

Jackie Fie-Klein

USAG Hall of Fame



Class of [1979](#)

Program(s): [Women's Artistic](#)

Inducted as: [Athlete](#), [Coach](#), [Contributor](#)

Birthdate: July 11, 1937

Jackie Fie-Klein's only Olympic experience as an athlete came in the Melbourne, Australia Games of 1956. She did not come away with a medal, but she took with her an attitude toward fairness and objectivity that years later were the basis of change she initiated as an FIG administrator in the way judging takes place. The 12-year president of the FIG Women's Artistic Gymnastics Technical Committee was instrumental in creating "quasi-objective rules" for judging, an idea that ensured fairness and unbiased ruling by judges, particularly in

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international competition. Fie-Klein also coached, judged, taught and lectured over the course of her successful career.

Leader in World Gymnastics, 1985

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JOURNAL PROFILE



Jackie Fie
Leader in World Gymnastics

A former chair of the student section of the Illinois Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation is playing a leading role in the development of gymnastics throughout the world. Jackie Fie, second vice president of the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) Women's Technical Committee, is the only non-European who serves on this committee of seven women. In a sport which has been almost totally controlled by Eastern Bloc countries, Fie and Ula Berg (Sweden) broke into the upper ranks—a first for Western nations. In addition to the chair, Ellen Berger, an East German, are three at-large members from Czechoslovakia, the U.S.S.R., and Rumania. The secretary is from Holland.

With Opportunities, Responsibility

What opportunities does this appointment offer Jackie and the United States? The first real advantage was broadcast on television during the 1984 Summer Games. A score on the balance beam was adjusted upward for Olympian Kathy Johnson, qualifying her for the finals. As the representative of the technical committee that evening, Fie was head judge for the event. In her judgment, Kathy's routine demonstrated all of the beam qualities that were and will continue to be emphasized during the next Quadrennium—elegance, originality, virtuosity, an emphasis on dance difficulties in addition to acrobatic difficulties, and the use of direct connections (series) of difficult acrobatic and dance elements.

The average score of the judges' panel came to a 9.55, but Fie's score was a 9.9. This required adjudication by the Jury of Appeal. As Fie had used the same rationale to win an earlier appeal favoring a Swiss gymnast, the jury agreed to a 9.75. "The most rewarding results were Kathy proving she could win the bronze and receiving two tens in the finals from head judges from the U.S.S.R. and Rumania." Her final average score was 9.85.

Nationalism and political ties *do* enter into judging. Fie explained that in many countries of the world the Ministry of Sport is responsible for allocating development funds for training athletes. If a team does not do well at world or Olympic competition, it is likely that funds will be reduced or even withdrawn. Judges, then, are placed in the precarious position of creating funding problems for their own nation or those of their political allies. The subtle pressure is always there. Even with five of the ten best teams of the world absent at the 1984 Games, subjectivity was an issue. Fie expressed the opinion that the critical judging task is to ensure that the best athletes and teams emerge at the finals. Basically, she felt this happened in Los Angeles. The judging was fairer than it had been but still was not "perfect."

One new change designed to help alleviate judging problems is to assign six judges per event, rather than four. The high and low scores will be dropped and the other four will be averaged to the nearest thousandth. Fie sees this benefit two ways: (1) a finer discrim-

ination among gymnasts can be made with the expanded averaging method, and (2) more judges from more nations can be involved in the process. These additional scores may "neutralize" the effects of "bloc" judging which so many gymnasts from the West have faced for so many years.

Training New-Style Judges

Fie has made numerous contributions to the judging program in the United States and abroad, having started the USGF Women's Committee in 1963 and having led the technical committee until 1978. One of her current thrusts is to train individuals throughout the world to judge the new compulsories and optionals for the next four years. The major emphasis during the past few years has been on "risk," "the originality of risk" and "high difficulty." Representatives at the 1983 FIG Congress felt that these criteria led to extensive use of acrobatic moves rather than dance and gymnastics moves. Thus the new Code of Points ("rules") will reflect a different emphasis. Judges have always been able to add a .5 bonus to their scores, and the criteria for this will be: .1 for an extra "D" element (excess of required highest difficulty); .2 for originality of the difficulty; and .2 for virtuosity (quality of performance or virtual freedom of error in execution). Thus, a break in performance or a fall, which is a .5 deduction, will also result in not being awarded a .2 bonus points for virtuosity. Fie suggested this emphasis from

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CLASS OF 2014

JACKIE FIE

- UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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As gymnastics will never cease to evolve in terms of athletic achievement, so too must the rules by which it is governed. Complicating matters more is that the sport cannot be measured in the competitive arena by any truly objective system. Instead, that task is left to human beings, each vulnerable to his/her own natural biases, to determine the champions of any given contest. So it takes a special individual to not only enter such a political theater, but also to reshape the sport in terms of credibility.

Through her determined diplomacy, Fie established a new, higher standard for judges worldwide, emphasizing honesty and

fairness as the only path to global growth for gymnastics.

For nearly four decades, women's international gymnastics benefited greatly from the character and vision of Jackie Fie. From 1976-2004 she worked in various roles on the Women's Technical Committee of the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG). When she took over as WTC President in 1992, she worked tirelessly to implement transparency in a sport clouded by political interests. She introduced a Judges Objectivity Evaluation system, which added a level of accountability throughout the judging ranks. Through her determined diplomacy, Fie established a new, higher standard for judges worldwide, emphasizing honesty and fairness as the only path to global growth for gymnastics.

Fie was more than qualified to undertake and succeed in such a position within the FIG. A native of Chicago, Jacquelyn "Jackie" Klein was active in speed skating and track & field as a youth. She took up gymnastics at the Lincoln Turners, and success followed. In 1956 she made the U.S. team to the Melbourne Olympics.

Gymnastics remained Fie's life focus even after she retired from competition. In 1959 she graduated Magna Cum Laude from Northwestern University and started her career as a physical education teacher, gymnastics coach, judge and administrator. During the 1960s she reshaped the U.S. women's gymnastics competition program and judges training. In the 1970s she began her affiliation with the FIG, for which she was named an Honorary Vice President upon her retirement in 2004.

It is impossible to fully measure the impact Jackie Fie has had on the sport she loves. But when you consider her volume of work as an FIG official—41 FIG events, comprising 20 World Championships, 11 World Cups and 10 Olympics—it would be equally challenging to name an individual who has contributed more.

Today, Fie lives with her husband, Larry Fie, in Jefferson, Iowa, and the couple enjoys visiting their children and grandchildren.

Jackie Fie Awards



NATALIA YURCHENKO



JACKIE FIE



LI YUEJIU



KLAUS KÖSTE

Jackie Fie - Class of 2014 Induction Speech - International Gymnastics Hall of Fame HD

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Madame Fie takes us on a heart-felt tour of her astonishing career as an athlete, Brevet judge, leader of the FIG Women's Technical Committee, and ultimately her role as a front-row witness and contributor to the rise of women's gymnastics over the past 50+ years.

<https://youtu.be/l78NWrqIS4s>