

# U.S. Women's Gymnastics Team Expected to Dominate in Rio

By MARGAUX WINTER

There are a few Olympic sports in which Team U.S.A. dominates the field, and one of them is Women's Gymnastics. Although there are two returning members from the Fierce Five team of 2012, Gabby Douglas and Aly Raiskin, this team is lead by the worldwide phenomenon Simone Biles.

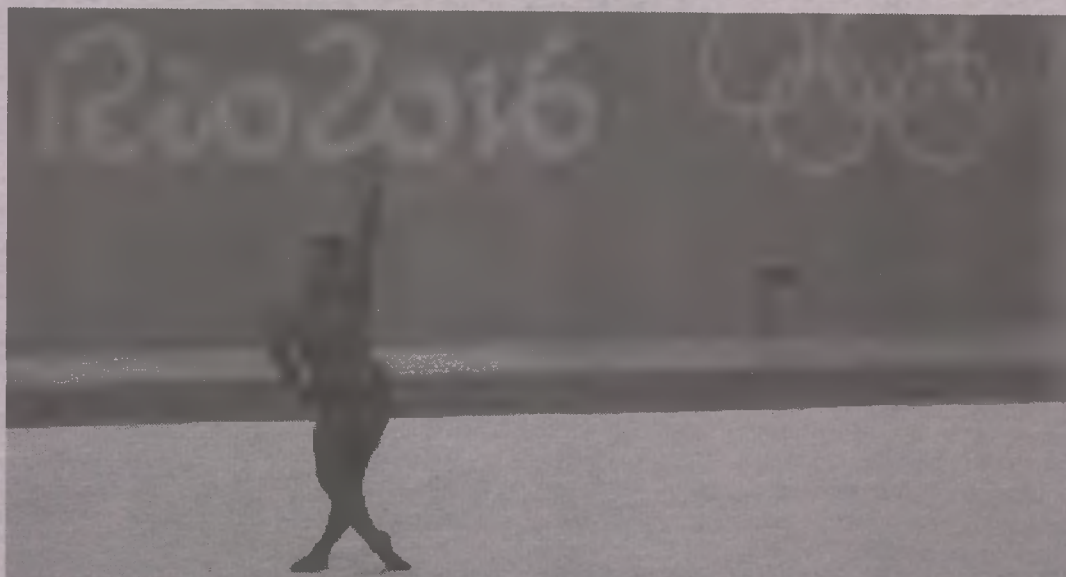
For the past three years, Biles has been blowing away the competition on an international level. In fact, she hasn't lost a competition during those three years, and has been the all-around world champion in 2013, 2014, 2015. Biles has won every single all-around competition she's entered since the 2013 P&G Championships, and she is projected to win up to five gold medals at Rio.

Biles had the highest score at the end of the U.S. Olympic Trials, meaning that she had an automatic bid for the team. She is known across the sport as having impeccable form and unimaginable power. One of the most famous gymnastic coaches and the main decision-maker for the U.S. team, Marta Karolyi, has been known to say that Simone Biles is the greatest gymnast she has even seen. That's a pretty incredible

allegation, considering Karolyi is 73 and watched the Magnificent Seven, the first Olympics women's gymnastics team to win gold, compete in 1996.

Like many other gymnasts, Biles has a short stature of 4'9", but she has amazing power. She sticks almost every landing and has a near-perfect vault. On floor, she is often compared to Japan's leading male gymnast, Kōhei Uchimura. Uchimura is a five-time Olympic medalist (all-around, team, and floor exercise) and 19-time World medalist (all-around, team, floor, high bar, and parallel bars). Both Uchimura and Biles perform difficult and dangerous skills and routines in the most graceful of manners. They make impossible feats of strength and balance look easy. Even small bobbles are seen as huge mistakes in the eyes of these two elite gymnasts, but even with these small mistakes they are able to procure medallions.

Although Biles's prowess cannot be overstated, the other four Olympians on the team are also huge contenders for medals. The projected number two for the all-around is Aly Raisman. At 22 years old, Raisman is an experienced athlete, having competed and



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Simone Biles, 19-year-old gymnast, competes in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

won three medals in the 2012 Olympics, two gold and one bronze. Like Biles, Raisman is known for her incredible power, which is evidenced clearly in her floor routines. Raisman has impeccable footwork in floor, always landing her skills in the same spot and same manner; she demonstrates perfect consistency.

Of course, Gabby Douglas is another familiar face. Her performance at London 2012 has won her many sponsorships with major companies, but her presence at championships over the past four years has been shaky. When Gabby

performs well, she blows the competition away, but she is often unpredictable. Notably, during the trials, Gabby fell twice off the beam in the middle of her routine, surprisingly during some of her more simple skills.

The two up-and-coming stars on the team are Laurie Hernandez and Madison Kocian. Laurie Hernandez is the first U.S.-born Latina to go to the Olympics with the U.S. gymnastics team since 1984. Hernandez just started competing as a senior gymnast this past March. Her performance at the trials was at

the top of her game, and placed her second in the all-around and first on beam.

Kocian is a specialist on the uneven bars. Although she is also talented on the beam, her uneven bars performance is the best on the team. She won her spot to win medal for the United States on the uneven bars, historically one of the country's weakest events.

Overall, this year's team is comprised of unparalleled talent. With Raisman serving as the team captain, this U.S. team is expected to make history.

# As the Olympics Rev Up, So Do Problems in Rio

By MARGAUX WINTER

As the Olympics approached this summer, Rio de Janeiro became plagued with a myriad of problems. Not the least of which included polluted waterways, missed deadlines for building the Olympic Village, and economic downturn.

Onlookers hoped that these issues could be resolved before the games started, but it seems as if we can only hope the stellar athletes' performances overshadow these major, persistent issues.

Athletes in the Olympic Village have reported huge leaks, faulty plumbing, and disconnected fire alarms. Due to these infrastructure issues in the Olympic village, the U.S. men's and women's basketball teams have opted to stay on a luxury yacht instead of in the provided quarters.

As usual, the basketball teams are projected to dominate their prospective fields, and as such, their sponsor, Cisco,

is paying for the 196-cabin luxury cruise ship.

In addition to construction issues, there have been several reports of crime in and around the Olympic Village, as well as concerns raised over reports of debris in the waterways in Rio. Not only are the waters toxic, but participants in water sports such as sailing and kayaking are afraid of the unforeseen effects large debris may have on their sports.

Sailors have been warned that the water is not potable, which is usually not an issue, but it could cause problems if a boat is capsized and water is ingested accidentally.

Crime organized by major drug gangs is a huge problem in Rio. Low-level crime is a constant issue, but the high level of murder in Brazil has led the country to be dubbed "the most dangerous place in the world outside of Syria."

The beaches that will be used by visitors during the games are not completely safe, says the Overseas Advisory

Security Council. Assaults and shootings are known to take place on the beaches after dark.

Some of the local inhabitants are unhappy with the influx of people. With the cramped and windy roads, it can be hard for locals to go about their day-to-day business. As inhabitants try to get to work, there is often heavy traffic from incoming athletes and spectators. A

though the government has advised locals to stay off particular roads to reduce congestion, some are unwilling to follow these recommendations.

Despite an economic boom right before Rio won the bid for the 2016 Olympics, more recently Rio has been engulfed in an economic downturn. Two months before the start of the Olympics, Rio de Janeiro's governor declared a financial state of emergency.

In the face of weak commodity prices, low demand from China, and falling tax revenue, Brazil has cut spending from health,

police, and education budgets. Fortunately, the Olympics is funded by several private companies, a much safer option in the face of the current economics, but the state of emergency has caused much social unrest.

Some protesters have taken to the streets and are unable to be contained, as the security

budget for the Olympics has been cut drastically. One side effect could be a rise in violent crime as the 500,000 visitors flood Rio.

From a spectator's standpoint, this year's Olympics are expected to appear to run smoothly, but it is unlikely that this image will be mirrored behind the scenes.



FELIPE DANA/REUTERS

The Olympic Village in Rio de Janeiro has been rife with problems ranging from leaks to disconnected fire alarms.