USA GYMNASTICS

WOMEN'S REGION 7

Virtually Assisted Competitions

Frequently Asked Questions
Linda Johnson, Region 7 JOCC
R7jocc@gmail.com

What are virtually assisted competitions? There are several definitions of virtually assisted competitions, that basically depend upon the platform used. These may include synchronous and asynchronous options. We explored the following models with our test events, and used Zoom as our virtual platform:

- Use of virtual panels, where judges would judge through a virtual platform rather than on-site
- Use of virtual platforms for clubs to participate in an on-site competition virtually rather than attending on-site. We used Zoom, and those clubs participated synchronously.
- Use of virtual platform for an entire competition to be conducted virtually, in other words, all clubs participated from their own gyms in a single virtual platform

What platform did you use for your Virtually Assisted Competition Test Events? Zoom for meetings.

How did you set up Zoom for this? We set up a Zoom meeting link for participating judges and/or clubs. We made sure that all participants had accounts in Zoom (most up to date upgrade). We made sure that our settings included the following:

- Enabled waiting room required (so we could monitor who is entering)
- Enable participants to enter using video
- Enable participants to rename themselves
- Enable to assign co-hosts
- Breakout rooms are enabled
- Private chat function is enabled

- Have all extra personnel muted with video off, and in the Host settings turn them off so they are not visible in the "open gym". This way all you see are the thumbnails for the clubs.

When participants enter the meeting, they are in the "open gym". This is where open stretch, coaches' meeting, camera checks and timed warm-ups took place. We created breakout rooms for competition. One breakout room was assigned an event. Judges were able to stay in the room of their assigned event. Clubs moved between the event breakout rooms and open gym.

What devices did you use to run Zoom? We used laptops or PCs to run the meeting. Judges and gyms used computers, tablets, iPads, at times phones.

What format did you use for your competition? We tested a modified traditional and modified Capital Cup formats.

How many different locations did you use in your test events? We started with 1 gym, and eventually progressed to 8 gyms. During the event with 8 locations, we ran a modified Capital Cup format with 2 flights, 4 events running simultaneously, all virtual judging panels.

What type of planning did you do before the event? Advanced planning is critical! Be sure to send out plenty of information to clubs and judges participating. This includes event times, rotation schedules, technology needs, personnel needs, meet format, and the event link. Plan to meet with each club in advance to check camera set up. Meet with judges in advance to review scoring and how to navigate the virtual platform.

How were you able to see the competitors? You could easily view each club by pinning that club. When pinning, it is important to avoid moving your mouse or the task bar will show and reduce the size of the screen. It is also important to use full screen for better viewing.

How did you run open stretch and timed warm-ups? All of the clubs were in the "open gym" and set up a microphone or PA so that they could hear announcements in their gyms. The Meet Director was able to announce the start of open stretch and timed warm-ups. We did not run separate timed warm-ups per event for our test events, however it would be easy to assign other personnel to do this. We chose not to use continuous rotations and have all clubs in the open gyms go through timed warm-ups together. We found this easier to control.

What types of cameras did you set up for viewing the events? Our gyms used iPads, laptops, laptops hooked to external cameras, tablets. Some clubs used GoPro using narrow settings. What is most important is that the device is stabilized (using a tripod or blocks) and the camera stays in 1 position. Phones do not work well for the camera in Zoom. You will lose about 1/3 of the view even with a wide-angle lens.

How did you set up the cameras in the gyms? We scheduled Zoom meetings with the gyms in advance to look at their camera set ups and help them troubleshoot with this. Here are some general guidelines:

- Vaulting:
  - Width angle: the view should include a part of the run, the board, and landing area
  - Height angle: view should include base mat and highest expected vault height
- Bars:
  - Width angle: Should be able to view the matted area in front of the low bar that includes the mount position for a board or glide kip mount, and matted area behind the high bar to include all landing surfaces.
  - Height angle: The height of the view should include the base mat and extend high enough for a handstand position on the high bar
- Beam: It is recommended that all gymnasts dismount off of the same end of the balance beam.
  - Width angle: The width of the viewing angle should include the entire balance beam and dismount landing area.
  - Height angle: The height of the viewing angle should include the base mats and high enough to view aerial and inverted skills on the beam.
- Floor exercise: Do a sound check to determine if floor music can be heard on Zoom
  - Width angle: The device should be positioned so that all 4 corners of the floor exercise area are viewable.
  - Height angle: The view should include the floor level with enough height view to see all salto skills performed.

Not all gyms will have the same view. Gyms have different obstructions, layouts, etc. Floor is the most difficult to set up, and we found that gyms with tighter spaces had to set the camera up on a diagonal. We also had a gym that had to set the camera up from a balcony, and this worked fine.

How were the judges set up? In some test events we used an on-site judge with a virtual judge. In this set-up, the on-site judge had to switch to virtual to judge other locations. Other events we used all virtual panels. As stated before, they received training before the event on scoring and navigating Zoom. There are many training sessions going on around the country helping judges acclimate to judge virtually.

What did the judges use to for accessing the virtual meet? Most used laptops or desktop computers. Having the larger screen is helpful. If you are using ProScore, the judges will need to use iPads for the scoring system and will not be able to also judge from that iPad.

How did the judges signal the athletes? The facilitator would tell the judge the athlete's number and name (or you can create competition cards). In some cases, the athlete could see the virtual judge signal the athlete to start. In other cases, the Head Judge would signal (raise

hand or verbal signal) to start the routine, and the club facilitator would signal the gymnast. On vault, you cannot see the whole run. The facilitator would hold their hand up in front of the camera until the gymnast started her run. This gave the judges an idea of when to expect the gymnast to come into view.

How did the judges show start values and neutral deductions? The judges could hold up start values or neutral deductions. If the coach could not see them, the facilitator could assist. The private chat can be used for judges to share start values or neutral deductions.

How did the judges conference when needed? They used the private chat function in Zoom. They also shared cell phone number in case they needed to call one another.

What happens if there is a technical breakdown with the virtual platform? It is treated just as a technical breakdown in a face-to-face meet, per Rules and Policies. Each case is looked at individually. In one case, only the round-off and landing was seen on a vault. The athlete was given the opportunity to repeat the vault. In other cases, we used the coach's video to review if a routine was missed due to technical breakdown.

What scoring platform did you use? We integrated ProScore for our last event where we ran Modified Capital Cup. We pushed the scores to MeetScoresOnline.

How did you set up ProScore? I contacted Scott Slater, and he worked with our ProScore person to set up the router to accept the judges' iPad IP addresses. We set up a meeting with the judges and ProScore person a few days before the test event to make sure the judges had downloaded the app (free), and could log in. They also had an opportunity to practice inputting scores.   It also gave us an opportunity to review how to navigate Zoom (entering breakout rooms, pinning clubs, using private chat).

How many people helped with running the event? For our test event, I served as the Meet Director and basically managed the "floor" and operations. We have a Meet Referee, our RACC monitored the chat and waiting room, and we had a ProScore person overseeing scoring. Each gym had a facilitator who was near the camera who I could interact with, and who also facilitated during the competition between coaches and judges.

How did the Meet Director communicate with the clubs? There was a facilitator at each club near the camera that I could talk to for camera checks, timed warm-ups and announcements. The gyms also set up a mic or PA so that my instructions were broadcasted for them to hear in the gyms.

Did you have a Meet Referee, and how did that work? The Meet Referee was not on a judging panel. She was able to "float" between breakout rooms to monitor the judging and competition flow. She was able to troubleshoot any technical issues or unusual judging situations.

How did you stream the event to spectators? I invited each club to set up their own streaming from their gyms. Streaming is an important aspect of these competitions so that spectators can view the competition, and clubs can see each other. We just have not explored this at length at this time.

Did you record the events? I did record each test event via Zoom, for our own educational purposes. We also asked coaches to videorecord all routines on their own devices in the event of a technical breakdown.

I'm overwhelmed. How do I get started? Try setting up 1 camera in 1 gym and bringing in 1 or 2 judges. Once you get a feel for the camera set up and flow, you can build from there.

Some additional Tips:
- Be sure clubs and judges have chargers or a way to stay plugged in so they don't lose power or have to switch to another device
- If you plan to run more than 1 event at a time, be sure you can set up cameras for each event that can stay in one place.
- If you are running multiple meets at the same time (like with a large invitational) I recommend separate Zoom links for each competition.
- Make sure both judges and gyms have adequate internet band width, or consider mobile hot spots or hard-wiring computers.