

Gymnastics Academy of Charleston – West Ashley

Team Handbook for Girls and Boys 2022-2023

Gymnastics Academy of Charleston West Ashley would like to welcome your family to our Competitive Team. Through this team handbook, we hope to give you more insight into how our Competitive Team program operates and answer many of your questions.

First, and most important, we aim to provide an excellent gymnastics experience. We are here to support the gymnasts in reaching their goals. To make those goals and dreams come alive the gymnast, parents and coaches must function as a team.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide excellent training and instruction in the sport of gymnastics, cheerleading and sports fitness in an excellent facility. Our highly trained and enthusiastic staff will help your child excel and reach their goals.

Athlete Expectations, Commitment and Priorities

At GAC WA the coaching staff is committed to making a positive difference in the lives of all the children they teach. The Team Program is more disciplined than the recreational gymnastics programs by design, therefore, the expectations of the athlete are higher. These expectations are reasonable and include but are not limited to the following:

- A GAC WA Team Member is expected to enter the gym with a positive attitude.
- A GAC WA Team Member is expected to have fun while learning.
- A GAC WA Team Member is expected to set reasonable goals.
- A GAC WA Team Member is expected to respect his/her *instructors, teammates, and him/herself*.
- A GAC WA Team Member is expected to try her best.
- A GAC WA Team Member is expected to be on time and maintain good attendance.
- A GAC WA Team Member is expected to maintain good academic standing.

Priority of Commitment

Although GAC WA expects gymnastics to be a high priority for team members, we believe it should never come before family and religious commitments as well as academics.

Priorities of Commitment

- Family/Religious Commitments
- Academics
- Gymnastics and other activities where commitments have been made. (Note: For optional level gymnast, it's not recommended to schedule additional sports or activities during competitive season – November-April/May)

During the competitive season, a gymnast is not permitted to miss practice the week prior to a competition due to other sports, activities or vacation. If the gymnast misses practice the week prior to a competition, it will be the discretion of the coaching staff to determine whether the gymnast will be safe and prepared to compete in further competitions. No refunds for missed competitions will be given.

Team Descriptions

The Women's Development Compulsory and Optional program was developed with the belief that all athletes, regardless of their potential, must have a solid foundation of basic skills to advance safely.

Development Compulsory Team Level 2

This is the GAC WA introduction to team. While they do get placement awards, their efforts are focused on learning basic skills, shapes, flexibility and conditioning elements. These young gymnasts participate in local meets.

Development Compulsory Team Level 3 - 5

Level 3-5 have routines that are set forth by USAG. These levels are progressive in nature, building upon the skills required at the previous level. These gymnasts participate in local and regional meets.

Development Optional Team Level 6-10

Levels 6, 7,8,9 and 10 are considered the beginner, intermediate, advanced intermediate, and advanced optional levels. Routines are designed around the gymnast's strengths and away from their weaknesses. This team requires a high commitment level from the parents and gymnasts.

TOPS

(Talent Opportunity Program), is a talent search and educational program for female gymnasts ages 7-10 and their coaches. During the months of June and July gymnasts age 7-10 are evaluated on physical abilities at the state, regional, and national level.

Xcel Team Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, Diamond

The Xcel Program is designed to offer a broad-based experience outside of the traditional Jr. Olympic Program.

This team can meet the needs of an older introductory gymnast or a gymnast wanting to commit slightly less time to team.

It can also meet the needs of a gymnast who is in between levels and does not wish to repeat that level. Instead, giving them an opportunity to thrive in Xcel.

These gymnasts will compete in local meets with the opportunity for regional and national qualifiers.

Mobility Requirements

Gymnasts at GAC WA are evaluated twice a year.

The first evaluation is in the spring. Your child's coach will evaluate each gymnast, then a coach's team meeting is held to determine the placement that will meet each gymnast needs on our team.

The second evaluation occurs in August. Each gymnast will be tested on the skills in the level they are training. The coaches then have another meeting to decide for the fall which level will be the best placement for the gymnast.

Moving up to the next level is dependent on several factors:

- Each skill at the new level must be met before a gymnast will be promoted to the next level (ex. A gymnast without a kip on bars will not compete as a level 4 until the goal has been met with proper form)
- The gymnast should be mentally prepared for the next level
- Commitment, maturity, attitude, fear and work ethic of the gymnast

Moving up is a coaching decision and at the discretion of the Team Staff. This will not be influenced by parents. Rather, what the coaching staff believes is in the gymnasts' best interest.

Communication

- Email is the main form of team communication. Please be sure to check this regularly to stay up to date on team events, practice changes, meets, etc.
- **Team coaches are available to communicate through email or call the front desk and leave a message for them. Please **do not** use social media or their personal cell phones to reach them. Coaches will respond within 24 hours Monday – Thursday and 48 hours on the weekends.**
- Stacey Croston (Director/Customer Service Manager): gacwa.stacey@gmail.com
- Coach Jordan (ALL Levels Girls Team Coach and Manager): devlinjl@g.cofc.edu
- Coach Hannah (Level 3-5 and Xcel Team Coach): gacwa.hannah@gmail.com
- Coach Randy (T & T Coach/Coordinator and Boys Team Coach): gacgym@gmail.com
- Coach Val (Fast Trak Coach and Owner) Val@gymnasticsacademyofcharleston.com

PRACTICE

Rules and Guidelines for Successful Team Membership

PROMPTNESS – Team members should always report on time for training. Warm-up is an important part of the training process. The flexibility gained from your warm-up is how the body gets ready for activity. A good warm up limits potential injury. Being on time for warm-up also shows respect and sets a disciplined tone for training sessions where goals and objectives may be discussed. Being on time is VERY important. **In addition, because of Safe Sport guidelines, Parents who are late picking up children from practice will be charged \$25.00 for every 15 minutes late to pay for additional staff that must stay with your child.**

TRAINING APPAREL – Team members must train in a leotard only. Other clothing presents a potential spotting problem and/or safety issue and are not deemed to be standard of dress within our sport.

PARENT CONDUCT - Parents should not disrupt training by talking to or motioning to your gymnast. Distractions can create an undisciplined training environment or may be cause an injury. Parents need to remember that the coach is responsible for all training decisions. If there are concerns or questions, we encourage an open line of communication if it is handled in a professional and solution-oriented manner. Parents should refrain from approaching a coach during training but may address any concerns before or after practice time.

When a parent starts to coach their child, they interfere with the very performance they are trying to improve. The gymnast can only concentrate on one part of her performance at a time. If a parent is telling the child to “keep their legs straight” to “smile” or to “run faster” they are directing the child’s attention away from what their coach is telling them. The child cannot make two corrections at once so either they do both poorly, or they focus on one and not the other. No matter which choice they make, someone is going to be upset with them and they will not progress in the way they should. Coaching your child in the gym or at home puts them in a no-win situation.

Some Guidelines

Danger signs- watch for these. If you recognize yourself in these descriptions you probably need to reevaluate your actions, your role, and your attitudes.

Observing every practice- intently

“Coaching” your child during practices or once they leave the gym

Praising or punishing your child based on your observations

Finding your sense of worth or happiness is dependent on the success of your gymnast

Constantly comparing your gymnast and her progress with others

Verbally abusing the gym, coaches or program while still placing your child in their control

Video taping each competition and requiring your child to review it at home with you.

Looking up online the scores of every meet and every gymnast and comparing them to other gymnasts in her age group, level or team.

RESPECT – Team members must listen to, respect, and adhere to the training outline established daily by the coach. Disrespect will not be tolerated and immature attitudes are discouraged. Major conduct violations include uncalled for crying or pouting, cheating on assignments, lying, unproductive effort, improper tone of voice or improper body language when addressing teammates, coaches and/or other adults.

MISSED TRAINING – Parents should inform the office when a child is unable to attend training. The effort will assist coaches in planning daily requirements, goals and objectives. It also shows a

certain level of respect for the program. Likewise, if a child has to leave practice early, please inform the coach at the beginning of training so that they may make any adjustments to the day's assignments. This also serves as a safety measure so as to know that our athletes are not in harms way.

Attendance

- Gymnasts are recommended to attend 100% of your required training sessions. Attendance will be taken and less than 80% attendance will require evaluation of the gymnast to remain in the level and or team she/he was placed. Decreased attendance reduces the rate of progress, competition readiness, but more importantly creates safety issues.
- Team members are excused for vacation. Tuition will not be pro-rated.
- **If your child is sick enough to miss school, your child should also not come to practice.**
- There are no make-ups at the team level for any practice missed for personal reasons.
- If you qualify for Regionals, Easterns, or Nationals after State Meet you will only be able to miss two unexcused absences for spring break, vacation etc. or be disqualified to compete.

COMPETITIONS

Gymnastics Academy of Charleston WA Team philosophy is that the coaches, the gym, the parents, and the gymnasts are all part of the team. Please remember gymnasts and parents alike, the gym is noted by judges, coaches and other gym parents for a number of things. Appearance, behavior, manners, etc. and especially the manner in which the gymnasts conduct themselves at all times. Sportsmanship is important in this sport both from the gymnasts and parents.

Competition Schedule and Information

At the beginning of the school, a tentative schedule of meet dates and locations will be handed out. Meets may be added, changed or canceled. We will be attending meets throughout the school year depending on your gymnast's level. We will send out entry information (including place, date & meet entry fees). Meet entry fees will be due by the deadline given.

- **Girls Level 2, 3, Bronze, and Silver meets WILL likely be on some Fridays. Some Boys Meets start on Fridays as well.**
- Time schedules for meets are unfortunately always TENTATIVE and LATE. USA Gymnastics requires the hosting team to provide the time schedule to gyms participating in the meet at least 10 days in advance of the scheduled date, but it could be as late as only those 10 days.
- PLEASE understand that the hosting teams DO NOT WELCOME calls from parents asking for the meet schedule.
- We will provide you with the time schedules, maps, directions, and any information made available to us as soon as we receive it.
- **PLEASE DO NOT CALL OR EMAIL THE HOSTING TEAM!**
- Note any leotards left at the gym for resale due to not competing will be charged a \$50 resale fee.

- There are no refunds for competition fees or coaches' fees except for injury when a doctor's note is received and submitted to the meet before the host team deadline.

Be ready

- ✓ For a big crowd
- ✓ To pay CASH entry into competitions (usually around \$10-\$15 for adults)
- ✓ To have to park and walk
- ✓ For the unexpected, sometimes things do not run-on time or last-minute schedule changes!

GAC HOSTED Meet Expectations for Parents

VERY IMPORTANT!!

- Each family will be expected to volunteer 2 full sessions for Palmetto Patriots Classic (Feb 3-5, 2023) that GAC hosts. Sessions could be 3-4 hours long. One of the sessions MUST be to help set up or tear down.
- If you are unable to volunteer 2 sessions, a charge of \$100 per session not worked will be assessed and payable to GAC. GAC uses funds for coaches training and education. This fee will be used for that purpose or another applicable reason such as equipment.
- All families must be in good standing with the gym for volunteer sessions or assessment payment of \$100 per session/meet before the gymnast will be registered for their respective state meet.

Meet Etiquette for Parents

- Make sure that your gymnast is on time (20-30 minutes prior to the start of general stretch), in the correct attire and with hair properly done.
- Once you have escorted your gymnast to the competitive area, wish her luck and direct her to her coaches. At this point, please do not signal or talk to your daughter until the competition is concluded. We ask the gymnasts to focus all of their energy on their competition and we want as few distractions as possible.
- Never speak about another club, coach, gymnast or judge in a negative manner.

- Under no circumstances is a parent ever to approach a judge or meet official before, during or after an open workout or competition to comment on, complain about, or even ask about the format, the timing of the meet, a score or an awards ceremony.
- Parents should not approach the coaching staff during a warm-up session, competition or after the session. The coaches are very busy, and any concerns about the competition or the performance of your child should be addressed the following week at the gym.
- In case of an injury during competition, please wait for your child's coach to give indication that you should come on to the competition floor. In most cases, you will not be invited onto the floor because the injury will be relatively minor, and the coach and/or trainers will take care of it. In cases of more severe injuries where the gymnasts may be finished for the day, it would be appropriate for you to come see her after she has been moved from the competitive area for treatment.
- Before each out of town competition you will be given travel and hotel information. It is the responsibility of each individual gymnast's family to make travel, lodging and rental car arrangements for all away competitions, clinics, camps and other team events unless otherwise stated by the team staff.
- Sometimes for out of town competitions it is difficult for one or both of the parents to attend. Please be aware that more often than not arrangements can be made with another family to help, so that every gymnast can attend every competition

Meet Etiquette for Gymnasts

- Arrive at the competition the competition site 30 minutes before open stretch.
- Find his/her coach as soon as they are asked to come out on the floor.
- Remain on the competition floor at all times during the competition.
- The gymnast must have proper attire on including GAC Team competition leotard and warm-ups.
- All gymnasts' hair should be very neat.
- If makeup is worn, it should be worn in moderation.
- No jewelry permitted except for very small stud earrings.
- Behavior of GAC Team gymnasts should always be one that they and their coaches will be proud of. Discussions regarding your teammates, other teams, coaches, etc. should all be done with respect. Gossip and negative talk are unacceptable.

- Crying will not be tolerated. Any gymnast unable to control emotional outbursts during the competition or awards will be asked to leave the competition arena.
- Be courteous, respectful, and polite to all meet officials, hosts and hostesses, competitors, and coaches.
- Stay with the team the entire competition. Once the gymnast has entered the competition area there should be no contact between the gymnast and her parents unless there is an emergency.
- Cheer for all members of the GAC Team.
- Accept any awards or scores given to you with courtesy and gratitude.
- **Stay for the entire awards ceremony** in your warm-up attire unless released by the coach.

Athlete/Coach/Parent Triad

(USA Gymnastics)

Below is an overview of the **Athlete/Coach/Parent Triad**. This relationship is an exercise in compromise, communication and discipline. The athlete must always remain at the top of the pyramid, the purpose and motivation for the existence and necessity of the coach and parent. We wish you the best of luck in your role in this noble endeavor.

The Athlete

First and foremost, the athlete is essential or we would not exist. The athlete must have the desire to train the sport, the dedication to face and overcome obstacles and the perseverance to push on when the going gets tough. The athlete is on the team to learn from their coaches, from their teammate and from themselves. The athletes must make mistakes, make corrections and drive themselves to transcend beyond their perceived limitations. In our sport, athletes compete individually, against themselves. However, they are not alone...their coaches, their teammates and their parents are by their side lending support and cheering them on. In the end, the athlete will learn and remember the sum total of the entire experience in the sport.

The Coach

The coach is a mentor and a guide. The coach plans the training and competitive cycle for every athlete on the team. The coach leads by example and the team follows in their footsteps. The coach is not always right and sometimes makes mistakes. The coach is constantly learning and striving to find new ways to teach, motivate, inspire and propel their athletes to the next level of performance. The coach is a communicator and mediator interrelated to the athlete, the team, the parent, the coaching staff and rival teams.

The Parent

The parent supports the athlete, the coach and the team. The parent is a spectator, allowing the athlete and the coach to perform their roles. The parent is a role model for the athlete, demonstrating disciplined behavior, showing respect and performing their duties to the highest level. The parent is strong enough to watch their athlete fail and tender enough to give a hug when they need one. The parent will occasionally cross the line with the athlete or coach and be humble enough to apologize and return to their territory. The parent is an advocate for their athlete but does so in an appropriate manner. The parent provides balance, encouragement, and love.

Being a Winning Parent

Understanding the Mission and Philosophy of our Team

(By Randy Sikora, Gym Owner and Team Parent)

A key component to your child's success is you. USA Gymnastics coined the term "Athlete Triad"; Athlete, Parent & Coach working together to achieve the best possible experiences and outcomes.

First, last and always is the Athlete, the center of our attention and focus. Often this reality is lost (or misplaced) due to negative outside factors such as ego (of the coach or parent), an unhealthy emphasis on winning, too much focus on the outcome rather than the entire process and/or a parent living vicariously through their child.

Coaches and Parents have choices to make for their athlete/child. When making a decision we must ask;" What overall, long-term benefits will the athlete receive? Will the process be both fun and rewarding? What are the possible dangers or harmful side effects of this decision? Are the goals set too high, too low, too fast, too demanding, or for a benefit of someone other than the athlete?"

Coaches perform a delicate balancing act everyday. Our ability to walk this fine line comes from years of experience, education, planning, successes and learning from our mistakes. Some days, an emphasis will be placed on technical corrections while others will be focused on strength and speed, form and execution taking a lesser role. Overall, the training plan will be a complete picture. However, taken as a snapshot it will be incomplete and out of context of our grand plan.

Parents play a vital role as the supporter, both of the athlete and the coach. When your child needs a little encouragement, it is your job to give them a hug, tell them how wonderful they are and send them to train with a renewed confidence. It is your responsibility as a parent to know your child's goals, dreams, challenges, limitations and achievements. After all, you are in the

child's corner for life. It is your challenge to effectively communicate to the coach and listen, seek to understand, and do what is best for your child.

We are a sum of all of our experiences. Our mission is to provide a fun, safe, nurturing, challenging and rewarding environment for athletes to have a healthy experience both overcoming challenges and learning from failure.

Just because you can-doesn't always mean you should? Parents are driven to do what they perceive as the best thing for their child. This may not be realistic, healthy or focused on the long-term best interest of their child/athlete. In the end, the parent has the choice whether or not to support the coach's decision, compromise with the coach or find another coach with a more congruent philosophy.

It is Helpful When

By Tom Burgdorf, Gym Owner

Team parents can be helpful to the gym or they can hurt. I think we all want the best for the athletes. It is Helpful When – the athletes get to practice on time. Make that a little early.

It is Helpful When – the athletes are motivated to work hard when they walk in the gym. The parents can help with this on the car ride to the gym. Talk to your athlete about their goals for the practice. Talk to them about the benefits of working hard and listening and following directions. Have them ready for their practice.

It is Helpful When – the parents let the coaches know of any problem that the athlete is facing. Bad test, big test coming up that they are worried about. Sickness in the family that might be on the mind of the child that could hurt their practice.

It is Helpful When – the parents pay attention to all of the verbal and written information from the coaches and the gym.

It is Helpful When – the parents meet deadlines regarding event fees. Make that getting the event fees in early. This takes a lot of pressure off the coaches and the secretaries at the gym.

It is Helpful When – the parents come to the coaches directly when they have a concern or question.

It is Helpful When – the parents reframe from negativity in the parents waiting area, parking lot and bleachers at the meets.

It is Helpful When – the parents pick their children up on time after each practice and competition. Make that early to pick up their children. (I can't tell you how difficult it is for a coach to work hard all evening long, get the gym ready for the next day, think about getting home to say good night to their children and look up to see 2 team athletes sitting at the window in the lobby looking out into the parking lot for the headlights of their late parents.)

It is Helpful When – the parents occasionally mention to the coaches how happy their children are at the gym. Sometimes the coaches get a little too many "concerns" without that pat on the back. Just occasionally is all they need. Parents are hugely important to all youth sports programs.