

**Women's Artistic Gymnastics During the Cold War and Its
Aftermath**

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Executive Summary

This research aims to discover how Women's Artistic Gymnastics (WAG) developed from its balletic roots to its current acrobatic form, and why it evolved this way between 1952 and 2000. Tracing WAG through the Cold War, both as a temporal scope and political context, I examine the sport's governance through the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) and International Olympic Committee (IOC).

WAG began as the pre-eminent sport for women – designed to be appropriate females without challenging understandings of sport as masculine. However by the 1970s a new style of performance emerged which abandoned these feminine ideals. Through the resulting popularity, gymnastics tours demonstrated the IOC's own internal debates regarding amateurism, and indeed professionalization can be seen in WAG from the 1980s onwards. Meanwhile, the relationship between the FIG and IOC is analysed throughout this work. These changes are explored through the backdrop of the Cold War, with the 1980s boycotts and post-Cold War migration all playing a major part in WAG, Olympic and indeed world history.

Ultimately, I argue that WAG's evolution was a multifaceted phenomena. While the Soviet Union may have driven the subjective sport with their success, the FIG and IOC codified rules in response to such performances. Global participation in the sport reflected gender, political and economic changes, supported, opposed and perpetuated by the IOC. Thus, in WAG lies a microcosm of twentieth century societies.

Keywords: gymnastics, Cold War, governance, International Gymnastics Federation, International Olympic Committee

Research Outcomes*

Research Subject And Objectives

This research traced the development of Women's Artistic Gymnastics (WAG) during the Cold War and its aftermath, 1952 – 2000, through exploration of the differing responses in the United States, Australia and the international gymnastics federation (FIG) to Soviet domination. WAG entered Olympic competition in 1952, when the first appearance of the USSR started forty years of team ascendancy. By 1992 emphasis on spectacle and risk had replaced gymnastics' balletic origins. The principal aim of this research was to discover why and how WAG developed as such, while concurrently assessing the wider impact of the Cold War on sport and how this was handled by the Olympic movement.

Although gymnastics has been an Olympic sport since the birth of the modern Games in 1896, women's gymnastics only debuted in 1928, and even then it was not quite how we envision the sport today. A modified version of men's gymnastics,¹ women's gymnastics modified apparatus to be more suitable for women. And in the same way men's gymnastics was designed to exhibit masculine characteristics of strength and control, the purpose of women's gymnastics was to demonstrate physical femininity: grace, flexibility and strength. It was to be a suitable sport for women. Indeed, my archival research revealed that upon creating a sport for women, the FIG also attempted to assume control of a wide range of women's physical activities, including track and field events, much to the chagrin of other IFs.²

Reflecting the confusion over women's position in sport, and gymnastics, women's gymnastics appeared again at the 1936 and 1948 Games, however not following a standard format. It was a team only competition, and consisted of different events at each competition. It was not until the 1952 Olympic Games - the first involving the Soviet Union - that women's gymnastics became Women's *Artistic* Gymnastics, a standardized sport consisting of individual, apparatus, and team contests always in the same four events: vault, uneven bars, balance beam, and floor.

Yet six years after WAG's debut, both the men's and women's disciplines remained peripheral sports in the West. Its marginalization in Western sporting cultures left the Eastern bloc free to dominate the sport. Indeed, the absence of strong Western competitors allowed the Soviet Union to earn nearly every gold medal in WAG's Olympic history: no small feat, with six events to contest, and eighteen medals to be won at each Games. In the context of the Cold War and the sporting rivalry it created, the abundance of Olympic medals to be won from gymnastics was of immense value to the

* The following includes near exact excerpts from the PhD thesis to which this research contributed and extracts may be submitted to journals for publication as articles. See Georgia Cervin, 'A Balance of Power,' (PhD diss.) University of Western Australia, Crawley: 2016.

communist state, which held a firm monopoly on medals throughout its political domination of Eastern Europe. Over the fifty years and ten times in which the Soviet Union competed in WAG at the Olympic Games it won a staggering 92 medals, including every team gold.³

In this context, the central question of this research is formed: how did WAG develop in the Cold War? In this sense, the Cold War acts both as a time period, 1952 – 1990 and the ten years following, as well as a political impetus acting on sport. Drawing on the Olympic archives, I aim here to explore the sport's governance, both in terms of the FIG and the IOC.

Methods

While grounded in sports history, this research reflects wider socio-cultural and political events and issues. Gymnastics operated within the 'Olympic family' as one of its flagship sports, and was subject to changing economic, gendered and political influences on sport in general. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and gymnastics' governing body, the FIG, acted as international non-government organizations (INGOs).⁴ In doing so these transnational groups⁵ were not only the directors of the sport, but facilitators of international cooperation and mediators of sports diplomacy. Using this framework, my research aims to shed light on their role both within WAG and in wider international sporting relations.

To do this, I relied on a variety of sources. First, interviews with select figures involved in international gymnastics provided a general structure of themes for exploration. Second, these suggestions were traced through documentary evidence at the Olympic Studies Centre (OSC) in Lausanne. Here, I pursued unpublished archival sources of the IOC, its National Olympic Committees (NOCs), and the FIG, which included correspondence, statements, and policy documents and minutes from Olympic sessions. In addition, I consulted the women in sport collection, as well as the files of the medical commission, programme commission, Goodwill Games, and various IOC members including Presidents Brundage, Killanin and Samaranch. Furthermore, published (although not widely disseminated) materials from the FIG were also analysed at the OSC. Its quarterly 'Bulletins' contained minutes, summaries and reports from FIG meetings,⁶ which have been drawn on extensively throughout this research, as they provide deep behind-the-scenes information on much of the development of WAG during this period. Finally, 'public' sources have supplemented this work, through the likes of newspapers and gymnastics magazines available online, to provide external views on some of the issues raised in this work.

Academic Significance

To interpret this array of sources, this research has also employed several unique historical frameworks. First, unlike the little existing scholarship on WAG, this project

utilises the Olympic movement as a framework around which WAG developed. In doing so, it places IOC and FIG governance at the centre of inquiry. Second, it employs the framework of the Cold War to understand the history of sport.⁷ This framework is only beginning to receive attention from scholars, and has gained the most use within Olympic histories.⁸ However, it has not been used to explore WAG, one of the most popular Olympic sports, whose key players came from the polarized powers central to the Cold War conflict.⁹ Furthermore, to date there have been no transnational studies of competitive gymnastics, nor any approaching of the FIG as an INGO or diplomatic body, making this uniquely important research. Finally, it focuses on women's participation in the Olympic movement. WAG enabled female competitors earlier than many other sports did, and was subject to the influences of Cold War politics. Yet, most existing scholarship on the Cold War and the Olympics focuses on male-dominated sports.

Impact On The Olympic Movement

This research contributes to understanding of the Olympic movement in three key ways. First, as the one of the most popular Olympic sports,¹⁰ gymnastics has been severely under-represented in scholarly research. This study alleviates this paucity, catering to a clear interest in the sport, and shedding light on one of the foremost sports in the Olympic programme. Second, it illuminates how WAG developed as a result of International Olympic Committee influence on the Federation Internationale de Gymnastique. This has implications for revealing the intricate relationships between the IOC and its member federations; the result of constant negotiations, accountability and compromise to remain part of the Olympic movement. Third, it enters into a growing dialogue on the role of the Olympic movement in the Cold War. Despite Avery Brundage's avowed separation of politics and sport, the Olympic Movement was a powerful and visible platform on which this international conflict played out. More broadly, this caters to new understandings of sport's role in international relations and diplomacy. Despite improving understanding of the Olympic movement in history, this research is unlikely to affect the practical activities of the Olympic movement, although it may serve to embolden the IOC's position as a powerful advocate for marginalised groups in physical activity, and its role in supervising governance of international sport.

Results And Conclusions Of The Research Project

The results of this research are presented here divided into five decades, each comprising of separate themes. Beginning with the first two decades of WAG, I explore WAG's unique position as a pioneering women's sport, before demonstrating how gymnastics' growth in participation size at the Games, combined with the number of medals, put the sport in jeopardy. In the 1970s however, a new, more popular style of WAG emerged to solidify its place in the Olympic movement. Moreover, tours resulting from this

popularity reflect the changing nature of Olympic amateurism at the time. In the 1980s, these economic shifts continued, and here I examine the slow professionalization of the Games, as well as the two boycotts that broke the old adage of the separation of sport and politics. Finally, I analyse the post-Cold War world of the 1990s, where migration shifted gymnastics knowledge westward, while the FIG undertook a new direction for the sport.

1. Women's Sport and Downsizing the Games, 1952 - 1969

At its inception, and for most of its first two decades, WAG was an amalgamation of classical dance and an adapted version of men's gymnastics adapted. Former Soviet ballerina Larissa Latynina was the reigning champion throughout most of this period,¹¹ and her closest competitors from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Germany and Romania were similarly versed in dance. Meanwhile most Western countries had few competitive female gymnasts; and the disinterest in the sport resulted in a paucity of East-West Cold War interaction in WAG in the 1950s and 1960s.¹²

Women's Sport

Despite the lack of gymnastic contact in the first decades of the Cold War, the conflict nonetheless affected WAG and women's sport in general. There can be no doubt that the support for female sport in the East eventually caused renewed ways of thinking about women and sport in the West. According to historian Susan Cahn, 'The deficiencies of women's track and field had been a minor matter in the past. But with the Soviet Union's first Olympic appearance in 1952, these failings posed an acute problem for US politicians, sports leaders, and a patriotic public.'¹³ American policy toward female athletes, or lack thereof, was informed by nineteenth century notions of femininity. In particular, the way a woman's primary role as mother was seen to be in conflict with physical exertion formed the basis of women's exclusion from sport.¹⁴ Although by the twentieth century there were groups advocating women's participation, in general American women's sport lacked unified leadership, direction and organization in terms of a top-down, elite system.¹⁵

Meanwhile the FIG was keen to promote it as a women's sport, with constant references to WAG's feminine demands in correspondence with the IOC, as well as internal policy documents. It was not simply a women's version of a man's sport, it was *appropriate* for women,¹⁶ 'in harmony with their constitutions.'¹⁷ WAG's very design was meant to showcase how beautiful, graceful, and feminine women could be. In its 1968 Code of Points, the FIG had imagined artistry - for women - as 'harmonious flexibility and feminine grace'.¹⁸ Physical attributes associated with femininity defined good execution in gymnastics: fluid, ease of movement in which nothing should appear difficult. The positive emphasis on the female physique, combined with the different

apparatus and requirements of MAG, enabled WAG to be accepted without seriously challenging the still prevailing concepts of gender difference.

In this way, WAG occupied a uniquely contradictory position for women's sport. Its femininity allowed it to grow, gain acceptance, and avoid many of the common criticisms preventing participation, let alone investment in sport in the decades to follow. In this sense, it can be seen as a gateway sport forging the path of acceptance of women, sport, and athleticism. On the other hand, at the end of the Brundage era, something designed to be uniquely feminine was unlikely to challenge the gendered assumptions of traditional sporting competition. As the years ahead brought gymnastics further into the realms of athleticism and masculine sport, the older views did not entirely disappear.

But gender was not the only issue brought to the forefront of sport by Cold War rivalry. As the Olympic Games grew in size, and certain sports afforded the opportunity of an abundance of medals, the inclusion of sports like the gymnastics into question.

Gymnastics' Place in the Olympic Games

The 1956 Games had been a reality check for the USA. 'Both in total number of gold medals and aggregate points under any system of tabulation, Russia displaced the United States as the unofficial champion,' worried the *New York Times*.¹⁹ Soviet victories could be easily discounted, because they were in unimportant and/or women's sports. For instance, after the Melbourne Games journalist Allison Danzig accused the Soviet Union of winning in sports that were less important. 'Russia's overwhelming supremacy in competitions that the United States ignores, and for which it enters teams that are little more than token representation, carried her to the top.'²⁰ Two of these token sports were identified as Greco-Roman wrestling and gymnastics: tellingly, the latter saw the Soviet Union come away with eleven medals, to America's zero.²¹ Not only does this evidence gymnastics' standing in American sporting culture, such reportage also served to minimize Soviet athletic victories by implying that the US was not really trying to win in such other, less important sports.

In addition to being portrayed as unimportant to the US, such sports were also perceived as unfair because so many medals could be won. 'Avery Brundage was asked whether it was an equitable distribution of rewards for the effort expended to give three gold medals to one person for gymnastics when the decathlon goes through exhausting tests in ten sports from morning to night on two consecutive days and receives only one medal.'²²

Such questions came to be major concerns in the IOC and FIG's relationship. IOC archives reveal that several moves were made in an attempt to downsize gymnastics at the Games, and although it was not the only sport targeted by this reductionist policy, this became a defining feature of the IOC and FIG's relationship. In fact, before 1953, the gymnastics programme had only been expanding. Although the IOC had been looking to reduce its programme before 1953, no one had challenged gymnastics.²³

While suggestions of removing or downsizing gymnastics through its women's events had always been couched in the discourse of combatting gigantism – the growing size of the Games – a 1950 vote shows the entire Programme Commission was opposed to this idea, except the presidents of the London and Copenhagen Organizing Committees. Indeed, not only was it agreed that WAG would be added to the programme, it was decided that it would remain there as a 'compulsory sport'.²⁴ This brings credence to the idea that later suggestions to downsize gymnastics were influenced by Soviet success in it.

While the Games certainly had logistical problems as they grew, the mission to reduce their size and the way they were conducted, was in some ways the beginning of a Cold War assault on gymnastics. Referring to his own experience as a competitor at the 1912 Games, Brundage himself claimed gymnastics had become unduly large:

If I am not mistaken, in the 1912 Games in which I participated, there were only gymnastic demonstrations, no competitions. In 1920 there were only individual events (no teams) ... As a matter of fact, in recent years, although [the FIG] permitted teams of 8 men, most countries have sent only 5 or 6.²⁵

However, Brundage was mistaken. Gymnastics had been a competition event (for men) since 1896, and the team competition had always been a major component. While the FIG agreed to reduce its team size from eight to six gymnasts and, in doing so, contribute to a solution towards reducing the number of athletes at the Games, the IOC's satisfaction was short-lived. By 1958 the IOC again attempted to decrease team size, this time to four. The FIG sent several furious letters following this decision, which was made without its approval:

In reducing again our participants from 6 to 5 we would have a suppression of 40% of the number of our gymnasts, which is far beyond the goal we wish to attain, a sacrifice which you would never ask any other federation to accept.²⁶

However, Brundage responded with surprise – in his view, he had prevented the team gymnastics competitions from being cut altogether.²⁷ Brundage noted that he was only able to make such a compromise for gymnastics with the support of the Soviet IOC members. It would make sense that Soviet IOC members Alexei Romanov and Konstantin Andrianov would protect the size of a sport from which their country benefited in medals. By 1959, the FIG had managed to negotiate its position back to six team members, preventing cuts to gymnastics for the time being.²⁸

At the same time, the IOC called to reduce the medals available in gymnastics, which caused 'serious difficulties' for the FIG.²⁹ A new ruling that an athlete could only receive one medal per performance would have serious ramifications for a sport in which one competition yielded the potential of several medals per gymnast.³⁰ It was like a 400m

runner having their race time eligible for the 100m, 200m and 400m medals. Scores for a gymnast's compulsory and voluntary routine on each apparatus counted towards her pursuit of a team medal, all-around medal, and medal for each of the four apparatus. Importantly, this policy would not contribute to reducing the size of the Games but rather redistribute medal potential – all important in the Cold War Games.

This ruling would also affect several sports that did not yet have qualification rounds and finals, such as cycling, fencing and equestrian.³¹ However, it emerged that the Federation Equestre Internationale had absolved itself from this IOC demand. Due to Australia's strict biosecurity policies, these events had been hosted earlier in 1956 in Stockholm instead of at the Melbourne Games. The change in medal policy was missed by the organizers, and subsequently, several medals could be won from one performance. The FIG successfully managed to argue that it would be unjust to then apply the ruling to other sports.³²

While these debates continued after the Melbourne Games, it was the Soviet IOC members who noted a solution that would become the first step toward the current qualifications/finals format of the gymnastics competitions. This retained the number of medals available in gymnastics, but solved the problem of too much reward for only one performance. In the first days of competition, gymnasts would compete for the team and all-around medals, based on their compulsory and voluntary routines. From this competition, athletes would be selected for the apparatus finals, which would then occur in a second, final round.³³

These examples illustrate certain trends in the correspondence between the FIG and IOC. Prior to 1950 this correspondence was mostly to do with accepting new member countries, fighting for power as the sole representative of a sport, and organizing the sport's participation in the Olympic Games. After 1950, and the Soviet Union's debut Olympics in Helsinki, nearly all of the correspondence is concerned with reducing the size of the Games, which threatened gymnastics' position in the Olympic movement. For the following decades, the FIG fought hard to retain its Olympic position, comprising and negotiating with IOC directives.

2. Acrobatics and Amateurs, 1970 - 1979

In the 1970s, Cold War tensions thawed somewhat into a period that became known as détente. But it is precisely this détente that saw sport, as a form of soft power, become a notable feature of Cold War politics, beyond its Olympic platform. This political context enabled gymnasts to travel to the West, on the back of their newfound celebrity, which had resulted in part from a new style of WAG emerging in this decade. However, the Australian gymnastic tour reflected growing problems with the changing amateur rules in the Olympic movement, and miscommunication between governing bodies.

A New Style of WAG and the Governance of Gymnastics

WAG in the 1970s underwent rapid change from its previous style, resulting in a greater number of acrobatics performed by younger gymnasts. Archival research demonstrates that this acrobatization was facilitated, if not encouraged by the FIG through improvements in equipment as well as the emplacement of new rules requiring greater numbers of difficult elements be performed the gymnasts.³⁴ Yet belying these changes was a discourse within the WTC that rued the new acrobatic direction of the sport. These conflicting ideas are reconciled when it is understood it was not acrobatization that was mourned, but rather its consequent cohort of young, pre-pubescent gymnasts who could not present the feminine artistry that had defined the sport since its birth. These findings highlight that fears over contemporary gymnastics' loss of artistry, are perhaps not a uniquely modern problem. Moreover, it foreshadows problems to come in the decades following, as the abundance of child athletes in the 1970s, 80s and 90s brought negative publicity to the sport.

But these concerns were not immediately the most pressing for the FIG in the 1970s, which was under pressure to maintain gymnastics' inclusion in the Olympics. Unhappy with the decreasing age of gymnasts, the FIG drew up a rule, insisting gymnasts reach a minimum age to be eligible for competition. Indeed, a large majority of its WTC had voted in favour of such a limit in 1971: any gymnast wishing to compete at the 1972 Games must be at least 14 years of age in 1971.³⁵ With this stipulation, the FIG commented:

Let us hope that we shall see less of these children... incapable of mature and harmonious work, being physically and intellectually forced to a degree of self-discipline necessary not only to achieve an impeccable technique but also to demonstrate feminine charm.³⁶

Here it can be seen that the WTC's concern was not for athlete or child welfare, but rather a commitment to the feminine ideals of WAG that it believed could only be demonstrated by sexually mature females.³⁷ Acrobatic routines performed by young gymnasts did not adhere to the carefully constructed narrative of WAG, in which gymnasts exhibited 'harmonious flexibility and feminine grace'.

Nonetheless, as the perception of WAG as a child's sport grew, both within and outside the sport, the FIG faced increasing pressure to deal with the problem. Eventually, by 1981, the IOC began to pressure the FIG to improve their regulations around age, even though the FIG was at least a decade ahead of the IOC with regard to such rules:

In spite of that you already have an age limit in your sport, in light of the experiences of the near past, the IOC insists that you reconsider your present age limit for both men and women, carefully studied by your medical commission (if any) and by your other appropriate bodies).³⁸

By the late 1980s, correspondence with the IOC reveals that the FIG had settled on a minimum age of 15 for Olympic Games and World Championships.³⁹ This example reveals the complex demands the FIG faced – governing its gymnasts and adhering to IOC rules. Indeed, a general theme of the correspondence between the FIG and IOC at the OSC in Lausanne is how much the desire for power affected this relationship. The IOC sought to be the top down administrator of all sports under its umbrella; the FIG sought to assert its independence and its value to the IOC.

The IOC was at times belittling to the FIG, constantly threatening the legitimacy of gymnastics as a sport, and thus its inclusion in the Games. ‘If one man can win eight medals in an international set of Games, the events must be altogether too simple,’ accused Avery Brundage to the FIG President in 1971. ‘And it certainly detracts from the importance of the sport.’⁴⁰ In turn, the FIG constantly sought reassurance of its status in the Olympic movement, but framed this confidently and assertively. For example, in 1961, after waiting all day to be seen by members of the IOC Executive Committee in Rome, FIG President Charles Thoeni wrote to Brundage: ‘Sitting in the waiting room hardly pleases me. Gymnastics is not a minor sport.’⁴¹ In response, Brundage cooed agreement.

I personally place gymnastics in the first category of sports. It is true that it is assigned a minor role here in the United States, but I consider this a national misfortune. Gymnastics is basic and fundamental in any national sport program.⁴²

Tired of being constantly under threat, the FIG at one point hinted at the possibility of leaving the Olympic family, although this seems to have been a bluff.

Surely it is not unknown to you that for a number of years now the gymnastics sport found itself perpetually compelled to struggle in order to maintain the place at the bosom of Olympism to which it deems itself entitled. To what do we owe these restrictive tendencies toward our sport? *In certain gymnastics circles the question is already being raised whether there is still any point in our participating in the Olympic Games*, and whether it would not be much wiser to replace them by World Championships every two years. However, we of the head of the FIG have grown firmly attached to the Olympic ideal and we refused to consider this alternative.⁴³

The FIG sought recognition, respect, and the right to rule itself. Moreover, it asserted that the very Federations which the IOC attempts to control are those who in fact enable the very persistence of the Games through their kind cooperation. For example FIG President Arthur Gander wrote to the President of the IOC Programme Commission in 1973:

The IOC takes the final and definite decision for the framing and programming of the Olympic Games, but you certainly know that these Games can only be organised

to carry out their aims if the recognised federations have at least an indirect influence on the programme in general and on the programme of their sport in particular.⁴⁴

Indeed, this was a mutually reliant relationship: the Games could not go on without the support of its member federations representing each sport contest at the Olympics; yet it was a marker of prestige and status to be included in the Olympic movement and its lofty ideals.

Gymnastics Tours

Despite these tensions in governance, WAG grew and flourished in the 1970s. Its new style produced a wave of celebrity athletes from the Eastern bloc - Olga Korbut and Nadia Comaneci foremost among them - with important consequences in how the sport was valued in the public sphere. One of the most significant repercussions of WAG's newfound popularity was the subsequent rise in international gymnastics tours – teams of elite gymnasts touring foreign nations and providing gymnastics shows in packed arenas. Seizing on the publicity WAG was attracting after Korbut's celebrity, gymnasts began to be used to strengthen international relationships, following the precedent set by Ping-Pong diplomacy. Although this phenomenon has been discussed in other research,⁴⁵ contextualizing it in documents from the OSC demonstrates how these tours represented internal debates about the nature of amateur sport within the IOC in the 1970s.

While the American tours became stories of 'Westernized' Soviets, and friendly political relations played out in the media,⁴⁶ the Australian tour became a site to contest the amateur status of the Soviet gymnasts. Australian IOC member, Hugh Weir, sent press clippings advertising the Australia tour to the IOC President, accusing the Soviet Union of breaching the amateurism rule, which dictated that no athlete could benefit financially from their athletic abilities.⁴⁷ Although the amateur rule remained in place throughout the 1970s, Lord Killanin's succession of Brundage in 1972 marked the beginning of the slow shift toward professionalisation.⁴⁸

Shortly after Korbut's success in early 1973, the Australian Gymnastics Union, together with an entertainment company and television network, worked with the Soviet Gymnastics Federation to bring its celebrity athletes to Australia. When advertisements for the shows began running in newspapers – featuring stars of the 1972 Olympics including Olga Korbut – Weir sent Killanin press clippings as evidence of Soviet breaching of the amateur rule.

Weir was a prominent member of the old guard in the IOC, leading its Eligibility Commission – the body which dealt with the issue of amateurism, who must have been surprised to see this happen on his home ground. He complained to Killanin in 1974:

This exercise is a purely commercial promotion in the entertainment field and has no connection whatsoever with the Australian Gymnastic Federation... I am sure no

one in this country believes the gymnasts are performing for love of sport and this presentation is not being promoted on a purely commercial and professional basis... Whether it is all above board and quite valid in accordance with the rules of amateur status, I cannot help feeling that the arrangement is not only unwise but certainly undesirable.⁴⁹

Killanin sympathized with Weir, but even the diplomat, encouraged further investigation by the IOC technical director, Henry Banks,⁵⁰ explaining:

There is to my mind, a considerable difference between (a) an Olympic competitor who turns professional, (b) individual Olympic competitors who may give performances for charity or sports fund-raising and (c) what would appear to be the case in Australia of a complete commercialization of the Russian Gymnastic Olympic team.⁵¹

So Banks asked the FIG for more information, but secretary Max Bangerter claimed to have no knowledge of the tour, explaining that if he did, he would have told the Russian Federation that the FIG would not support it, and prohibit participating gymnasts from competing at FIG events.⁵²

This view fed into a narrative also espoused by Killanin, of gymnastics as a 'pure' sport 'from an Olympic point of view; one not plagued by professional cheats'.⁵³ But attitudes were changing in light of the increasing difficulty of the sport, discussed above. 'To obtain the present high standard required for a gold medal the training would appear to be as long and as dedicated as that of becoming a ballerina,' observed Killanin.⁵⁴ Indeed, this was one of the growing problems of allowing the Soviet gymnasts into the Games, and the ripple effect they had on the sports in which they excelled: more training was needed to win.

However, Olympic archives demonstrate Banks' and Weir's sentiments were not quite accurate. There were clear records of intention to follow all the correct channels in the organization of this tour. First, there was a letter from the AAGU President, Jim Barry, agreeing to assist the two private companies arranging the promotional tour.⁵⁵ Then, a response from the tour companies indicates first, that the Russian Ministry of Sport insisted that the proper Olympic bodies be notified, and second, that the AAGU should correspond in the resulting negotiations with the FIG paying \$500.⁵⁶ This was negligible compared to the revenue from other parties: the touring company was to pay \$2500 to the AAGU and the Russian Ministry of Sport was to receive \$10,000 plus 50 per cent of the proceeds from the tour.⁵⁷

In response to Weir's and Killanin's inquiries, Bangerter shifted responsibility to the national federations, leaving the IOC to follow up this time with the AAGU as well as the Russian Gymnastics Federation. 'Mr Bangerter stressed that the Affiliated Federation in the country must agree to any proposal [for foreign tours or competition]... he was

quite definite that [Australia] would not allow this commercialization...⁵⁸ However the IOC declared this was clearly a matter for the FIG to deal with.

It would appear that this is solely a matter for the FIG to sort out and take what appropriate action deemed fit... it is not at this stage a matter which calls of action by the IOC except to express the view that exploitation of amateur athletes purely for commercial purposes such as I have described is undesirable.⁵⁹

Correspondence between the AAGU and FIG, the two parties supposed to be making sure the tour was legitimately amateur, is conspicuously absent from these files.

While there was some confusion over the legality of Olympic athletes engaging in publicity tours, clearly there were few repercussions. This correspondence, although unfortunately incomplete, is significant due to the stir the Australian tour apparently caused. The confusion over the Australian tour indicates the shadowy rules surrounding athletic exhibitions. And although the athletes received no payment themselves, this incident is representative of the beginnings of the commercialization of gymnastics, and the potential profitability of the Games.

3. Boycotts and Professionalization, 1980 - 1989

After détente, in which the Cold War exerted a subtle, behind-the-scenes effect on gymnastics, the 1980s were a stark contrast. The conflict exploded to the forefront of Olympic politics, with two large-scale boycotts having an immense impact on the Games and their sports. It was not simply that a large number of nations boycotted the Games, but that the nations that boycotted, the USA and allies in 1980, and the Soviet Union and allies in 1984, were key players within the Olympic movement. The absence of many world-class Eastern athletes from the 1984 Olympics enabled the West to dominate the medal tally: importantly, in subjective sports like WAG it provided the opportunity to break into the ranks of elite gymnastics. Indeed, it was at these Games that the US won its first gold medals in WAG. Such events forced the IOC to re-examine its role in politics, while power in WAG was also reshaped. Meanwhile, gymnastics continued to grapple with changing economic opportunities under new IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, who began a mission to professionalize the Games.

Olympic Boycotts

In 1974 Moscow had been selected as the site of the 1980 Olympics,⁶⁰ but in the months leading up to the event, the Games became hostage to a political stand-off between East and West. Following the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan in late 1979, American President Jimmy Carter announced an ultimatum several weeks later in January 1980: if the Games were not moved from Moscow, the United States would

boycott.⁶¹ The ensuing boycotts were not only significant in Olympic history, they were representative of the disintegration of the détente that had marked the preceding decade.

In addition to the call for a global Olympic boycott, there were demands for an alternative to the Moscow venue. United States congressman Clarence E. Miller wrote to President Carter in early January of his plans to introduce legislation to the American Congress to move the Games from Moscow with the pressured assistance of the IOC.⁶² This latter example reflects Sarantakes' observation that 'Carter and many of his subordinates never seriously respected the Olympic ideology,' and that 'they even lacked basic knowledge about the structure of international sports... assuming that the IOC had a political structure that was similar to that of the United Nations'.⁶³

Indeed, the IOC was not an organization to bow to such pressure, nor did American Congress have any jurisdiction over the matter. Notwithstanding the organizational problems of an eleventh hour change of venue, the IOC's continuing commitment to Coubertin's ideal of the separation of sport and politics led Lord Killanin to respond with a threat to American involvement in the Olympic movement:

The United States Olympic committee has publicly taken the absolutely correct line up to now in regard to the Olympic Games but it would appear that President Carter and members of your Government are not aware of the Olympic Rules. Naturally, should they issue instructions not to accept the invitation to Moscow, I think the *USOC would be in complete conflict with Rule 24 (c) regarding its autonomy which could have very dangerous repercussions for Los Angeles.*⁶⁴

Boycotting the Games affected not only the competitions, but also had ramifications regarding power affiliations of those governing world sport. On the 19th of May 1980, President Carter and his advisors had met with Lord Killanin and Monique Berlioux in the Oval Office. A confidential report on the meeting reveals that Lord Killanin warned Carter of the repercussions on the governance of world sport through the political affiliations of IF members.

Firstly, [Americans] had taken no action when the Eastern representatives were taking over the international federations. Now, it would be difficult to oppose many of their actions. They should be careful regarding the Congresses to be held at the time of the Games.⁶⁵

It is unclear if Killanin was genuinely encouraging a Western alliance to block Soviet power in sports administration, trying to motivate Carter to revoke the boycott, or most likely, a combination of the two. The result was that Carter did allow officials to attend the Games and their corresponding IF congresses, although many did not. In the letters to the IOC from July, there are many instances of American officials declining to come to

Moscow (for example, Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee representatives and IOC medical commission members), and in turn, the IOC insisting US representatives attend or be removed from their posts.⁶⁶ As Killanin had feared: ‘by their action, Americans were playing into the hands of the East.’⁶⁷ However, the Roll Call of the 1980 IOC Congress in Moscow, revealed no apologies from boycotting nations’ members, and the members from Australia, the USA, Canada and New Zealand appear to have attended.⁶⁸ Within WAG, only the Canadian WTC member was noted as absent, having being refused permission to travel from her government,⁶⁹ and at the FIG General Assembly, there were no such notable absences.

Four years later, on the 9th of May 1984, the Soviet Union announced its intention not to compete at the LA Olympics, citing fears for its athletes’ welfare, amid ‘anti-Soviet hysteria’, making it impossible to send a team.⁷⁰ It claimed that, unlike the USA in 1980, it did not engage in politically motivated actions.⁷¹ ‘We have no intention of boycotting,’ said a statement by Soviet authorities. ‘We make a difference between boycotting and not attending.’⁷²

Indeed, IOC archives also echo the USSR’s fears regarding security at the Games months before its announcement. In a meeting with US Secretary of State George Schultz shortly after the USSR’s announcement, the IOC’s new President Juan Antonio Samaranch stated ‘that everybody in the Olympic Movement was very worried concerning the security for the Games to be held in Los Angeles in a few days. Following the decision taken by the USSR, various other countries were forced to do likewise’.⁷³ When Schultz attempted to placate these concerns, explaining that security was shared between local and state authorities, Samaranch reminded him that this was exactly the flaw in security that had led to the events at Munich some years earlier.⁷⁴

In addition, Soviet non-attendance was also rooted in Olympic rhetoric. The communications between the Soviet NOC and the IOC are replete with references to the LAOOC not being in line with the ‘Olympic charter.’⁷⁵ For instance a letter from May 1984 notes: ‘In December 1983 we nominated our Olympic attaché and the LAOOC agreed. On the eve of his departure he was denied a visa.’⁷⁶ Considering the Soviet athletes would all also require a visa to attend the Games, this was a serious logistical concern, and one which should have been taken care of by the LAOOC, according to the Olympic Charter. In the Soviet view, such problems had been unresolved for the preceding three years, and there is evidence of these concerns being raised in correspondence with the IOC since 1981.⁷⁷ Such sources add weight to Edelman’s view that the Soviet Union genuinely was concerned about security.⁷⁸

By 1984, the IOC recoiled from being used as a political tool and, under the new leadership of Samaranch, began to utilize its high profile status to intervene in international politics. Between the 19th and 21st of November, Mikhail Gorbachev and US President Ronald Reagan met for the first time in Geneva to discuss Soviet-US relations.⁷⁹ The IOC took a deep interest in this.⁸⁰ Indeed, preceding the Geneva summit

where a 'Joint Statement' between the two nations was signed, a similar meeting between the two National Olympic Committees in Indianapolis entrusted the IOC to oversee the development of cultural links through sport.⁸¹ As a result of the boycotts and IOC-led diplomacy, the Soviet Union and the USA agreed to work together on a range of mutual endeavours. The two National Olympic Committees agreed with the IOC that they would encourage their national sports federations to expand exchanges through bilateral and multilateral competitions and joint training camps. Such actions represent a move away from the old IOC mantra separating sport and politics, instead recognising sport's hand in international relations. In doing so the Olympic movement solidified its long held rhetoric of the Games' importance in facilitating world peace.

Professionalization

Meanwhile, another Samaranch's leadership ushered another new direction in IOC policy: its slow move away from amateurism, which shifted the economic landscape of elite sport.

The Olympic movement must forget the word "amateur" and open its doors to the world's best athletes. The Olympics Games are now the major sports event in the world, and we must allow the best athletes to take part.⁸²

This was Samaranch's announcement at the beginning of his IOC presidency in 1981, clearly setting his Olympic agenda for the coming decade. However, the Olympic Congress needed to vote in any official changes to the rules, and even then, the sports federations could maintain their own amateur rules within the Olympic framework. Thus, at the Baden-Baden Congress of 1981, athlete representatives appeared for the first time, and the IOC amended its rules to allow the international sporting federations to create their own eligibility rules, resulting in wide ranging approaches to defining amateurism.⁸³

While the IOC leadership was open to professionalization, the FIG was not. Noting the inclusion of football, tennis and hockey in the Games, the FIG questioned how sports with major professional branches could include paid athletes at Olympic Games.⁸⁴ A year later, in 1986, the FIG remained unimpressed with the IOC's new direction, yet appeared to have no official information about its implementation. 'As far as the FIG is concerned, our statutory dispositions and Rule 26 [the amateur rule] of the Olympic Charter are still both applicable and applied.'⁸⁵ Still committed to its traditional roots, and those of the twentieth century sporting federation movement, the FIG refused to entertain the idea of professionalization for the remainder of the decade.⁸⁶

As demonstrated within the IOC membership, the FIG was probably not alone in its misgivings, but its reluctance to abandon amateurism disadvantaged gymnastics in an era of emerging commercialization of sport. While greater income enabled other sports to invest more in development, gymnastics was increasingly invisible as the quadrennial

Olympics became its main source of revenue, compared with the income and publicity attached to other sports that held frequent World Cups, World Championships and had major leagues. Both interest and financial investment in WAG suffered as a result.⁸⁷

Although professionalization was rarely discussed within the gymnastics community through *International Gymnast* magazine, and despite definite opposition from the FIG, the potential income from private sponsors became a profitable and typical career trajectory for many successful American Olympic gymnasts. Following their historic successes at Los Angeles, the American team of 1984 was swamped with lucrative offers from companies interested in the rising popularity of the sport. 'For some athletes, the Olympic Games became a ticket to the whirling, sparkling, all-American, publicity-and-commerce merry-go-round,' one *New York Times* writer observed.⁸⁸ Retton became the first female spokesperson for cereal brand Wheaties, signed a contract with a company of hair products, Vidal Sassoon, and agreed to be a worldwide representative for youth sports programmes for fast food chain McDonalds. Meanwhile, several of the successful MAG and WAG gymnasts at the '84 Games won acting opportunities as a direct result of their athletic success.⁸⁹ Despite FIG rules rendering them ineligible for further Olympic competition, the victorious American gymnasts were happy to renounce their amateur status and reap the rewards of their Los Angeles success.

As economic opportunities for gymnasts grew, so did their international success. From the 1950s to the 1970s, Soviet and Romanian gymnasts raised both their income and standard of living through international victories, prompting FIG member Hardy Fink to assert they were 'the real capitalists' in gymnastics.⁹⁰ Meanwhile their Western counterparts, relying on private funding for training and competition, had no opportunity to do the same, no matter how successful. However, with relaxed rules on professionalism in the 1980s turning the tide on potential income from Olympic sport, it cannot be coincidence that at this point American gymnasts broke through into international success. Although improved training systems, better networking, and the 1984 boycott also played a part in creating a more favourable environment for Western gymnasts, the new economic situation was also crucial to changes in the power balance of international gymnastics.

4. Post-Cold War Gymnastics, 1990 - 2000

...Since the 1988 Congress in Seoul, there have been tremendous changes in the world; this has also made itself felt in our sports discipline, gymnastics, and will continue to leave its traces...⁹¹

At the end of 1990, WTC President Ellen Berger made this statement on the changes in world geography that marked the beginning of the decade, and foreshadowed the changes to follow in the coming years. On Christmas day, 1991, the Soviet Union ceased to exist.⁹² The political reshuffling that followed was reflected within the gymnastics world

both through new migratory patterns as well as in the governance of WAG, in an increasingly competitive sports market.

Post-Cold War Migration of Gymnastics Experts

The study of migration in sport has tended to focus on athletes as the main supply of labour, and globalization of the late twentieth century the primary force behind it.⁹³ However, such understandings do not adequately explain the shifts experienced in gymnastics. Here, the labour was predominantly, if not exclusively in the form of coaching staff. The migratory patterns were indeed global in destination, but resulted from the newfound openness of borders after the end of the Cold War. Eastern European experts moved westward in the 1990s, spreading their technical knowledge beyond the Soviet Union, but also creating cultural clashes in their new gymnasiums.

Where once in the Soviet Union, coaches had been amongst the privileged elites, after the collapse of the Soviet Union they lost status, income and jobs. 'They all moved out of Russia because there was no way to make a living for them,' asserted Liz Chetkovich, Australian WAG High Performance Manager who employed the first Soviet coach in the West when working for the West Australian Institute of Sport. 'They were driving taxis, doing all sorts of things.'⁹⁴ So they began to take up coaching offers overseas. One of the first of this exodus was former national coach, Andrei Rodionenko, who emigrated to Australia. From him and his wife, an entire network of former Soviet coaches expanded throughout the West, including the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

While disadvantaging the former Soviet Union, the emigration of coaches caused significant improvement in gymnastics programmes worldwide. Asked about the extent of international cooperation before the breakdown of the Soviet Union, one former Soviet gymnast and FIG official recalled that in the past climate of Cold War suspicion gymnastics knowledge was a secret; nobody shared their experience or expertise. After 1991, these barriers were broken. The secrets behind the Soviets' immaculate technique, their conditioning, programming, and organization were shared with the countries to which these experts moved. Observing these movements, Fink exclaimed: 'Soviet coaches had a huge effect worldwide. There was an immediate increase in quality everywhere in the world where they were'.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, changes from the FIG contributed to this opening of potential success in gymnastics.

A New Direction for Managing Gymnastics

The development of WAG in the 1990s was affected by many of the issues that had influenced the sport in the preceding decades, despite the changed geo-political landscape. Professionalization remained a contentious issue for the traditionalist FIG, yet this decade saw the organization more willing to capitalize on commercial developments

in sport. This trend is not surprising, as the FIG – working under the IOC umbrella – sought to justify gymnastics' place in an increasingly diverse and spectator orientated Olympic environment. In this vein, the 1990s saw the foundations laid for an entirely new scoring system that would be implemented in 2006. More immediate changes preceded this overhaul though, with age rules and competition structure changed to enhance WAG's public relations in the wake of negative media attention focussed on it across the globe.⁹⁶

A decade later than the rest of the Olympic movement, in the 1990s the FIG began to modernize its economic policy. It had suffered financially from its resolute devotion to amateurism, and by the start of the decade, competition costs for the world championships nearly exceeded income. Yet competitions were the main source of income for the FIG.

We must realise, however, that the funds received from TV rights, entries, sponsors etc. must not only cover the event, but also the total FIG budget, allowing us to cover all our expenses, to build the necessary reserves for the future, to be able to support the development of gymnastics in all those countries, which have desperate need of FIG support.⁹⁷

To remedy the FIG's financial state, it undertook a number of measures. First, it allowed advertising on leotards.⁹⁸ Then, in 1996, it partnered with a sports marketing company to improve its income. International Sport and Leisure (ISL) brought television contracts worth over two million US dollars to the FIG, along with two million dollars of sponsorship deals.⁹⁹ In addition to these private commercial ventures, ISL also secured 4.6 million dollars from the IOC, and a grant to pay for the 1997 world championships in Lausanne, reaping the benefits of the IOC's earlier professionalization.¹⁰⁰ 'Since the FIG engaged in collaboration with the world-known agent ISL, its financial state has recovered well,' concluded Titov.¹⁰¹

These financial incentives continued under Titov's 1996 successor, Bruno Grandi, who emphasized not just competition, but televised competition coverage. 'We must realise that financial stability is not possible until we offer the television market a technical presentation of gymnastics more in keeping with the expectations of the public and competitive vis-à-vis other sports,' wrote Grandi in 2000.¹⁰² This also points to the need for gymnastics to continue its promotion of the spectacular, as 'other sports' (like skateboarding, snowboarding, and BMX) began to encroach on gymnastics' acrobatic and flight monopoly in the 1990s. In addition, Grandi sought to revitalize the sport from within, adding financial incentives to improve the gymnasts' performances and create 'top-level sporting entertainment'.¹⁰³ In the new millennium, cash prizes would now be awarded to medal winners.¹⁰⁴ But these economic shifts within the sport meant little if gymnastics could not reform in other ways too. With better economic policies in order, the FIG still needed to improve viewership to yield the fruits of this reform.

Titov himself had acknowledged that emerging concerns over the entertainment factor of gymnastics were extremely important in the increasingly competitive Olympic market. Preparing for the changes as early as 1992, he explained: ‘Whenever the Executive Committee is introducing new competition formats, it considers the modern tendencies of today’s sports and keeps in mind sport-technique as well as social, financial and economical aspects’.¹⁰⁵

Meanwhile the FIG was also under two conflicting pressures from the IOC: first to tighten its scoring procedures in order to meet the stringent demands of Olympic membership, and second, to improve its popularity and bring more public interest to the Games. As Titov elaborated: ‘The problem is that in the modern, dynamic world a spectator has neither time nor interest to dig into the rules and very subjective judging in the way a determined winner might. We need to make some improvements’.¹⁰⁶ To counter gymnastics’ threatened place in the Games and its falling public image, increasing gymnastics’ viewership became a key feature of FIG policy in the 1990s.

To meet these goals, Titov argued the FIG should follow the example set by other sports still under the Olympic umbrella. This meant making the sport more media-friendly through streamlining competition times, modernizing its rules, and encompassing more entertainment value, more drama.¹⁰⁷ Foreshadowing significant changes to the Code of Points. His successor, Bruno Grandi, explained:

As far as the press, sponsors and sporting public are concerned, we become important only once every four years. This is no longer enough. We must exploit our potential in terms of entertainment and cultural traditions and occupy our rightful place within the Olympic movement.¹⁰⁸

First, the ‘new life’ rule was introduced, which meant the gymnasts’ scores would be reset at the beginning of each round of competition, rather than accumulating over each day. Second, the compulsory routines were abolished to eliminate repetition throughout the competition; instead gymnasts would only perform optional routines consisting of prescribed groups of elements. However, summaries of the minutes from the FIG meetings at which these changes were decided, reveal discontent about these Executive Committee mandates and hint at the growing power of the WTC within the FIG.

In this context that Titov and Grandi mandated a new Code of Points, which was designed throughout most of this decade. It was to be universal across gender and gymnastic discipline, and anticipate future elements so the rules need never be reconsidered.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, it was designed to ensure that no person had control over the final score for a gymnast’s routine; instead the judged components were separated. However, opposition from the WTC ultimately prohibited the fruition of the post-10 Code¹¹⁰ until the FIG’s hand was forced after a judging scandal at the 2004 Olympics.

Despite such initiatives to improve gymnastics’ public image and viewership, the prevalence of young athletes in WAG remained harmful for the sport’s image. Since

1981 the minimum age limit for international competition had been stationary at 15. However, amidst growing criticism¹¹¹ of gymnastics as a sport for little girls, in April 1994 the WTC proposed moving the senior age minimum to 16 – a change that would come into effect in January 1997.¹¹² Rather than evidence of leading reform however, it is a further example of codifying an already existing trend to achieve a positive public relations outcome.

Conclusion

The Cold War between East and West coloured gymnastics' interactions and development throughout the fifty-year period examined in this research. However, the resulting rivalry also catalysed the growth of WAG, and women's engagement with sport in general. Previously the domain of men, more women began to engage in sport as 'feminine-appropriate' sports appeared and were popularized on the Olympic stage. WAG was the poster sport for this movement. As Eastern bloc nations targeted women's sport for the lack of competition their athletes would face, Western nations were forced to reassess their involvement and support of female athletes. Twenty years after its Olympic debut, WAG began to feel the effects of this newfound interest, particularly after 1972 and 1976, when Korbuto and Comaneci captured the world's imagination.

For the Eastern bloc, such successes not only proved their sporting superiority and gender equality over the West, the gymnasts were also meant to suggest the freedom of movement, liberation and joy enjoyed by their citizens, demonstrated at the quadrennial Olympic Games and later, on tours. However, in the changing economic context of elite sport, the Australian tour illuminated problematic communication between national and international governing bodies of gymnastics and the IOC. But just as sport was used to aid in achieving détente, it was also used as a weapon in the following decade when two subsequent Olympic Games were boycotted.

The problems surrounding the Games highlight the importance of viewing the IOC and FIG as INGOS, facilitating relations between the superpowers, and globalizing the sport. Before the 1980s, the Olympic Games were one of the few sites where the powers engaged directly with one another. After the boycotts the IOC increased its political presence, overseeing negotiations for cooperation through sport. In this way the IOC acted not only as a political entity, but also as the leader of world sport, including gymnastics. As this research has shown, many of the changes enforced on WAG by the FIG were actually directives of the IOC. The IOC, constantly threatening gymnastics' place in the Olympics, had much sway over the smaller, weaker FIG. Concurrently, beneath the FIG were gymnastics' practitioners: coaches and gymnasts who led the sport and forced the FIG to respond to the changes they introduced. It becomes clear that throughout this time, the FIG struggled to control the sport between the conflicting influences from above and below.

Nonetheless, when the West began to professionalize, economic opportunities grew and simultaneously so did their gymnastic success. In the aftermath of the Cold War, opportunities in the former Eastern bloc dried up, and many coaches went West in search of better economic prospects. Their movement reflected wider global mobility as a result of the end of the Cold War and improved communication networks. As a result, many Western countries saw marked improvements in their gymnastics abilities, albeit in an increasingly competitive field. Meanwhile, the FIG too redirected its policy based on economic motivations in the 1990s, seeking to increase its viewership and revenue to retain its Olympic position.¹¹³ While the sport arguably professionalized in this decade, its greatest change developed in the 1990s was halted until 2006, when an entirely new scoring system was introduced.

Two major suggestions for further research from an international perspective should be borne in mind. First is to expand the history of gymnastics beyond WAG's borders to include MAG and Rhythmic, which have both received even less attention than WAG. Second, this research has suggested the IOC's promotion of women's sports began much earlier than foreseen. While it is not surprising that gymnastics received such attention in terms of women's sport, it does beg further questioning of the IOC's influence on the gender of other, less traditionally feminine sports, for example events like boxing or weightlifting which were only added to the Olympic roster for women as recently as 2000. In this respect, I hope to have demonstrated how the study of a particular sport like WAG can have implications for the wider discipline of history, offering deeper insight into the intricate relationships between the IOC and its member federations, and illuminating the influence of gender and politics on international sports policy.

Notes

¹ Gertrud Pfister, ed. *Gymnastics, a Transatlantic Movement: From Europe to America*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013).

² Countess Jadwiga Zamoyska (WTC President), 'Xxiie International Session of Delegates of the Gymnastics Federations, Brussels, 18-19 July 1935,' 1935, in *Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): Meetings and reports 1935-1979: D-RM02-GYMNA/002*, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).

³ 144 medals were available over this period, with each Olympics holding the possibility of winning: one medal available in the team competition, three medals in the All-Around competition, three medals in each of the four apparatus until 1972 and from 1976 onwards, two medals in each of the four apparatus. This gave the Soviet Union a success rate of 64 per cent. 'Official Olympic Games Results,' International Olympic Committee, <http://www.olympic.org/olympic-results>.

⁴ Heather L. Dichter, 'Diplomatic and International History: Athletes and Ambassadors,' *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 32, no. 15 (2015).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Matthew Taylor, 'Editorial – Sport, Transnationalism, and Global History,' *Journal of Global History*, 8, no. 2 (2013) and Paul Darby, 'Africa and the “World” Cup: F.I.F.A. Politics, Eurocentrism and Resistance,' *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 22, no. 5 (2005).

⁶ Although I was able to access these records at the FIG, there are rumoured to be further unpublished archives held at the previous headquarters in Moutier, which the FIG is reluctant to open to researchers.

⁷ Robert Edelman, *Serious Fun: A History of Spectator Sports in the U.S.S.R.*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁸ See for example, Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews, eds. *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2007).

⁹ Indeed, there have been few socio-cultural studies of WAG at all, and most of the existing works are not concerned with the past. Notable exceptions have formed a foundation for this research, particularly Natalie Barker-Ruchti, *Women's Artistic Gymnastics: An Auto-Ethnographic Journey*, (Basel, Switzerland: Edition Gesowip, 2011) and Kerr, Roslyn. 'The Evolution of Women's Artistic Gymnastics since 1952.' (Master's thesis), University of Sydney, 2003.

¹⁰ Mitch Bowmile, 'Swimming Set to Receive Second Highest I.O.C. Funding among All Olympic Sports,' *SwimSwam*, 25 April 2015, <http://swimswam.com/swimming-set-to-receive-second-highest-ioc-funding-among-all-olympic-sports/>.

¹¹ Such was Latynina's dominance across all apparatus at successive Olympics that she held the record for most Olympic medals at 18 for nearly 50 years until she was finally surpassed by American Michael Phelps in 2012.

¹² Hardy Fink, interviewed by Georgia Cervin, (Nanning, China), 5 October 2014.

¹³ Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sports*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), 131.

¹⁴ Vertinsky, Patricia. 'Exercise, Physical Capability, and the Eternally Wounded Woman in Late Nineteenth Century North America.' *Journal of Sport History*, 14, no. 1 (1987), 8.

¹⁵ Janet Woolum, *Outstanding Women Athletes: Who They Are and How They Influenced Sports in America*, (Phoenix, Arizona: Oryx Press, 1998), 8-20; and Richard C. Bell, 'A History of Women in Sport Prior to Title IX,' *The Sport Journal*, (2008), and Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sport*, 1st ed. (London: Taylor and Francis, 1994), 179, and Tess Kay, 'Sport and Gender,' in *Sport and Society: A Student Introduction*, ed. Barrie Houlihan, (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 99.

¹⁶ Letter to Charles Thoeni (FIG Secretary General), 26 May 1953, in *Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): Correspondence 1906-1959, SD3- Correspondence 1950-1955: D-RM02-GYMNA/003*, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).

¹⁷ Charles Thoeni (FIG Secretary General), Letter to Baron Eric von Frenckell, 2 November 1953, in *Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): Correspondence 1906-1959, SD3- Correspondence 1950-1955: D-RM02-GYMNA/003*, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).

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- ¹⁸ Barker-Ruchti, Natalie. 'Ballerinas and Pixies: A Genealogy of the Changing Female Gymnastics Body.' *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 26, no. 1 (01 January 2009), 47. Barker-Ruchti explores such performances and bodies through the likes of the sexually mature, Czechoslovakian gymnast Vera Caslavka, who was over 20 year of age when she won her Olympic titles, in comparison to later, sexually immature and younger gymnasts such as Korbut.
- ¹⁹ Danzig, 'Russia Far Ahead of 68 Other Nations as Olympic Games End in Melbourne.'
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ 'Minutes of the 49th I.O.C. Session: Mexico City, 17th - 21st April 1953,' Minutes to Members of the IOC, 1953, in IOC Archives- sessions and executive committee: CIO SESS-049ES-PV, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre). This is the first example of gymnastics being suggested as a way to reduce the Games.
- ²⁴ 'Minutes of the Copenhagen Session, 15, 16, 17 May 1950,' Minutes to Members of the IOC, 1950, in IOC Archives- sessions and executive committee: CIO SESS-045ES-PV, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).
- ²⁵ Avery Brundage (IOC President), Letter to Count Goblet D'Alveilla (FIG President), 4 June 1954, in Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): Correspondence 1906-1959, SD3- Correspondence 1950-1955: D-RM02-GYMNA/003, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre). Although this quotations speaks of men, these policies would affect both MAG and WAG. Masculine was the default gender when writing about athletes at this time.
- ²⁶ Charles Thoeni (FIG President), Ginanni (FIG Vice President), Pierre Hentges (MTC President), and Berthe Villancher (WTC President), Letter to Avery Brundage (IOC President), 10 April 1958, in Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): Correspondence 1906-1959, SD4- Correspondence 1956-1959: D-RM02-GYMNA/003, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).
- ²⁷ Avery Brundage (IOC President), Letter to Charles Thoeni (FIG President), 28 June 1958, in Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): Correspondence 1906-1959, SD4- Correspondence 1956-1959: D-RM02-GYMNA/003, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).
- ²⁸ Charles Thoeni (FIG President), Letter to Avery Brundage (IOC President), 10 June 1959, in Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): Correspondence 1906-1959, SD4- Correspondence 1956-1959: D-RM02-GYMNA/003, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).
- ²⁹ Charles Thoeni (FIG General Secretary), Letter to Avery Brundage (IOC President), 16 April 1956, in Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): Correspondence 1906-1959, SD4- Correspondence 1956-1959: D-RM02-GYMNA/003, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Charles Thoeni (FIG General Secretary), Letter to Otto Mayer (IOC Chancellor), 20 June 1956, in Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): Correspondence 1906-1959, SD4-

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- Correspondence 1956-1959: D-RM02-GYMNA/003, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).
- ³² Charles Thoeni (FIG President), Letter to Avery Brundage (IOC President) and Executive Committee Members of the IOC, 13 October 1956, in Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): Correspondence 1906-1959, SD4- Correspondence 1956-1959: D-RM02-GYMNA/003, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).
- ³³ Olympic Committee of the USSR, Alexei Romanov, and Konstantin Andrianov, Letter to Otto Mayer (IOC Chancellor), 20 December 1957, in Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): Correspondence 1906-1959, SD4- Correspondence 1956-1959: D-RM02-GYMNA/003, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).
- ³⁴ Georgia Cervin, 'Gymnasts Are Not Merely Circus Phenomena: Influences on the Development of Women's Artistic Gymnastics During the 1970s.' *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 32, no. 16 (2015): 1929-1946.
- ³⁵ Berthe Villancher, 'Preparations for the Munich Olympics,' in FIG Bulletin, vol. 69, (June 1971).
- ³⁶ Villancher, 'Extract from the Minutes of the General Assembly Held on 3rd October, 1971, Madrid: 4. Reports, C) President of T.C.W.,' in FIG Bulletin, vol. 71, (December 1971): 51-52.
- ³⁷ Barker-Ruchti, 'Ballerinas and Pixies,' 47. Barker-Ruchti explores such performances and bodies through the likes of the sexually mature, Czechoslovakian gymnast Vera Caslavka, who was over 20 year of age when she won her Olympic titles, in comparison to later, sexually immature and younger gymnasts such as Korbut.
- ³⁸ Arpad Csanadi (Honorary IOC Sports Director), '84th Session of the I.O.C. In Baden-Baden,' Letter to Yuri Titov (FIG President), 7 December 1981, in International Gymnastics Federation: Correspondence 1977-1981, SD5 1981: D-RM02-GYMNA/005, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).
- ³⁹ However, at the World Championships in the year before the Olympic Games, a gymnast could be 14, in anticipation of her qualifying to compete at 15 at the upcoming Games. Max Bangerter (FIG Secretary General), 'Age Limit of Gymnasts,' Letter to Bernard Schneider (Sports Department of the IOC), 9 June 1987, in International Gymnastics Federation: Correspondence 1985-1988, SD3 1987-1988: D-RM02-GYMNA/008, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).
- ⁴⁰ Avery Brundage (IOC President), 'Gymnast John Crosby Wins 8 Medals at Pan American Games,' Letter to Arthur Gander (FIG President), 26 October 1971, in International Gymnastics Federation: Correspondence 1960-1976, SD4 1971-1974: D-RM02-GYMNA/004, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).
- ⁴¹ Letter to Otto Mayer (IOC Chancellor), 25 January 1961, in Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG): Correspondence 1960-1976, SD1- 1960-1961: D-RM02-GYMNA/004, (Lausanne, Switzerland: Olympic Studies Centre).
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