Uneven Bars: Intermediate/Advanced Bars

1) Back Giants-

An important thing to remember is that FEAR will be an initial issue when dealing with giants. Progressing to soon could result in “peeling off the bar” (which happens even when all progressions for readiness are followed). Peeling is a feeling that most kids will NOT WANT to repeat and can lead to road blocks in the learning process. BE CAREFUL to make sure your athlete is physically and mentally ready to proceed. Giants are introduced at advanced level 5 but more commonly at level 6 and accomplished prior to moving to level 7.

A) Progressions
- Cover all physical preparation bases
- Straight body falls on a floor bar
- Straight body falls with the coach catching at horizontal and correcting the shapes.
- Strap giants
- Tap swing to handstand with a spot
- Missed giant recovery- What to do when they don’t make it over-
  Pirouette OFF
- Single rail giants with a wrist spot by a “strong coach”
- Single rail giants over a foam pit
- Single rail giants past a “break away” rope or band

B) 5 point Technique-
- Straight body fall- Many kids want to break angles (shoulders or hips) or “Sag” (lower back) in order to SLOW the downswing. The goal is to maintain a straight, tight hollow position until horizontal (taller kids may have to bend earlier).
- Round or “scoop” by the low bar (distance from the bar will depend on the setting and the height of the gymnast)
- Relax to a hyperextension- as the body passes the low bar, relax the hollow shape to a hyperextended hip position with the head neutral. The degree of hyperextension will be determined by a) coach preference b) athlete strength and quickness c) bar setting and d) athlete size
- Snap to a hollow “Levering Action”- From the hyper-extended shape kick your feet upward to a regain the hollow shape while the head remains neutral.
• Late wrist shift to handstand- As the feet approach the handstand phase and vertical plane, begin to shift the wrists to support phase. A common error here is to let the hips open becoming the first part of the body to pass through vertical... the feet should be first!

3) PIROUETTES-

Pirouettes and giants basically are the core of the LEVEL 8 bar routine. The pirouetting action is a weight transfer and body alignment skill. These 2 ingredients are essential to success.

A) Progressions-

• Cover all related handstand progressions and body alignment preparation
• Wall handstands with weight shift
• Single arm handstands for alignment, balance and strength development
• Floor bar kick change, kick change pirouette
• Box Pirouettes on the floor ( 4 hand change)
• Line Pirouettes on the floor ( 2 hand change)
• Press Pirouette- representing the shape coming from a straddle up cast
• Planche Pirouette- representing the shape coming from a straight cast
• Kip Early Change
• Single Arm Pirouette Drill
• Kip Cast to handstand and HOLD for 2-3-4 seconds to find the balance

4) FRONT GIANTS

Front giants are normally introduced after the core level 8 routine is accomplished as a progression to level 9. Although bent hip front giants are actually somewhat simple technically, they do present the possibility for serious injury (peeling).

A) Progressions-

• Cover all physical preparation bases
• Straight body drops to a skill cushion
• Straight body drops on a low bar with a coach catching at horizontal
• Floor bar barrel rolls to simulate the final phase (pull shoulders over the bar, lift the hips over the shoulders, straddle and press to handstand0
• Strap bar giants
• Spotted ¾ Front Giants with the emphasis on a straight body fall, hip lift and WRIST SHIFT.
B) Technique-
* Cast to a handstand and fall to horizontal with the tight stretched body, head neutral
  * Round by the low bar (or where a low bar would be)
  * Drive the heels through the third quarter of swing
  * Begin to pull down on the bar while lifting the hips upward
  * As the shoulders progress over the bar, shift the wrist to the top of the bar and straddle press to handstand.

5) Blinds-
  Determining the proper direction in which to turn is often confusing and misunderstood. Due to my belief that I want my athletes finishing on their dominant arm for the final half turn for a BLIND FULL, I have all gymnasts turn towards the opposite hand. Although this does work well, it does present the argument that the gymnast is actually “Twisting” in the opposite direction from normal (that is if you use the RIGHT ROUND OFF/RIGHT TWIST, LEFT ROUND OFF/LEFT TWIST philosophy). I feel the trade off for being able to finish on your dominant arm (especially with the deductions emphasizing finishing in handstand on all pirouetting) is worth it.

A) Twist Direction- Basically, if you round off left, you will be a left pirouette and therefore you would turn to the right (look under the right arm) on the initial half turn of the blind.

B) Drills-
  • Back Extension ½ pirouette- Execute a good tight body back extension. Turn the toes in the direction of the intended blind while looking under that arm. Push off the opposite arm and continue looking under the support arm while transferring the weight in the direction of the turn. Snap the hips around.
  • Back Extension Full pirouette-
  • Candle Extension pirouette- On the floor with or without a floor bar lever up to a hollow candle position. With the assistance of a spotter grabbing the thighs, turn the toes and hips in the direction of the turn. 1-2-3, extend from the candle position towards a handstand with the spotter lifting. Drive the head under the support arm and execute a ½ or full pirouette.
  • Tumble Trak Bars- Tumble trak makes a bar that connects to the frame. Using this bar, kick to a handstand and fall forward to a candle shape. Using the bounce of the bed, extend back up to a handstand (similar to a back extension). As the body extends from the hollow shape, turn the toes and hips
in the direction of the turn, look under the support arm, transfer the weight over the support arm and execute the turn.

- Floor Bar Blinds- On a long floor bar with the assistance of a spotter, execute a series of consecutive blind pirouettes.
- Wall Blinds- With or without a floor bar, kick up to handstand using a wall as your spotter. Look under the support arm, transfer the weight and execute the turn.
- Single Arm Balances or Pirouettes- With the assistance of a spotter or with the use of a wall, kick to a handstand. Place your dominant hand by your side and center your weight over the support arm. Find the alignment. Either hold this position or execute a series of blinds on one arm.

C) Technique-

- Early Blinds- These can work well but usually present with a rhythm problem or more commonly a leg separation due to the turn coming at a time when there are the most opposing forces present.
- Late Blinds- Take longer to teach but are more appealing in my opinion. After the body passes through a strong tap swing, hold the hollow shape through the 4th quarter of swing. Upon approaching the handstand, turn the toes and hips in the direction of the turn, look under the support arm, extend from the hollow shape using this extension to transfer weight over the support arm, and to initiate the blinding action.

6) Stalders and Endos

A) Back Stalders- A very attractive skill and opens the door to some very creative uneven bar work. With the requirement of the single bar circling element, this skill will see a resurgence in popularity.

- Drills-
  - Monkey Circles- starts the idea of circling the bar
  - Clear Hips- Very few athletes learn a good Stalder without first learning a proper clear hip.
  - Bar Pancakes- hang on the bar, straddle the legs and pull them to the shoulders. This should be done as a warm up each time Stalders are trained as it stretches the related muscles.
  - Floor Bar Late Drops- Set up a floor bar into a skill cushion. Kick to a handstand, fall slighty and then pike the legs towards the bar. Arrive in a pancake position on the mat with the toes on the bar, head down, arms extended.
  - Pressing Action- Good stalders require the ability to do a good pressing action. Some succeed without it but this is rare. Straddle press to handstands in sets of
5-10, Handstand forward straddle roll press to handstand and floor bar presses or hip lifts are excellent strengthening drills for this skill.

- **Toe Shoots** - Toe shoot to handstands are a great lead up to stalders, although not necessarily easier.

- **Stalder Compressions** - From a stand on a spotting block grab the bar in a rounded, hollow body position. Jump up, pike towards the bar and then straddle very late to arrive in a Stalder pancake hanging on the bar. Compress this position and rock several times trying to maintain the compression.

- **Stalder Circles** - From a cast, with the assistance of a spotter at first, execute a late drop into the stalder compression BUT continuing the circle around the bar. Use a late wrist shift as your return to straddle support. Do these in series of 3-5.

- **Strap Stalders** - An excellent way to increase the numbers.

- **Technique** - From a handstand fall stretched as long as possible. Start piking towards the bar towards the completion of the first quarter of swing. As the body passes into the second quarter of swing, start the straddle while continuing to push the hips (center of Gravity) away from the bar. Turn over backwards into the stalder compression. Hold the pancake shape and lead with the hips through the 3rd quarter of swing. Swing the hips to handstand through the 4th quarter of swing being sure NOT TO open the shoulder angle or shift the wrists too soon.

**B) Endos (Front Stalders)**

- **Drills** - On a floor bar with a skill cushion kick to handstand. Fall towards your back, at the end of the first quarter of swing straddle the legs. Arrive on the mat in a compressed straddled position.

- **Presses** - See above presses but use a reverse grip.

- **Endo Circles** - From a cast forward over the bar, straddle the legs and drop into an Endo compression circle. Use a spotter at first.

**7) Shapashnikova** - A clear hip starting on the low bar with a release to the high bar using a hechting action.

- **Drills** -
  - **Strong, Consistent Clear Hip**
  - **Clear Hip to Vertical Hyper-Extension**
  - **Clear Hip Release to Flat Fall** - With the assistance of a spotter grabbing the thighs of a well executed clear hip, pass through the shoulder hyper, with a release and fall to a flat back position into a soft mat. Learning to fall is a key to developing confidence. If they are concerned about landing improperly, they will generally hold back on the swing to control the fall.

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8) **Toe Up to High**
   The biggest mistake made here is allowing the hips to open upon release of the low bar, thus resulting in a dead hang. The secret is to allow the hips to rise, suddenly stop which creates a transfer of momentum and allows the chest to sit up towards the high bar. This often resembles a floor Shoshanova.
   Drills:
   - Toe shoot to belly onto stacked mats.
   - Toe shoot to flat belly drop onto a floor level resi

9) **Wiler** – This is a reverse clear hip. Begin in a handstand in reverse grip, fall slightly before lowering the thighs to the bar, pull the bar against the thigh to prevent loosing the shape of the circle, then swing to a straight arm press handstand.
   Drills:
   - Front hip circles in reverse grip
   - Reverse grip planche presses
   - Straight arm pulls with weight