

Hopes, Developmental and the Elite Pipeline

By Kim Riley, Managing Director of Athlete and Coaching Programs, USA Gymnastics

Many young gymnasts aspire to become a World or Olympic champion for USA Gymnastics. It takes dedication, hard work, passion and a journey. The journey begins at one of the many gymnastics clubs around the country where young hopefuls begin to stand out, and their coaches begin to discover something special in their athletes. Gymnasts often start with a pre-team program, and then join the Junior Olympic Program for competitions. Beyond the Junior Olympic Program is the Elite program with its various levels.

Hopes

Gymnasts interested in testing the Elite program can do so as a Hopes competitor. Hopes gymnasts are 10–13 years old. The age of the Hopes athlete is determined as of December 31 within the year of competition. Hopes athletes compete both Elite compulsory routines, along with optional routines with modified Elite rules. For the Elite compulsory routines, both text and videos can be found on USA Gymnastics' website under Women's Program — Elite Program. The Hopes modifications are listed under the TOPs/Hopes section on the website under Hopes Modification.

Gymnasts can qualify to become an elite through Elite compulsory meets, national qualifiers or through verification at Developmental camps. The qualifying scores for Hopes gymnasts can be found under

the Elite/Hopes Qualification Chart in the Elite section on our website. Hopes gymnasts who have achieved the qualifying score may compete in both the American and Secret U.S. Classic. The Secret U.S. Classic meet will have a competition specifically for Hopes gymnasts, called the U.S. Challenge. There are two age groups in the Hopes program: 10–11 and 12–13 year olds. Gymnasts in both age groups will be awarded all-around and individual event medals determined by optional scores only. From the U.S. Challenge, athletes may be selected to attend a Developmental training camp.

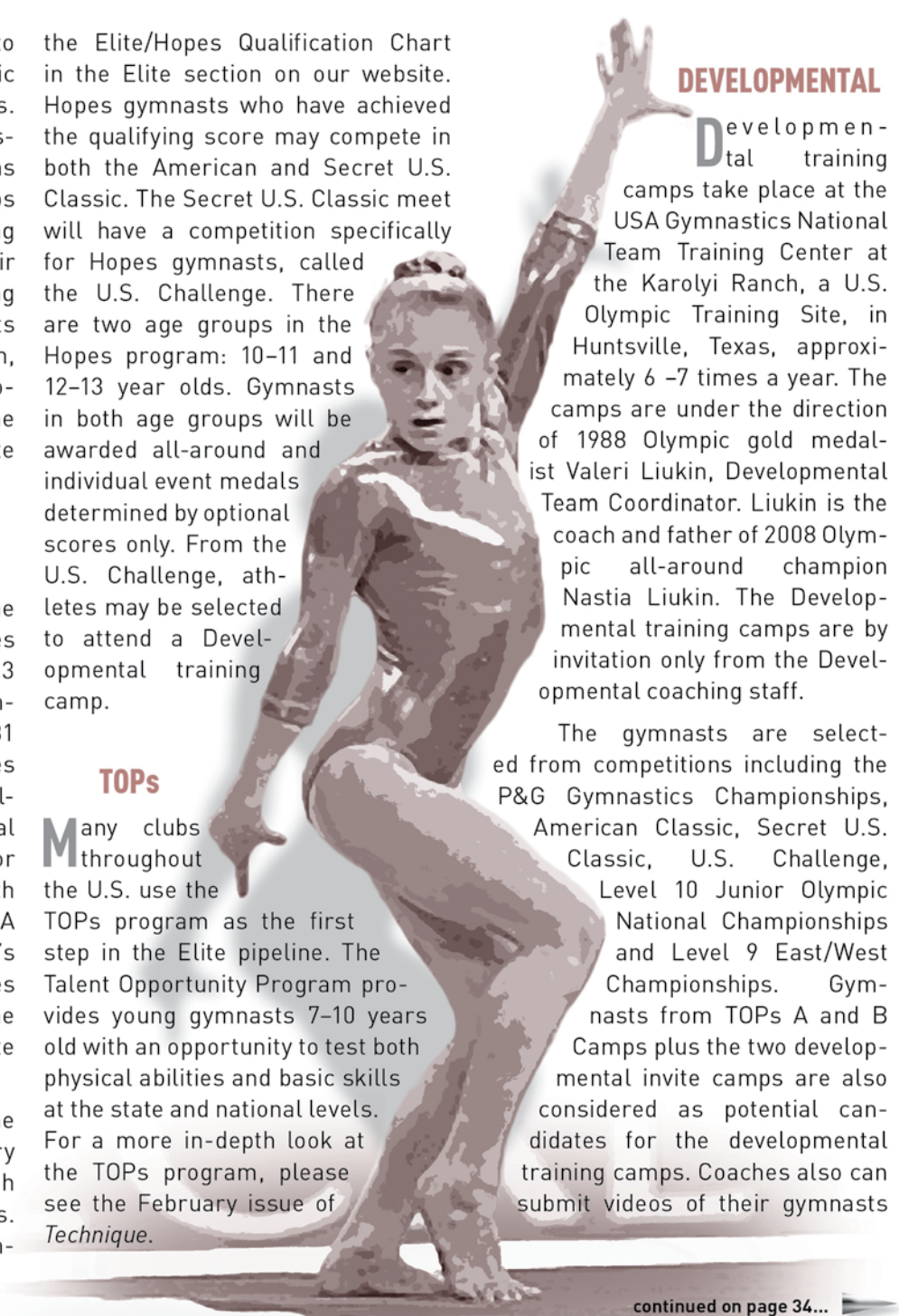
TOPs

Many clubs throughout the U.S. use the TOPs program as the first step in the Elite pipeline. The Talent Opportunity Program provides young gymnasts 7–10 years old with an opportunity to test both physical abilities and basic skills at the state and national levels. For a more in-depth look at the TOPs program, please see the February issue of *Technique*.

DEVELOPMENTAL

Developmental training camps take place at the USA Gymnastics National Team Training Center at the Karolyi Ranch, a U.S. Olympic Training Site, in Huntsville, Texas, approximately 6–7 times a year. The camps are under the direction of 1988 Olympic gold medalist Valeri Liukin, Developmental Team Coordinator. Liukin is the coach and father of 2008 Olympic all-around champion Nastia Liukin. The Developmental training camps are by invitation only from the Developmental coaching staff.

The gymnasts are selected from competitions including the P&G Gymnastics Championships, American Classic, Secret U.S. Classic, U.S. Challenge, Level 10 Junior Olympic National Championships and Level 9 East/West Championships. Gymnasts from TOPs A and B Camps plus the two developmental invite camps are also considered as potential candidates for the developmental training camps. Coaches also can submit videos of their gymnasts



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for consideration. Instructions for video submissions are covered in the *2014 Rules and Policies* on page 74.

Developmental training camps are structured much like the National Team training camps. Developmental training camps have a dedicated National coaching staff, who have all attained the Master of Sport. Each staff member has trained an Olympic or World team member. Camp starts with an advanced physical abilities testing. Each full training day has two-a-day training sessions for the athletes. The training ses-

sion is followed by coaches' lectures given by Liukin and members of the national staff.

At the camps, athletes and

coaches work closely with Liukin and the national staff on basics, skill selection and development, routine construction and composition. At most camps, there is a FIG Brevet judge on staff to

help guide both coaches and athletes.

Many of the athletes participating in the Developmental camps will compete as junior Elites or Hopes.

DEVELOPMENTAL INVITE CAMPS

Twice a year, in May and August, USA Gymnastics offers a Developmental invite camp. This camp is open to all athletes interested in participating in the Elite pipeline. The camp is also under the direction of Liukin and is supported by much of the national staff. The camp is structured the same as the Developmental camps with the two-a-day training sessions and coaches' lectures after each training session. Priority registration is given to TOPs A and B National

Team members, along with the Diamond Team members. Information on these camps and registration will be available on the USA Gymnastics website in February.

ELITE PROGRAM

The Elite program is designed to provide competitive experiences for athletes aspiring to the National Team. Elite athletes are divided into two age groups: juniors (15 years old and under) and seniors (16 and up). Elite gymnasts compete at National Qualifiers, at which they must perform both compulsory and optional events to earn a spot at the two Classic meets. The Elite Qualification chart can be found on the USA Gymnastics website and includes requirements and qualifying scores for both junior and seniors vying for a spot at the Classic meets and the P&G Championships.

The junior and senior U.S. National Team are selected from the P&G Championships each year. The National Team size can be up to 28 athletes and is determined by our country's needs. The junior and senior team size will change from year-to-year based on our international meet schedule for the upcoming year. All National Team members are expected to attend all training camps at the Ranch. Additional elite athletes may be invited to participate at the National Team camps by Martha Karolyi, National Team Coordinator, who has helped lead Team USA to more than 70 World and Olympic medals since 2001. The Athlete Selection Committee comprised of Karolyi, Steve Rybacki, Director of Elite Athlete Programs, and Terin Humphrey, athlete representative, choose National Team members for international assignments.

