

Lakes Area
Gymnastics
2013-2014

TEAM HANDBOOK

Overview of Lakes Area Gymnastics Team Program

Welcome and congratulations on joining the LAG gymnastics team!

GENERAL PHILOSOPHY

LAG feels that gymnasts need to grow at their own pace. Our teams receive a strong physical, ethical, and moral foundation, along with many valuable qualities that will carry over to “life after gymnastics.”

- * self discipline (knowing what has to be done to achieve a goal)
- * self motivation (working hard because they want to)
- * time management (time is a valuable commodity)
- * respect (for danger, teammates, judges, coaches)
- * sportsmanship (playing by the rules, winning, and losing)
- * dedication (staying focused on their goals)
- * leadership
- * concentration
- * teamwork, friendship, friends, FUN
- * nutrition and physical fitness

Gymnastics excellence means becoming the best you can be individually. This requires setting long- and short-term goals, time, energy, and hard work to achieve these goals. The results will speak for themselves.

TIME COMMITMENT

Competitive gymnastics is a year round commitment. Because of this, occasional personal sacrifices will sometimes have to be made. This is not to say that gymnastics must consume your lifestyle. Our coaching staff realizes that family, academics, and church must be priorities. Ultimately, we hope that our athletes learn to budget their time when other activities arise. If the gymnast is going to be late or absent, please call the gym and leave a message for the coach before practice. Gymnasts are expected to attend all scheduled workouts. At the team level, year round practice is required. The gym phone number is 346-1540.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The gymnasts are expected to attend all practices; however, the coaching staff understands that there can be many different conflicts with practice times (mandatory school events, schoolwork, conferences, special events, church, sickness, etc.) The occasional absence is understandable, but to progress, consistent workouts are essential. Any gymnast that does not follow their practice schedule may be moved to another class level/time. Remember being at practice is a commitment for you, to your team-mates and your team. If you are gone you are letting not only yourself down, but your team and its coaches.

LAG FEES

Monthly tuition fees vary per level. You will be notified of any increase in tuition if your child's schedule or level changes. There are no family discounts given on team tuition since the tuition is already discounted on an hourly rate. Payment is due prior to the tenth of the month. A \$25 late fee will be assessed per student if fees are not received by the tenth of the month. Late fees will not be waived.

TEAM UNIFORMS

Team member wear the LAG team leotard at meets and shows. All gymnasts are required to purchase a team leotard. Please contact the staff if you do not have one.

COMPETITIONS AND SHOWS

Gymnastics meets and shows are typically held at gymnastics center and public facilities. Meets and shows are usually held during the week. Team members will compete in all meets or participate in all shows unless excused by the head coach. Acceptable reasons are serious illness, injury rehabilitation, and family emergencies. Coaching staff selects the meets and shows we feel most benefit our program. Parents are responsible for transporting their child to and from shows. Please remember that the meet/show time table actually begins the night before with a good night of sleep. Below are our requirements for competitions and shows.

- Gymnasts are to remain with the team at all times.
- Parents are not allowed to contact the gymnast during warm-up, rehearsal or competition/show. They may talk to their child at the completion of the awards ceremony or after dismissal from the show.
- Gymnasts expressing negative comments or opinions before or during the competition will be removed from the meet.
- Gymnasts are required to remain in uniform for the awards.
- Hair must be arranged away from face and not interfere with gymnast's movement. For safety purposes and general impression, hair must be up tight with no loose pieces. If a gymnast needs help, the coaches will assist her with her hair.
- Gymnasts must arrive at the competition or show site according to the agenda they receive for each event. If a gymnast is late, depending on the incident, the coaches will decide if the gymnast will be allowed to participate.
- Gymnasts are not allowed to have food on the floor. Water only.
- No gum is allowed in the gym.

ADVANCEMENT

Advancement to the next level is determined by the coaching staff using the following criteria: Skill level, mental attitude, success at gymnast's current level, possible success at the next level, gymnast's desire, and gymnast's work ethics. There is not a specific "time of the year" that the gymnast will advance, as it will vary for every gymnast and every situation.

WORKOUT SCHEDULE

Workouts include a flexibility, strength, and individual event rotations ranging in length from 30 minutes to one hour. Visualization of skills and routines will also be incorporated into practices. The rotation and training schedule is predetermined by the team staff. Please see that your daughter arrives on time. If your daughter needs anything taped prior to her workout (taping will be done by coaches only), please keep that in mind when determining your arrival time. If you find it necessary to pick your daughter up early, please notify a member of the coaching staff prior to the beginning of practice so appropriate workout alterations may be made if needed. Under no circumstances is a gymnast to leave practice early without informing one of her coaches. We understand that a gymnast may participate in other activities; however, to attain a high competitive level, gymnasts must be committed in their practice times.

INJURIES

Injuries happen for several reasons: 1. lack of concentration 2. being out of condition 3. excess body weight: in order to perform to the best of your ability each athlete must maintain a safe and healthy body style for gymnastics.

Unfortunately, injuries are part of gymnastics. Our director is safety certified and kept up-to-date on safety techniques. Our number one goal is to create the best facility possible within a safe environment. However, injuries can happen anytime we involve motion, speed, height, and body parts. If your gymnast becomes injured, the coaching staff needs to be kept informed on the rehabilitation process, and it is necessary that the coaching staff speak with the physician regarding the injury.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURE: Most injuries that will occur in gymnastics will simply require an ice pack. If this is the case, the gymnast will ice the injured area for 20 minutes, and the coach will then evaluate the injury. The gymnast may be able to continue with her training at that time, or she may be asked to work on strength or flexibility for the duration of practice. The parents will be notified of the injury at the end of practice. If the injury requires emergency care, the parents will be called immediately. The paramedics may be called depending on the severity of the injury. During competitions and shows, the parents may be asked to the floor only if an injury is severe and requires immediate medical attention.

INJURY POLICY: If a gymnast becomes injured, they are still required to continue attending all scheduled practices. It is necessary for the gymnast to continue their strength, flexibility, rehabilitation, and visualization training. This will allow them to return to event training immediately after the injury is healed, minimizing the gymnast's training recovery period. The gymnast will train three times the amount they normally would in flexibility, strength, and visualization in order to prepare them for a timely return when they are fully healed. There are exceptions to this policy depending on the severity of the injury. These exceptions will be determined by the coaching staff after consulting with the gymnast's physician.

Monthly tuition rates will not be altered because of an injury if the gymnast plans to remain on the team after the injury, however if a severe injury occurs monthly fees may be adjusted by the coach/parents.

TEAM COMMUNICATIONS

We have an open communications policy on our team with gymnasts, parents, and coaches. If any concerns or questions should arise, feel free to contact a member of our coaching staff and they will be happy to listen to your concern or question and do their best to help. Coaches will hold a conference at the parent's request, and the coaches may also request a conference with the parents.

With any major concerns or frustrations, the following outline must be followed.

1. "24-hour cooling off period" Parents must wait 24 hours before contacting the coach with their concerns or frustrations.
2. Contact the coach. 218-346-1540
3. If the issue does not get resolved with the coach, you may then take your concern to the parent liaison.
4. If the issue does not get resolved at this level, the liaison will take the issue to the board.

The coaching staff will post all information on the lobby bulletin board under TEAM NEWS. It is necessary that parents check the board daily to know if the gymnast forgot to bring a note home.

SAFETY

Team gymnasts will walk through a safety clinic once a year to ensure they are aware of and responsible for safety rules and regulations. They will be reminded of and practice safety falls, trampoline safety, and general gym safety.

VOLUNTARY TERMINATION

If a gymnast decides to leave LAG they will need to inform the head coach as soon as they make their decision. At the time we are notified of your decision, you will be asked that your daughter's last day at LAG be that one. The reason for this policy is that it is unfair for the gymnasts training at LAG to be sharing coaches' attention with a gymnast who will no longer participating at LAG. **If a gymnast drops out of the team program, there is a one-year waiting period before she may join the team again.**

If he/she decides to rejoin the all back fees must be paid to the coach.

Any account debts or credits will be taken care of by the head coach.

BEING A COMPETITIVE GYMNAST

CONGRATULATIONS! You made the team!

To have made the LAG team you have already worked hard to develop your gymnastics skills. You will find that you will work even harder now that you will be competing or doing shows in gymnastics. Sometimes practices will be very frustrating. It may be that you are not able to do what you tried very hard to do. Be patient with yourself. Work on a smaller part of the skill you are trying to attain. It takes many failures and many, many hours to learn to be a fine gymnast.

There are exercises to build your strength and flexibility. These exercises must be done over and over again and may be assigned to do at home. They are essential for developing your body to perform well.

You may be afraid to try a new skill. Your coach is there to help you. Work to overcome your fear. You are a member of a team. All of you are putting forth your best effort to become better. Encourage the other members of your team! If someone learns a new skill after trying for a long time, tell your teammate, "That's great!" You will maintain a positive attitude toward your training and be supportive and encouraging to your teammates at all times. Cooperation with the coaching staff and respect for the facility, equipment, and other gymnastics classes is expected. Be enthusiastic for gymnastics at practice!

Fulfilling a Gymnast's Responsibilities

Being a member of the LAG team requires that you:

- Attend practices regularly, and on time
- Dress properly, leotard only, no tights or shorts
- Listen carefully to your coach, and ask questions if you don't understand
- Work hard during practice, at everything
- Be polite and respectful at all times to coaches and teammates
- Display good sportsmanship at all times
- Dream high – anything is possible!
- Smile and have fun

Attitudes:

- Set realistic and progressive short- and long-term goals.
- Be willing to work hard and find reward in that.

- Be willing to take instruction without resenting constructive criticism. Listen and trust your coaches.
- Stay positive and refuse to be frustrated – work through it.
- Rebound back from setbacks and defeat, to apply yourself.
- Be polite and well mannered in training, shows, and competitions.
- You need mental courage. You may be apprehensive about a move, but stay calm to work through the fear with the coach’s reassurance.

Flexibility and Strength:

- Continuously work to increase flexibility and strength in all joints and muscles.

Nutritional Guidelines

Team members are expected to maintain good nutritional habits. Gymnasts need proper nutrition to keep their bodies fueled for tough workouts. Good nutrition leads to a healthier, longer life. Gymnasts can bring a small healthy snack to practice in case they need to take a break and refuel.

Discipline Procedure

Whether in the school classroom or in the gym, the best environment for learning is a disciplined one. Discipline in this context means that students follow the rules. The coaching staff will discuss appropriate behavior in the gym. If a discipline problem occurs the procedure is as follows:

- First, the coach who noticed the problem will discuss the problem with the gymnast, and the gymnast may be asked to sit out for a period of time.
- Upon a second offense the parents are called and will be made aware of the situation. The gymnast will be sent home for the night.
- Finally, if discipline problems persist, a conference with the gymnast, the parent, the head coach, and the coach most directly involved with the problem is held. A solution that is suitable for all should be reached.
- If there is another occurrence, the gymnast will be removed from the team program.

Gym Bags

Team member must maintain their own “gym bag” which should include: one pair of grips (if used), wrist bands, hand lotion, tape, emery board or pumice stone, wrist supports, etc. (items depending on your level) Tape will be provided for injuries; however, gymnasts will be responsible for purchasing tape for other uses (such as taping their grips).

Gym Environment

Gymnasts are expected to respect the gym environment and help keep it clean. This means picking up your grips and wristbands at the end of EVERY practice! It also includes picking up your tape at the end of practice and making sure you've got your water bottle before you leave! Gymnasts should help keep our gym clean, whether it involves the above-mentioned tasks or other things such as picking up mats at the end of practice. A policy will be posted in the gym regarding grips/wristbands that are left out.

Injuries

It is extremely important that gymnasts communicate their injuries to coaches. It may be hard, but the only one that knows exactly how much you can tolerate is you! Please use the following steps if you have trouble training due to an injury:

- Tell the coach immediately if you have slight pain due to an injury (do not wait until it hurts so bad that you are in tears!). The coach will then ask you to work through your pain for a few more reps or minutes, depending on what the gymnast tells us they can tolerate. gymnastics, as with any sport, requires the athlete to "work through" small amounts of pain. However, you must work through the pain while still maintaining 100% effort on the activity.
- After working through the pain for a few more turns, and if the gymnast is Experiencing any amount of pain that is not allowing them to perform up to 100% on the given activity, they MUST stop the activity. This is where the injury becomes a safety issue. The gymnast must immediately notify the coach when this occurs. The coach will then ask the gymnast to replace the activity with conditioning or stretching or with another activity that is not hindered by the pain.

PARENT OBLIGATIONS

First and foremost, decide whether or not this program is for you and your child.

- Can she handle an accelerated pace?
- Can you handle the commitment?
- Can she handle the increases in training time? In some cases it can double.
- Can she handle the discipline, commitment, and conditioning?
- Is gymnastics what she wants to do?
- Can you trust a large portion of your child's growth and development to the members of the LAG coaching staff?
- Can you afford it financially?

Financial Commitment

You must be willing to undertake the expense of gymnastics. You will be the bank for leotards, tape, warm-ups, travel, doctors, tuition, dance choreography for floor routines, gym bags, floor music, etc. etc. etc.

If fees in arrears beyond 30 days, the "no-participation" rule will go into effect.

Transportation

Parents provide transportation to practices, some meets, and special events. Promptness is expected!

Insurance

LAG will furnish, at no cost to the participant, limited accident insurance. For the 2013-2014 season there will be a \$25,000 maximum coverage, \$100 deductible. Contact the coach, parent representative, or the board of directors for details on this limited coverage.

Coach/Gymnast/Parent

The parent, at times, has one of the most difficult roles on the coach/gymnast/parent team because they have the smallest role in actually controlling performance. At the same time the parent feels a much higher sense of personal attachment to this performance. They ride a roller coaster at times of feeling failures and successes of their children personally, and feeling a greater responsibility for these. This combination of a high emotional stake in a performance that they have so little direct control is stressful! Many times this stress causes them to lose sight of their role on the team and attempt to work beyond their limits. This can cause stress for the coach and the gymnast, as well as reducing the effectiveness of this three-part team.

What do we mean by parents going beyond their roles? The most common ones are of course the parent that begins to “coach” their child. This is the parent that begins to try to make technical corrections on the way a skill is being done, or attempts to make decisions on what skills should be in a routine, or feels they know which group their child should be in, or gives corrections to their child at a competition or show. If you choose LAG as the gym to train your child, be sure of your decision and then let us do our jobs. Once your child walks through the gym doors or onto the show or competition floor, they are our responsibility. **We will not allow interference with our coaching. If you have a problem, please talk to the coach at the appropriate time.** We will explain but we will not discuss coaching issues. We are not perfect, we may make mistakes but we are professionals that have trained and continue to train to do this job. If you do not feel that we are doing a good enough job or are not qualified you have the ultimate control of removing you and your child from this program.

Some Guidelines for the Parents

Danger signs—they indicate the parent needs to reevaluate their actions and attitudes.

- Observing every practice – intently.
- Learning as much as possible about technique and applying it (unless you would like to apply to coach).
- Comparing your child and their progress to other gymnasts on the team.
- Verbally abusing the gym, its coaches, and/or its facilities yet remaining in the program (this usually demonstrates a deeper frustration or problem – identify the real problem).
- Video taping every meet/show and requiring your child to review it at home with you.

Incorrect

You beat Susie – way to go!

Did you do your (current difficult skill) today?

Correct

You beat your highest all around score!

How did practice go?

If you win today, there's \$20
in it for you.

Do your best!

That judge has never liked you.

Work hard; you'll do better next time.

She's been at this level for 2 years;
it's time to move up!

As long as she is progressing (even slowly),
and is happy and safe, I'm happy!

Become the essential link in the training triangle of coach/gymnast/parents. Your trust in the coaching staff is paramount. Gymnasts need more encouragement at "plateaus" in their skill development. At times when no progress is being made, or at least it seems that way, a supportive hug after practice sure feels good (if her shoulder don't ache!). encouragement is great, but please refrain from pressuring the child to "outperform" anyone else or to attempt skills which may be beyond their present physical ability and therefore are dangerous. Truly believe that we have your daughter's best interest in mind, and we ask you to support the coaching staff during the rough times.

Find out about your gymnast's progress periodically. A good time for a brief conference with the coach is just after practice. For a full discussion of your gymnast's progress, make an appointment with the child's principle coach. Advise coaches on extremely adverse situations or stresses the gymnast may be undergoing outside the gym.

Should problems arise, feel free to communicate with the coaching staff. We would much rather bring the problems to the surface immediately rather than hear about your discontent through the ever present "gossip grapevine".

Nutritional Guidelines

Team members are expected to maintain good nutritional habits. Entire families could follow nutritional guidelines for a healthier, longer life. As parents you need only to monitor the types of foods that your athlete consumes. It does not in any way mean a stringent diet! Simply being conscientious about what they are eating will keep any "bad habits" from developing. There is no need to "carb load" before a meet or show. A meet is much less physically demanding than a practice, with the gymnast already having good nutritional habits. The only food recommended is something that digests easily.

Meet/Show/ Routine Selection

Meet/show selection decisions will be made by the coaching staff, and gymnasts will be asked to compete/participate. Athletes are expected to attend all meets/shows assigned unless the coach excuses the gymnast after discussing it with the parents. Skill selection, training techniques, competitive level, music selection, choreography and all other similar matters are the responsibility of the coach, **NOT THE PARENT**. Parents are encouraged to

communicate concerns to the coaching staff but discouraged from attempting to be part of these decisions.

Meet/Show Behavior

No one can prepare you for your daughter's first competitive/show gymnastics experience. Each one of you have a unique relationship with your child. We rely on you to create a relaxed and supportive atmosphere prior to, during, and after the meet/show.

For the best interest of your athlete, please do not say anything before a meet/show, ex. "point your toes," "run hard," "smile," "stick your routines," nothing at all. Just some encouraging words, "good luck" or "have fun" will be sufficient. Once warm-ups or rehearsal have started, you will no longer communicate with your athlete until the meet/show is completely over. If you do wave your child over during any part of the warm-ups or meet/show, the coach is not going to allow her to leave the group. So please, don't put your athlete in that situation. Also, parents are not allowed on the meet/show floor. Most meets/shows have a roped off observation area, usually bleachers. Because we as coaches know what we want each gymnast to concentrate on, we don't want conflicting messages coming up when they are competing/performing. We like the athletes to have clear conscious and subconscious mind. This allows us to focus their thoughts where they are needed with no interference. Again, if you feel we are missing something important like a coaching tip, please feel free to come and discuss the matter with the coaching staff, but a meet/show is not the time or the place, and coaches will not discuss techniques with you there.

It is not the parents' responsibility to discuss judging and scoring during competitions. Under NO circumstances are the parents or gymnast to converse with the judges. We are representatives of LAG and are expected to behave in a friendly and polite manner.

Parents number one job is to be their athletes biggest fan, during good meets and especially bad meets. On the road to the final goal there are great practices, good practices, bad practices, great meets, good meets, and bad meets. Remember that attainment of personal victory was preceded by many failures. How do you think your athlete will feel after a fall on the beam and they look up to see their parents shaking their heads in disgust? That can affect their confidence level for the rest of the meet. Ask yourself, "How do I perform when I'm feeling very self conscious? How do I feel when I'm filled with confidence?" Remember, there is no such thing as failure, it's only one step to a final goal.

Every bad practice or bad meet is as important as a good/great practice and meet. They are all steps towards a final goal. They are learning experiences. Please be your child's biggest fan through anything; they need you!

Lakes Area Gymnastics

Team Commitment

I have read and understand the team rules and the responsibility descriptions for coach/gymnast/parent. I feel that this sport has many benefits to offer my family, myself, and my child. In choosing LAG I feel that my child's goals can be reached. I make a commitment to fulfill my roles to the best of my ability and to support this program in my words and actions. If I have a disagreement or problem with the staff or program I will contact the head coach first to attempt to resolve the situation. If at any time I feel that this is no longer the best program for my child I will notify LAG and stop her training at this gym. I also understand and agree that if at any time my actions or words become detrimental to this program, I will be asked to remove my child from the program.

PARENT SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

PARENT SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

I have read the team rules and responsibility descriptions for coach/gymnast relations. I understand these rules and make a commitment to do my best to fulfill my responsibilities on this team. I also make a commitment to compete/perform.

GYMNAST SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

LAKES AREA GYMNASTICS

INSURANCE RELEASE

Anyone who participates in any of our programs must be covered by either their own insurance or insurance which is available through Lakes Area Gymnastics. A parent or guardian signature on this form confirms that the participant is covered by either their own insurance policy or by a policy available through LAG, thereby releasing LAG and its coaching staff from any financial obligation the participant may encounter during an athletic injury.

Insurance policy coverage available through LAG is limited. For more information please check with the coach, the parent representative, or the LAG board of directors.

My son or daughter is covered by: (Please check all that apply)

Private Insurance _____

LAG Insurance _____

Both _____

Participant's Name _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____
(please print)

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____