts put the leg on the bar and bend to the leg. The chest should touch the knee. Then they turn to opposite side from the leg which is on the barre. For example if the right leg is on the barre girls turn left. So after they turned and the girls start to bend to the leg which is on the barre and to the opposite side as well for ten times. Then the gymnasts turn again, so now the barre should be behind them. And now also the girls bend tho the front leg and backwards. After that they change legs.

There is also one good exercise at the ladder. The girl does a split at the horizontal position, she puts her hands on the ladder and holds. Then bends backwards. You can see this exercise at the picture. And another example of active stretching at the ladder - the ladder is behind the girl, the gymnast should also do a split but staying backwards to the ladder holding by her hands to the ladder.

There is an opinion that gymnasts have no childhood, because they have to train very hard to obtain a result. And I can't say that these are only words, because there are a lot of tears on the way to the Olympic pedestal. But agree the aim is worth the result.