



Uneven Bar Cables.... Uptight or flexible?



Perhaps the fastest piece of equipment to wear out in your gym is your cable tighteners on your uneven bar cables. If you find yourself frequently replacing the rollers in your cable tighteners..... GOOD! You are taking the right steps to save wear and tear on other parts of your bars.

First let's look at why the cable tighteners are so fast to wear out. I'm always proud of the coaches when I see them take that last-minute check around the bars making sure that everything is right. Here's the quick check of the bars:

- ✓ Rails at the right height and level? Check.
- ✓ Bars chalked? Check!
- ✓ Turnbuckles tight with lock nuts engaged? Check!
- ✓ Spreader bar at the correct width? Check?
- ✓ Snap locks engaged? Check!
- ✓ Spin locks tight? Check?



I see that routine repeated hundreds of times at every meet and then oh yea, one more push or pull on the cable tighteners. That last push is somewhere between a nervous habit and an isometric contraction exercise. Either way, it probably a bit of overkill.

The original purpose of the cable tighteners was to provide a last-minute tightening method that allowed us to leave the cables loose enough to make necessary width and height changes and then have a quick method to retighten the cables. Here's the interesting part. The first cable tighteners were made of fabric which meant they wore out quickly by rubbing on steel cables. It was also done with bungy cords, chains, rope, and one was a very sophisticate two-piece aluminum locking mechanism. All were materials softer than the steel cables. Some manufactures put tension measuring devices on their cables that indicated when the cables were too tight. Who knew they could be TOO tight??

Too tight seems like a nonexistent condition today as we see coaches apply that one last pull. I'm often asked why we don't make the rollers out of harder material. Some manufacturers do. With the rollers being softer material, it guarantees that they will wear out before doing any damage to the cables. Hardened rollers will wear evenly with the cables and the cable may wear out first. It is much more dangerous to have a cable fail and much more expensive to replace the cables than to replace the rollers. ***The rollers are designed to wear out first.*** It just must be an area of regular inspection. So, spoil the rollers and spare the cables.

One last word on uneven bar cables, the tighter the cables, the less flex on the bar. So, if you're looking for the flex of the bar to assist the gymnast, then maybe you shouldn't tighten the cables quite so far. Over tightening puts additional strain on all parts of the bars. With flexible rails, we need to allow for a little movement. Uneven bars like high bar are an active piece of equipment. Movement is essential. ***#Makeyourgymsafe***

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