

As of July 20, 2023, our Privacy Policy has been updated. Please take a moment to review the updated policy [here](#)



TEAM USA



News

IN GYMNASTICS, A NEW OLYMPIC CYCLE MEANS A NEW QUALIFICATION SYSTEM

SHARE:

APR. 19, 2022, 02:37 A.M. (ET)

BY BLYTHE LAWRENCE



(L-R) Sunisa Lee, Simone Biles, Jordan Chiles and Grace McCallum pose for a photo during women's podium training ahead of the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 on July 22, 2021 in Tokyo.

Goodbye, four-person Olympic teams. Welcome back, fabulous fives.

Gymnastics teams at the Olympic Games Paris 2024 will once again be made up of five gymnasts, a plus-one increase from the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, where only four were able to contend for gold in the team competition.

The confirmation that teams would return to five was the biggest change in a document outlining the qualification pathways for teams and individuals for the 2024 Olympics, released last week by the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG).

Though other changes to how gymnasts will be able to get to the Games are minimal, they are likely to impact how Team USA chooses its 2024 Olympic teams. Here's a look at what this could mean for the upcoming generation of gymnastics hopefuls.

FIVE ALIVE

Five-person teams have historically served the USA well: the “Fierce Five” and “Final Five” women's teams won Olympic gold in London in 2012 and Rio de Janeiro in 2016, respectively, in what will go down in history as a golden age in American women's gymnastics.

More compact four-person teams tended to tilt toward all-arounders, because there is comfort in knowing that anyone could potentially fill in for a teammate if necessary. That was pivotal for Team USA in Tokyo when Simone Biles was sidelined with the “twisties” — all-arounders Jordan Chiles and Sunisa Lee stepped in to take Biles's place on uneven bars, balance beam, and floor exercise, and their clutch performances resulted in a team silver medal.

With five people, the Olympic format — typically, three perform in team finals, and all three scores count — does leave room for an apparatus specialist or two who can contribute big scores on one or two events, while also challenging for individual medals.

The U.S. men tend to choose five strong all-arounders, but a blended team of all-arounders and specialists has worked well for the women in the past. In 2012, supervaulter McKayla Maroney rounded out a team of four strong all-arounders in Gabrielle Douglas, Aly Raisman, Kyla Ross, and Jordyn Wieber. In 2016, Madison Kocian, whose trademark was the uneven bars, helped Biles, Douglas, Raisman, and Laurie Hernandez clinch team gold. Maroney and Kocian both went on to win individual silvers on their best events.

It's worth noting that though Maroney and Kocian could be considered specialists because neither did all-around at the Olympics, both competed it throughout the high-stakes team selection process to show that they could. The last true specialist to make the women's Olympic team was Alicia Sacramone, who did everything but bars, in 2008.



BLYTHE LAWRENCE

Blythe Lawrence has covered four Olympic Games and is a freelance contributor to TeamUSA.org on behalf of [Red Line Editorial, Inc.](#) [🔗](#) Follow her on Twitter [@rockergymnastix](#) [🔗](#).