

WHAT MAKES CHEERLEADING

UNIQUE

To anyone familiar with cheerleading, or has been to a competition, the uniqueness of the sport is self evident. But, how do you describe the uniqueness of cheerleading as a competitive athletic discipline?

Cheerleading routines consist of cheers, chants, dance, partner stunts, dance, jumps, pyramids and tumbling. Half of all routines are purely dance, and in other team divisions the following percentage of scores apply.

- Partner Stunts / Pyramids 10%
- Jumps 10%
- Tumbling 5%

Thus it can be clearly seen that it is not merely about building pyramids. It is a combination of totally unique trained skills that as a whole gives a performance and technique style that is like no other discipline.

Let us examine each element of a routine:

DANCE: Unlike other dance styles that perform to an audience close to the front of a stage, cheerleading dance evolved at huge stadiums where the audience is 360 degrees around, looking down, and up to 200 metres away. Teams generally of 20 to 40 dancers. Thus the style had to become hyper sharp and punctuated, with precise and exactly synchronised motions to be easily visible from a distance. Use of visual ripples and formation change effects, rather than subtle expressive finger movements that no one could see.

Pompoms are used to visually accentuate arm motions at a distance. It is the overall visual effect and the precision of execution that makes it dynamic and effective. No other dance form is even similar.



CHANTS: Short repetitive crowd-motivating words, announced in a trained manner to clearly carry to the far reaches of an arena. Cheerleading is spectator involving, eliciting response in projecting a positive message of enthusiasm. The use of voice as a technique is totally unique in sport.

CHEERS: Like chants, but longer and more involved, used as a performance skill to entertain rather than rouse response. Competition routines will usually consist of half music, half vocal in time used.

PYRAMIDS: Cheerleading is the only discipline to build such techniques in teams of 7 to 30 athletes, as single interlocked combination, and using significantly different building techniques to disciplines such as Sport Acro Gymnastics. Cheerleaders have to wear shoes for safety, require mandatory safety spotters to cover extended stunts, and with strict limits on building height. Most of Acro techniques would not be allowed in cheerleading under NF rules.

PARTNER STUNTS: Similar to above, but generally with teams of five comprising one flier; one spotter and three bases. Acro is normally carried out in pairs, women's trios or men's fours.

JUMPS: More than a dozen cheer-specific jumps are scored on precision of execution, many are unlike anything used elsewhere.

TUMBLING: Perhaps the only part of cheerleading that uses techniques that are used in gymnastics, but at 5% of total marks any case for non-uniqueness for cheerleading would be hard to justify on just these grounds. Similarities between other existing sports are vastly more self evident.

Cheerleading has to be seen to be appreciated, and stands alone. Practiced in at least 42 nations.