

Written by Dwight Normile  
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IG Editor Dwight Normile offers his take on **Kevin Mazeika**, the new U.S. men's national team coordinator, and various other topics from around the gym world.



USA Gymnastics just named **Mazeika** as its new men's national team coordinator, replacing **Ro n Brant**

, who took a job at the USOC. I think the good-natured Mazeika is an excellent choice. He coached the last two U.S. Olympic teams, winning silver in Athens and bronze in Beijing. He has plenty of talent to work with in this quadrennium.

Mazeika, 48, will no longer coach the elite program at Houston Gymnastics Academy, but said that **Norimasa Iwai** will assume those duties. Iwai, who has coached at HGA for two years, was captain of the Japanese men's team at the 2000 Olympics, where he also was a rings finalist. Mazeika also said that HGA gymnast and 2007 world team member **Sean Golden**

, who tore his Achilles' tendon a week before the 2009 Visa Championships, is "doing great [and] ahead of schedule on his rehab."

Less time in the gym will enable Mazeika to attend national team training camps at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs (every six weeks), and also travel to various clubs. Whether he will be named head coach of the 2012 team is "a decision for the Men's Program Committee," Mazeika told IG.

Though the 2012 Olympics will feature five-member teams, the world championships in 2010 and 2011 will still have six-member teams. With an influx of young talent, the U.S. men could be on an upswing from 2008, when they won the bronze.

"I think we're in great shape, and it's going to be my job to keep the ball rolling," Mazeika said.

### Elsewhere...

- Here's an outtake from my interview with **Shawn Johnson**, which will appear in our January-February issue. The question referred to the new rule in the women's Code of Points, which requires only eight skills instead of 10: "Yeah, that's definitely great. The new Code is

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different. I've been trying to learn it and figure out what [it] is about and what I would need, and things like that, and see if it suits me. But we'll see. It'll be difficult."

- Here's an outtake from my interview with current vault world champion **Kayla Williams**, whose story will also appear in our January-February issue. I asked her if she had any gymnastics role models when she was younger: "Of course,

**Mary Lou Retton**

, because she's from West Virginia and I'm from West Virginia, and I wanted to be just like her. But [also]

**Dominique Dawes**

, definitely. She was a powerful gymnast and graceful, and it was just beautiful gymnastics all at the same time."

- Super choreographer **Adriana Pop**, who has been creating routines for the top Chinese women for the past few years, stopped by the IG offices last week. She said she will return to China again in 2010. She also said she really enjoyed working with

**Nastia Liukin**

and

**Courtney Kupets**

for the Progressive Skating & Gymnastics Spectacular, which will air Jan. 10 on NBC (check your local listings). Pop is based in Marseille, France, but still travels frequently to share her expertise. Word has it that Japan is also interested in hiring her.

- 2006 world all-around silver medalist **Jana Bieger** placed sixth at the 2009 U.S. championships but was not selected for the world championship team. If the Olympics are her goal, I think Bieger, who was born in Germany, should explore the possibility of competing for her native country as early as 2011. Germany placed 10th at the 2007 worlds, which qualified it to the Beijing Olympics, where it finished last (12th). There is no guarantee that Germany will qualify a full team again, but Bieger, 20, could probably be an invaluable asset.

- Did you know that former rhythmic gymnast **Vera Marinova Atkinson**, who works for British Gymnastics and who ran the press room at the 2009 London World Championships, is one of the three judges on "Dancing With The Stars" in Bulgaria? She is absolutely revered in Bulgaria.

- The FIG is progressing in its investigation on the fluctuating ages of China's **Dong Fangxiao** and

**Yang Yun**

, both of whom competed at the 2000 Olympics. A Disciplinary Commission, composed of

**Rached Gharbi**

(TUN),

**Margarida Dias Ferreira**

(POR) and

**Marc Schoenmaekers**

(BEL), will announce its verdict on Feb. 26, 2010. But do we really care anymore?