SHAPING FOR GYMNASTICS

1) SHORT CUTS
* One of the biggest mistakes made when trying to develop quality athletes in the sport of gymnastics is thinking that there is a magical short cut to the process. There is no such thing!
* Another mistake is expecting athletes to attain a high degree of proficiency on an event when they do not have the tools to do so. Most often it is the inability to obtain, maintain or transition to and from the desired shapes that creates the technical or execution errors.
* The solution, the only solution is to meticulously take care when developing the basic shapes AND never stop reviewing them.

2) THE DVD
* This DVD will cover a multitude of shaping drills and exercises. This is a perfect learning aid for developmental and compulsory level coaches. Getting the message across that PROPER SHAPES and PROPER CONDITIONING is the key to success is a never ending battle with young coaches chomping at the bit to produce upper level gymnastics.
* Please pay particular attention to the demand for excellence and the consistency throughout the DVD. I once learned a long time ago that what you say is important BUT HOW OFTEN you say it is what really drives the message home.

3) EXECUTION DEMANDS
* Whether it be during your normal conditioning rotations, event complexes or drill learning, EXECUTION has to be the priority from day one. Allowing athletes to slop through their conditioning, complexes or drills simply creates a level of expectation that do so is acceptable.
* Athletes will deliver not only what you expect but what you ACCEPT.

4) CORE IS KEY
* In gymnastics core strength is key to maintaining any credible body shape. You can have monster upper or lower body strength but if the core is weak you will have issues.
* Core doesn’t simply mean HOLLOW SHAPES or abdominal strength. Often overlooked in the stabilizing importance of the Obliques/Sides and Back, Gluds and Hamstrings.
* Regardless of the exercise, teaching “tight core” should be an emphasis. (This includes, Belly In, Butt Tight, Hips Under, Upper Thighs squeezing)

5) INCREASING INTENSITY
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* Becoming stronger is all about adapting to a stimulus (resistance). In order to promote proper shaping it is important that SHAPE takes priority over resistance. As the SHAPE becomes refined is when added resistance is needed to increase strength development.
* Using too much weight or intense angles too soon will hamper shape development.
* The Intensity of each exercise can always be increased by adding weight, increasing speed, range of motion, increasing the angle, Slow lowering.
* Coaches should seek to increase the resistance but never at the expense of a proper shape.

6) CHEST IN, RIBS IN, HIPS UNDER, BUTT TIGHT, HEAD NEUTRAL, SHOULDERS ROUNDED, TOES POINTED, THIGHS SQUEEZING.
* These are all keys that present in virtually all shaping drills.
* Coaches who expect to produce great athletes are consistent in their demands for these keys.

7) TRAINING AIDS
* Tubing and Theraband- These are resistance rubber bands. The can provide a way to increase resistance through a range of motion and thus relate very well to the needs of Uneven Bars. The issue with tubing exercises is that it is fairly easy to “CHEAT” by allow too little tension during the exercise. YOU GET OUT OF IT ....WHAT YOU PUT INTO IT!
* Sliders- These are basically padded plastic furniture movers that slide easily across the floor. The lack of friction makes the athlete use more of their strength to control the movements. These are excellent for shape development.
* Ball- Exercise balls normally used for injury rehab provide additional variations for shaping drills and specifically become useful for those requiring or emphasizing static or dynamic balance.
* Sling or Kip Machine- This is an inexpensive yet multi-dimensional device that allows for skills and shaping through a range of motion. We use cargo straps (found at any local hardware) rather than the more expensive “kip machines” found in gymnastics magazines.
* Roller Wheel- Basically this is a wheel on a stick and excellent for kipping drills and core strength development.

8) DAILY COMPLEXES
* Each day starts with a complex that emphasizes a certain skill set needed for Uneven Bars (Casting, Kipping, Swinging). All of the complexes have shaping drills and exercises contained within.
* Complexes alternate every other day and are changed every 6-8 weeks to avoid monotony and stagnation.

9) COMPULSORY CONDITIONING
* Due to the limited amount of training time that most compulsory/developmental athletes are exposed to, the conditioning programs must be efficient.
* Spending time on detailed peaking plans, we choose to focus on core simple exercises, year round. In other words, with the exception of a periodic rest or tapering for a MAJOR competition, our compulsory level athletes CONDITION, CONDITION, CONDITION!

10) CONCEPTS
* Our Compulsory Level Conditioning program incorporates the same concepts that are used within our Optional Level Conditioning Program, YET hones them into a more efficient and usable system.
* Increase the Expectations (enforce the highest of standards)
* Quality vs Quantity (to enforce proper form and execution)
* Challenges and adaptation (to foster consistent strength gain)
* Proper Shapes and Mechanics (for proper alignment and injury prevention)
* All Encompassing program (for muscle balance and joint support)
* 25% Rule- (25% of total workout time dedicated to physical abilities enhancement)

11) THE PROGRAM
* 3-4 Days per week
* 4 Body Parts (Arms, Legs, Core, Back/HamString/Calves)
* 5 Exercises for each Body Part
* 4 Levels of Intensity for each Body Part (each building on the previous Level)
* 30 Minute Conditioning Rotation covers 2-3 Parts
* The Core, Back/Hamstring/Calves incorporated into the warm up/idle time stations
* Athletes progressed individually as needed (challenged) But most of the time they stay together as a group doing the same exercises.
* It is possible for some members of the group to be on Level 4 while others are at Level 3 etc. BUT this caters to the needs of the individual rather than holding some members back due to weaknesses of “the group”.
* 2 “Phases” for variety (no issue with creating 3 or 4 lists) provided the exercises remain simplistic in nature so that the focus is on execution and not on complexity.