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*Competitive Gymnastic Coaches and Judges Embrace TAGteach.*

By Theresa McKeon

I maintained a guarded enthusiasm during my presentation to coaches, judges and gymnastic school owners at the 2004 North Carolina State Gymnastics Congress.

Competitive gymnastic coaches are not known (and wisely so) for carelessly jumping into new programs that claim to make learning skills faster or easier. So when this usually staunch community lit up and clamored for more, I knew the *TAGteach* program had proved its merit.

After the session, one coach felt the need to explain why he had walked out of the presentation after only 15 minutes. "I couldn't stand it anymore." Ouch, not something a presenter wants to hear. Prepared for the worst, I let the coach continue.

"My brain was flooded with ideas and I just had to try it right away. I found one of the gymnasts I brought to the congress as a demonstrator and had her jump up on a beam. I tagged for a skill that had been escaping her for months. Can I tell you she got it in less than five minutes! I just thought you should know...it works!"

The North Carolina State USAG chairman and event organizer, Jennie Adams was thrilled with the presentation. She was anxious to present the information and press packet to the regional judging technical director and to get the presentation on the schedule for the Regional and National Congress (primary education and information vehicles for the sport of gymnastics).

Ms. Adams, also a middle school math teacher, was just as excited to try her 'thousands' of ideas with her math students.

Apparently there were others eager to use this newfound information.

At the conclusion of the presentation, attendees received a *TAGteach* clicker and headed off to the next session; a discussion of proper alignment and technique for advanced tumbling. The speaker used a live gymnast to pinpoint exact body position needed to perform skills properly. She began molding the gymnast's body into place, when both were startled by a flurry of clickers going off. No one had said anything, but the coaches still had the clickers in their hands, recognized the athlete's move to the proper position and marked it with their clickers. There was a burst of laughter and nods of recognition as everyone joined in on this impromptu Aha! moment.

Later in the day, two young coaches pulled me aside. It was apparently a clandestine meeting as they were speaking softly and keeping a watchful eye. "We just want you to know that we wish we had been coached with TAGteach. If we had, we probably would have kept competing longer. Right now we only coach pre-team, but you can bet that the kids we coach will learn like this...with positive reinforcement and single pieces to concentrate on. We really like that." They took a second to look at each and then at me. "We could be the generation of coaches that makes gymnastics..." they seemed a bit in awe of themselves but continued, "That makes gymnastics even better".

...I agreed.