

Written by dwight normile

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The chalk has settled, gym enrollments are booming, and the Fierce Five — who are now Four, after **McKayla Maroney** suffered a broken leg — are touring the land and soaking up the love they earned with their Olympic success. So while the rest of the gymnastics world rejuvenates, here are a few thoughts on the past few months.

## TIE-BREAKER BROKEN

Those pesky tied results in London really threw a wrench into things, didn't they? Just think about how happy everyone would have been had they just let the scores stand. As we reported in our pre-Olympic issue of IG, ties were indeed possible in London.

"In the past, if we would have used all possibilities to break the tie, we could have ended up with a tie anyway, even at the Olympics," said **Nellie Kim**, FIG-WTC President. "It just did not happen because there were (so) many steps to break the tie. And now, with the new system (for London), there may be a tie."

The tie-breaker that bugged me the most was the one between **Alexandra Raisman** and **Aliya Mustafina**

, who tied for third all-around with 59.566. At its very core, the all-around is a four-event test of a gymnast's abilities; a quadrathlon (for women), if you will. Irrefutably, the women's all-around is vault, bars, beam and floor. No ifs, ands or drop-the-lowest-score-and-add-the-remaining-three. The Olympic all-around final, the most important women's individual competition that exists, suddenly became the Arthur Gander Memorial.

By adding the top *three* scores of Mustafina and Raisman, the all-around bronze, or at least three-quarters of it, went to the former.

My argument concerning this result has nothing to do with comparing the relative virtues of the tied gymnasts. Personally, I prefer Mustafina's style of gymnastics but respect Raisman's competitive consistency. And there certainly are two ways to look at dropping the lowest score. Mustafina was actually rewarded for bombing beam worse than Raisman did. You could even say that she got the medal because she actually *fell* off an apparatus, even though Raisman beat Mustafina handily on three of four events.

But Mustafina supporters can say that she also earned the highest mark, a 16.10 on bars (which was only 0.20 higher than Raisman's vault score). Her 13.633 on beam, however, was

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significantly lower than *any* of Raisman's four scores. Pick your poison.

Since it was the all-around competition, the first "step" in the tie-breaking procedure should have been obvious: Use the qualification scores to break the tie. In Competition I, Raisman ranked second with 60.391, Mustafina fifth with 59.966. Case closed.

While that is not the perfect solution — what is? — it's much more fair than giving a gymnast a mulligan on one event. You might as well pick their names out of a hat. Imagine the resulting backlash had Raisman and Mustafina tied for the gold!

Blame the IOC for pressuring the FIG to avoid ties in London. The FIG honors tied results in world championships, which is how it should be.

"The issue of how to resolve "dead-heat" situations has long given rise to debate, but the FIG has taken a firm position and chosen to adhere to the principle of equal ranking," wrote **Bruno Grandi** in his September "Letter from the (FIG) President."

## **MCKAYLA MARONEY**

The 2011 world vault champion has had a string of bad luck, hasn't she? She leads the U.S. team in the dubious category of being carted out of an arena this year.

The first was at Visa championships in St. Louis, where she balked on a 3.5 twist and slammed onto her back. The second was last week during the Ontario, Calif., stop of the Kellogg's Tour of Gymnastics Champions. She broke her left tibia on a layout flyaway off bars. How can anyone break their leg on a simple dismount like that? It's easy when you're performing in an unfamiliar setting with the strobe effects of laser lighting. I was surprised she was doing anything remotely challenging on bars in the first place, since it's her weak event. I would have kept it really simple — and definitely no dismounts. Who is advising this girl?

In between those two injuries, Maroney couldn't come up with the goods in the Olympic apparatus finals when she crashed her second vault. And that was under ideal lighting conditions. She had to have been the unhappiest silver medalist in London.

Back to the Kellogg's tour, **Alexandra Raisman** followed Maroney with her own leg(s) injury when she peeled off the same set of bars. Thank goodness they were not using a 3-up-3-count format. It looked like Raisman had to improvise on the low bar when she went the wrong way on a handstand, and was simply tired by the time she got to the Maloney. (And the bar workers had just finished a group dance number on floor.) She went for it but slipped off and landed on her belly. Her skidding knees missed the landing mat. Ouch. Fortunately, Raisman was not seriously injured.