

# 2018 13-15 and 12&Under National Team Trials

## Judges and HPD Feedback

Overall for all figures, the recommendations for counts and for coaching the new figures in the document which was released later in December are all consistent with what the judges have observed at trials. Coaches still need to focus on knee and ankle extension.

### 13-15 FIGURES

**Ariana** – Athletes need to show a Back Layout Position and better body extension. Good start towards the Surface Arch. Some athletes perform a very controlled lift, but most of them are twisted and bouncy. Athletes should not stop in the Knight Position and change tempo from Knight to Split. Too many athletes are going through a straddle position instead of a middle split. Make sure athletes rotate one hip at a time between the 3 splits in order to control the movement of the legs and misalignment during the rotation. Athletes are lacking back flexibility. Splits are getting better (although the top athletes should aim for crotch completely dry and legs completely out of the water. The lower back and shoulder flexibility is generally not good and results in twisted Knight Positions (almost Side Fishtail). Note: at the Comen Cup last year, the majority of the athletes had three flat splits and therefore the difference in score was between those who had good back flexibility with square Knight and Surface Arch Positions, and the others.



In summary:

- Back Layout with better body extension
- Lower back and shoulder flexibility for better Surface Arch and Knight Positions
- Knee extension in Splits, and square and alignment in Ariana rotation

**Rio** – Athletes need to present better body extension in the Back Layout. The Ballet Leg is good, make sure the body is more extended and the hands under the water to limit the splash. The transition to Flamingo from Ballet Leg needs more work. Athletes need to extend their body and increase their height in the Flamingo and Double Ballet Leg. There is no need to hold the Double Ballet Leg too long, so we recommend really extending the body, press the head back in the water to get the hips as close to the surface as possible and the Double Ballet Leg well above the knee level. Athletes should be able to show a Ballet Leg at upper thigh and the Double Ballet Leg at mid to upper thigh. The descent was good. Once they were under, many athletes transitioned their hands behind the legs to prepare for the barracuda. During this transition, too many are sinking too deep, feet should be right under the water. All athletes should start the Thrust with the hands behind the ankles/mid-shin to increase the power for the height of the Thrust. All athletes need to focus on the quality of the unroll, instead of just opening the body and fully finish the triceps push at the top of the Thrust. Many athletes launch into the spin without the arms finishing the push and they then lose their lines during the spin. Make sure to fully finish the spin to avoid the 0 penalty. A reminder that the 0 penalty is for an athlete who did not finish the spin by at least 90 degrees.

In summary:

- Show body extension in Back Layout and no travel
- Higher Flamingo and Double Ballet Leg
- Not too deep in the Submerged Back Pike Position
- Unroll during the Thrust (no hips opening)
- Fully unroll before the spin and set core during the spin
- Arms close to body during the spin to avoid falling
- Fully complete the spin



**Jupiter** – This figure is done way too fast. We recommend for all athletes to work with the metronome on this figure to make it more consistent. Many athletes are struggling with the accuracy of positions and the hip flexibility for the Knight with too many looking like a Side Fishtail Position. Endurance of the support scull is very important for this figure. Athletes are losing their height at the end, finishing only just above the knees (6.5). Coaches need to have athletes practice sets of Vertical Position in support scull and joins from Fishtail to Vertical holds, building up to holding the Vertical Position for 40 support sculls as a minimum.



In summary:

- Slower & more consistent tempo for the whole figure
- Show accurate positions (design of the figure)
- More height from the Knight Position to the end
- Better knee extension throughout
- Square Knight Position

**Oceanea** – Athletes need to take their head progressively under the water. The start of the bend for the Bent Leg is initiated when the chest starts to be submerged. Do not wait until the body is in Surface Arch Position to bend the leg. Focus on square hips for the Surface Arch Bent Knee and the horizontal leg dry. The shoulders go too far behind the vertical line on the lift of the leg. The spin is a rapid spin which means it needs to be faster than the rest of the figure and cannot start with a half twist. Coaches should define height and walls for the spin just like in a routine so there are more even levels and tempo (even drop spaces). We recommend to do only half a spin down after the ankle level. If an athlete does 3 spins in total with the toes still out, this could be a 0.



In summary:

- Timing of the Dolphin start
- More Vertical Position height
- Timing and even descent for the spin

**Swordtail** – This is a fairly short figure and athletes should be able to go slower, especially during the lift of the first leg. We recommend bending the leg with the head in the water so the judges can focus on the legs and the athletes demonstrate stillness and calm. On the lift of the leg to the Knight Position, athletes need to show an arched back. There is no stop in the Vertical Position, make sure the tempo is consistent. Knight Position is again not square with the horizontal leg bent. Athletes need to aim for crotch dry throughout the rotation and then horizontal leg dry for the Knight and Surface Arch Positions.

In summary:

- Head in for beginning
- More height on the lift and body arched
- More height, square and aligned in Knight Position
- Extension of legs throughout



**Seagull** - This is a basic figure. Athletes need to have the correct tempo with the beginning and the vertical descent slow and the middle rapid. The first Vertical Position is bolded in the description and needs to be marked as long as the second one. We recommend 1 or 2 counts for the first and second Vertical and half count for the Split opening. Whatever the coaches decide, they need to do the same for the second Vertical. Athletes need to aim for maximum height on first Vertical and a fully dry Split with the legs touching the water and the back leg extended. Do not slow the descent down too much.

In summary:

- Show the first Vertical and as high as possible
- Full Split with hips above the water
- Show the second Vertical as high as possible
- Vertical descent needs to be at the same tempo as the beginning of the figure, often too slow

## 12&UNDER FIGURES

### Overall

Strengths – very little travel

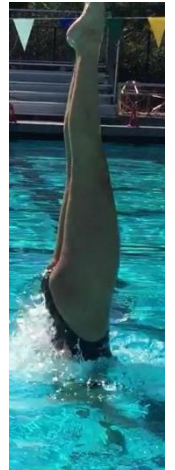
Weaknesses – knee and ankle extension and support scull technique and strength

**Straight Ballet Leg** – even though this is a new figure, the athletes are performing it fairly well. Back Layout needs to improve with better body and neck extension. Most athletes started with rounded shoulders and the head tilted forward which is the main issue during the lift of the straight leg. However, it is important for the athletes to show a great Back Layout Position before the lift. During the lift, pay attention to the horizontal leg extension. That leg is not engaged, bent and goes under the water during the lift. The scull throughout the whole figure is too splashy, the hands are too close to the surface because of the rounded back and the technique of the scull is incorrect with an inconsistent press on the water.

In summary:

- Show body and head extension on Back Layout
- More height on Ballet Leg
- Less splashy scull

**Barracuda** – again, make sure to insist on the Back Layout especially full body extension. The first portion of the figure is not bad at all. The athletes need to be more accurate on hitting and holding the vertical alignment during the Submerged Back Pike Position. The athletes still have an issue with the Thrust unroll. Coaches need to continue to teach the proper unroll to get the consistency and vertical alignment. Athletes also need to finish the unroll with a triceps push all the way over the head. None of the athletes completely finished the push, which hurts their final height on the Thrust. Athletes need to hold their core control on the descent.



In summary:

- Show body and head extension in Back Layout
- More body unroll technique on Thrust
- Finish the arm push all the way above the head to gain more height
- Control core on descent

**Swordfish** – Not a good figure for this group of athletes, needs more work. The whole figure is too fast and needs more control. Our recommendation is to start this figure with paddle moves not barrel scull, which leads to a piked start instead of an arch. Two or three paddle sculls to initiate the lift action prior to switching to support scull. Most athletes need to switch to support scull way earlier in the figure to be able to control the first portion better. In addition, coaches need to have the athletes work on the leg lift without arms in water and on land to build the athletes glute strength. Athletes should be able to do the action without arms so that when they add support scull they can slow down, control and increase the height. Note that there is no stop at the vertical. The second part of the figure is much slower than the beginning, Remember that the tempo should be consistent throughout. Aim for Surface Arch Bent Knee with square hips and the horizontal leg dry. The majority of athletes were able to transition to split scull and do a fairly good unroll to Back Layout.

In summary:

- No barrel scull or piking at the start
- Work on glute strength to be able to do the figure with no arms
- Use more support scull to control, slow down and show more height
- Hips square on Surface Arch Bent Knee Position





**Waterdrop** – This was a pretty good figure. Athletes should do the lift from Surface Pike to Bent Knee with the horizontal leg completely dry and the Bent Knee Position at butt level. For the spin, we recommend to spin inside, so if the left leg is up, the athletes turn towards the left. The judges prefer the aesthetics of the rotation inside, but it does not affect the score if they go the opposite way. The timing of the spin is incorrect for all athletes. They must not lose their height at the beginning before turning. They should drop progressively to the ankles. They should be at knee level at the quarter. The second half of the spin down has a lot of travel to the left. Often the athletes finished the rotation before closing the legs.

In summary:

- Height of the lift
- Height in bent knee
- Timing of the rotation
- Rotation towards the inside



**Ballerina** – This is a difficult figure for this group. Coaches need to make sure the athletes have accurate positions. Too many athletes do not know how to rotate from Surface Front Pike to Submerged Double Ballet Leg under. Athletes need to initiate an opening to a vertical in barrel scull and then push with the heels to do the rotation and just before landing in Submerged Double Ballet Legs, athletes must switch their hands to split scull. On the rise to the surface, define exactly what to do with the arms: some athletes are floating up. We recommend split scull changing to standard scull in the middle of the rise. Coaches may want to consider bending the left leg to do a right Flamingo and a left Bent Knee Vertical for this figure.

In summary:

- Clearer positions
- Technique from Surface Front Pike to Submerged Double Ballet Leg
- Choice of leg to go up
- Arm strokes on the rise up



## ROUTINES

### 13-15 Routine

Although many athletes and coaches thought they would hit the wall, propulsion was fairly limited with no athletes getting close to the end of the first lap. Athletes need to move more, and throughout the routine, not just at the beginning. The spins and the barracuda spin proved challenging at the end of the routine with only a few athletes able to perform it. Energy level was good except for a handful of athletes. Knee and feet extension should be a major focus for everybody, as well as accuracy of positions.

### 12&Under Routine

The athletes did a good job performing this routine. This is a difficult routine and they did it pretty well. They are able to swim fast and should have fast choreography in their routines. We encourage all coaches to create fast routines for this age group. A handful of athletes have great single leg height and better double leg height than in their figures. All athletes need to continue to work on their support scull to be able to perform sustained Vertical height in a routine setting. Great energy for nearly all athletes.

## SKILLS

**Speed Swimming** – Note that the pool was slightly shorter than 25 yards so the times are not accurate. However, the stroke technique for all 13-15 athletes was much better. The 12&Unders need to work on their butterfly technique and the speed of the freestyle sprint.

**Barracuda** – same comments as for figures.

**Ballet Leg** – Similar comments as for figures. The body is not extended. The shoulders are rounded with the upper back muscles not engaged which brings the hands close to the thighs and knees and makes the scull very splashy and loud. The vertical alignment of the vertical leg is much better.

**Water Hips and Splits** – The athletes were very weak on this test. Very few athletes are able to hit the positions accurately and hold them. The Surface Arch Position is incorrect. Athletes should arch at the hips and not just the upper body. The Knight Positions are not square and look more like a Side Fishtail Position. Coaches should focus on square alignment for this position. Knees are very bent in the Knight Position. Very few flat splits. Only one athlete with crotch dry and legs fully above the water.

**Vertical** – Seemed to be performed somewhat safely. In 13-15 only one athlete was at the 4 height (8.5), everybody else is at 7.5 or 6.5 (majority of athletes just above the knees). This is due to poor support scull technique, short and slow scull. The athletes do not have extended bodies (just like in the Back Layout). The shoulders are rounded with the tip of the shoulder forward, which does not allow them to properly perform the scull and will lead to shoulder injuries. The technique of the totem scull also needs to improve with the elbows set and not moving and the hands sculling back and forth above the head without extending down to the pool.

**Core on land** – Much better positions for all athletes. Very good for the 12&Unders. Better understanding of the correct Plank Position. Make sure all athletes squeeze their heels together to work on their inner thighs. Focus on knee extension and the body and hands reaching out further than the feet in the V-sits.

**Lower body** – Some athletes have very heavy landing in the jump rope exercise, and are extremely slow in the fast portion of the jump rope test. We need to see a difference in tempo during the max. speed jump rope. Make sure the athletes try to keep their legs together and extended during the jump rope. The squats are good. The jumps are often unfinished. The arms need to go fully to the vertical and the feet need to unroll all the way to the toes to come off the ground. Make sure all athletes land with bent legs on jump #3. The balance exercise was not good at all with the 13-15's but fairly good for the 12&Unders. The 13-15s need to extend the bottom leg, go up in full semi-pointe (or their leg will be bent) and lift the leg higher into the arabesque. The bottom leg and semi-pointe for the 12&Unders was better but the leg needs to be lifted higher.

**Land Support Scull and Handstand** – This was the easiest test, and athletes need to be more accurate. Feet must be together and touching the wall. Athletes need to perform a full scull with the hands touching the wall on every out move. The core needs to be engaged so that the ribcage does not pop out on the out move. The handstand was good but not all athletes are fully pushing off the ground to get their head into their shoulders. More pelvic tilt needed to have the stomach and belly button come off the wall and make a flat back.

**Land Hips and Split** – This test is similar to the water with the same issues. Athletes are not flexible enough with their shoulders and lower back. Most handstands were with the shoulders above the hands but not the hips. Hips needs to be aligned with shoulders and hands. This means that the athletes need better lower back flexibility. Very few 12&Under athletes could keep their knee extension during this exercise as well as the bridge and the splits. The over-splits are not extended (both knees are soft and not activated). The headstand for the 13-15 was not too bad but all athletes need to think about keeping their stomach in and reproduce the position of the handstand with posterior pelvic tilt.

