

Major Improvements for Trampolining Competitions in 2008/2009



2008 will be a big year for competitive trampolining in the UK. Today's competition structure, which was introduced in a huge change during 1993/94 to solve problems of the late 1980s, will be replaced by a new scheme designed for the 21st century.

For the transition, coaches and performers will be given freedom and responsibility to choose their appropriate starting point in the new system, within guidelines.

This means coaches will be able to choose the right level in the system for their performer's development. Over the course of the transition year, people who have started in the wrong level will gradually be moved into the correct level, and the final group sizes gradually achieved.

What Exactly Will Be Changing?

In October 2008, the existing eight Grades will be replaced along with the current matrix of 23 routines, and 45 different qualification and relegation marks for different age groups.

In their place will be nine standard levels, leading from beginner to international. Performers will progress through them at their own pace, regardless of age.

The scheme is designed around the career of the modern trampolinist. Today's future world champions are unlikely to hit their peak for twenty years, and their career may last thirty years.

Tomorrow's champion and tomorrow's enthusiastic participant will begin with the same developmental stages, although the champion may progress more quickly and further. Our future champion, aged six today, has twenty years of development ahead of them to reach their peak in their mid twenties, and up to another fifteen years to retirement.

Elite and recreational performers lose out when they are encouraged to miss out or rush key stages in their development in pursuit of early competitive titles.

The competition structure is built around the LTAD (Long Term Athlete Development) stages. To find out more about LTAD, download the "LTAD Gymnastics Leaflet" from the BG website and refer to the new club coach manual (in press). Trampoline is shortly to release its own adapted version of this model.

Each of these stages has its own distinctive flavour. *FIG A* is provided for our top athletes, and will provide an authentic experience of pressure and practice to prepare for world events during the top stages of the *Training to Win* stage. This level will follow FIG (Federation of International Gymnastics) rules and regulations.

FIG B, *National C* and *Home Nation/Regional D* will provide gradual development with some pressure and gradual progression: performers move from level to level as their ranking changes.

The lower stages provide gradual progression, guided by requirements that will allow all performers around the country to enjoy the development pathways that have proven most successful in recent years. Focus is on technique and skill development, with a traditional competition format retained to allow everyone the opportunity to experience competition. As at present, clubs will have the option to operate the first levels within the club.

Where Will I Start?

This all depends where you finish 2008.

Grade 1 performers are likely to compete in either: *FIG A*, *FIG B*, or *National C*.

Grade 2 performers are likely to compete in either: *National C* or *Home Nation/Regional D*.

Grade 3 performers are likely to compete in either: *Home Nation/Regional D*, *Regional E* or *Regional F*.

Coaches and Performers will choose the level at which to start the new season, based on the Grade in which they finish the 2008 season (after any qualification or downgrade achieved during the season).

To help us plan numbers, you and your coach must tell us which level you intend to start at no later than September 2008.

Coaches should think in terms of the new philosophy that replaces age-banded 'Grades' with gradual introduction to pressure, in line with each performer's developmental stage. Most younger competitors will be best starting in the earlier levels, allowing scope for promotion as they develop.

Performers who enter at the wrong level will be gradually redistributed during the season by the rolling promotion and relegations.

Grade after 2008	Suggested Start Point:
Men/Ladies	<i>FIG A</i> or <i>FIG B</i>
Grade 1 (over 13)	<i>FIG B</i> , <i>National C</i> or <i>Home Nation/Regional D</i>
Grade 1 (under 13)	<i>National C</i> or <i>Home Nation/Regional D</i>
Grade 2 (over 11)	<i>National C</i> , <i>Home Nation/Regional D</i> or <i>Regional E</i>
Grade 2 (under 11)	<i>Home Nation/Regional D</i> or <i>Regional E</i>
Grade 3	<i>Home Nation/Regional D</i> , <i>Regional E</i> or <i>Regional F</i>
All other competitors	<i>Regional F</i> , <i>Regional G</i> , <i>Club H</i> or <i>Club I</i> .

	U9	U11	U13	U15	U17	U19	O19
Men's/Ladies					FIG A		
Grade 1	Home Nation/Regional D		National C		FIG B		
Grade 2	Regional E			Home N/Reg D		National C	
Grade 3	Regional F		Regional E			Home Nation/Regional D	
Grade 4	Regional G					Regional F	
Grade 5	Club H					Regional G	
Grade 6	Club I						

Where is my equivalent set routine?

All competitions will take place during a season from late winter to early summer. They will alternate around every three weeks between regional events and national events (although the transition year may look slightly different).

FIG A, *FIG B* and *National C* will take place together at spectacular gala events, bringing all levels together and allowing performers at early developmental stages to learn from more advanced competitors, and to get a feel for the next level before trialling at it.

These gala weekends will, wherever possible, include both DMT (Double Mini Trampoline) and Synchronised Trampoline. Details on these events will be released later.

A New Logbook to Help Performers Develop

It is our intention to produce a logbook that will be introduced to guide coaches and performers through the skills and practices they may use to prepare at each level.

It has been distilled from successful practice around the country, and it may also provide useful guidance if you are unsure what level to start a performer in October 2008.

Once published it will be made available for download from www.bg-coaches.org, together with other resources (e.g. video) to help both coaches and competitors prepare.

So What Does it all Mean?

Soon we will all begin to see a new view of how competitive trampolinists can develop, over their whole career.

Performers will travel a smooth path from beginner to Olympian, on a route guided through each stage of development. Each individual will advance from stage to stage at the time *they* are ready.

Questions

Detail is being made available at <http://www.bg-coaches.org/>, and summarised in GymNews. We will be able to answer questions online as we approach the transition date.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all those who contributed to the new competition structure and would like to thank the 'New Competition Structure Committee', 'The Competitions Committee' and the 'National Trampoline Technical Committee' for all their hard work.

Training to Win and Training to Compete: Promotion and Relegation Between Levels

The old promotion and relegation system between levels based on achieving a single arbitrary score at a single competition during the season will no longer be used at *Training to Win* or *Training to Compete* levels.

Instead, performers will earn and lose points during the season, based on their performance relative to others in their level. Gaining enough points will earn the right to a trial at the next level, while losing enough points will lead to a trial at the previous level.

At the end of each competition, the performer's scores will be listed on the bg-coaches.org website in rank order. A proportion of the highest ranked performers (the promotion zone) in each level will each receive one point. A proportion of the lowest ranked performers (the relegation zone) will each lose one point. Men and women will be ranked separately.

Reaching plus two points will give the right to trial at the next level (e.g. *FIG B*). In the trial you enter a competition at the next level: finish outside the relegation zone to be promoted to *FIG B*, starting on zero points at the next event. Finishing in the relegation zone means you return to *National C* at the next event.

Reaching minus two points leads to a trial at the previous level (e.g. *Home Nation/Regional D*). In the trial you enter a competition at the previous level: finish in the promotion zone to return to *National C*. If you finish the trial outside the promotion zone, you join *Home Nation/Regional D*, starting on zero points.

Your points and level can only change when competing, and are carried over between seasons without any penalties. Qualification for National Finals is also shown on the website after each event, and can be achieved based on meeting the required ranking at any event in the year.

Technicalities will be covered in the relevant Competition Structure Handbook. The new system is much easier to use than to write down on paper, and will quickly become second nature to coaches, performers and parents. Not only does it eliminate the effects of variations in judging between events and regions, it is also much easier to explain to outsiders than the existing complicated matrix of requirements.

What Happened to All the Other Proposals We Saw in January 2007?

The existing competition structure was designed to address problems of the late 1980s; the sport has moved on since then. The competition structure has always had a huge impact on the activities and planning of all competitive clubs in the UK.

This change is designed to bring the structure into the 21st century, giving clubs the ability to provide modern training and development that has been demonstrated to work in the long run.

Not everything you saw at the technical conference could be achieved for October 2008. Such a major shift in philosophy must be achieved hand in hand with trampolining's specialist teams, such as judging and coach education, and allow time to prepare. Progress on some key proposals will depend on their expert input over the coming months and years.

How Do You Plan For A Change As Big As This?

Proposals for major improvements to the UK competition scheme were first presented to trampolinists for consultation at the Technical Conference in January 2007. There was strong support for the proposal, along with concerns about the detail of the judging proposals. As well as the trampolinists present, there was support from coaches in other disciplines, including one memorable comment, '*This is just what tumbling needs!*'

Since then, there has been extensive work behind-the-scenes, culminating in a full submission to NTTC in April 2007. On Sunday 27 May, Wayne Smith (Chair of Competitions Committee) presented the proposal to the NTTC meeting.

NTTC made further improvements to the submission prior to approving it for implementation in October 2008.

Why the Big Change?

The existing system has been used for 14 years, while competitor numbers have increased, and substantial youth international success has occurred.

The system needs change because:

It Ignores LTAD. Trampolinists enter at all ages, but the system of routines and qualifying marks has meant the young can quickly be exposed to the national competition circuit and pressure with limited preparation and while still in their learning to train stage.

Fixture Congestion. The number of weekends used by competitions has had an impact on other beneficial activities in trampolining, like regional and squad activities, club training, friendly competitions and synchro. It also impacts on family life for coaches and family, school and social lives of competitors.

Big Pressure on Small Athletes. Exposure to pressure is needed to develop mental toughness. However, the current scheme means younger performers face this pressure early in their career, while still in the learning to train stage. Events such as transition between age groups (with changes in qualifying marks, routines and judging) can have a major impact, yet are based entirely on chronological age.

The early introduction to 'high' grades for younger competitors can be followed by years of fighting to avoid downgrading at the end of each year as the requirements become more onerous. The separation of Grade 1 events from Grade 2 events from regional events means downgrading has a major impact on performers' social lives and self-image as well as their trampolining.

Youth Success, Senior Drop-Outs

The UK's elite youth compete for National Champion Titles from age nine; exposure of young athletes to intense competitive pressure has led to major successes in the Youth International team, but has also seen many young stars drop out as they find this early success become more difficult to repeat.

As explained by David Ross at the 2006 Technical Conference, many countries enjoying sustained senior international success today do not emphasise developing competition form until a performer's late teens. Many successful countries use competition systems which make no attempt to accelerate younger performers' entry to national competition at all.

Interestingly, Britain has a proud tradition of senior international success. Nearly all of these successes were achieved by performers who started on the 'Open' circuit, where no distinction was made for age at all.

Emphasis on FIG Competitive Form at all Stages of Development

The existing competition scheme makes development dependent on competition marks, which depend on development of FIG-defined competitive form. It is not just other countries that avoid this emphasis in the early years of a trampolinist's career: our own National Technical Priorities, developed by the National Squad Performance Directors seek a return to fundamentals of jumping skills over form, until they are thoroughly ingrained. In particular, the emphasis on kick-outs and remaining straight into the bed is considered to be unhelpful.

After a competition, performers receive only a generalised, overall subjective mark to chart their progress. China and other countries provide specific, objective feedback measures such as routine time instead of, or as well as, the overall subjective mark.

Competitive Season Only Provided for Grade One Competitors

The scheme provides an off-season for grade one competitors only. All other competitors are expected to prepare for competitions throughout the year, with no variation for holiday, skill development, strength development, etc.

Natural Judging Variation Affects Performer Development

The reliance on absolute qualifying marks expects judges to be as uniform as robots! In reality, qualification rates vary substantially between regions and also between events in the national circuit.

National Routines as of October 2008	
FIG A	FIG B
World FIG A routine (see FIG website for more information) <i>Minimum age 15 in year of competition.</i>	World FIG B routine (See FIG website for more information)
National C	Home Nation/Regional D
10 different skills including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 somersaults of at least 270° rotation, TO INCLUDE • A skill with a min of 270° rotation landing on either the front or back <i>and from this skill</i>, a skill with a min of 450° rotation, AND: • A back somersault with 360° turn (Full), OR • A front somersault with 540° turn (Rudolf), OR • A skill of 720° somersault. 	10 different skills including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 skills with a min of 270° rotation, TO INCLUDE • 1 skill with a min of 360° of somersault and 360° of twist, OR • 1 skill landing with a min of 270° rotation landing on either the front or back and from this skill, 1 skill with a min of 450° of rotation.
Regional Routines as of October 2008 To Be Confirmed	