

# Lakes Area Gymnastics



## Competitive Program Handbook 2016-17



LAG Office Phone – 320-219-9724

LAR Office Phone – 320-762-2868

# Lakes Area Gymnastics Competitive Program Handbook

## *Information and Expectations for a Successful Team Experience*

Congratulations – your hard work has paid off and you are a member of a very special group of competitive gymnasts. Often times, gymnasts and parents think this is the ending destination, but this is far from the truth. Competitive gymnastics is just the beginning – there is so much to learn and improve upon.

Your coaches are excited to be working with you as you take this step. However, in order for a gymnast to be successful, there needs to be a three-way partnership between coach, gymnast and parent(s). As coaches, we welcome you to keep the lines of communication open with us so we may do our role to the best of our abilities.

Competitive gymnastics will mean several things for your family (depending upon the program and the level):

- **Longer and more frequent practices.** With gymnastics, repetition and conditioning of the body is the key to success and this only happens through proper practice.
- **Larger commitment of time and finances.** As your child becomes more involved in the sport of gymnastics, you will need to be prepared for a growing commitment of time, money and effort.
- **The need for flexibility and dedication.** Being on a team requires commitment not only from the gymnast, but from their family. It is not only a sport, it is a lifestyle. You will need to be flexible to accommodate practice times when there is appropriate gym space and coaching availability – this can mean changes in evenings and even weekends. Your coaches are dedicated to the gymnast’s development, and ask that both gymnast and parent(s) are equally committed.

### **Coaching Philosophy**

My coaching philosophy is that strong basic skills grow stronger gymnasts. Gymnastics is a sport of many skills. However, ALL advanced skills have roots in some very common shapes and basic skills. It may seem that your gymnast has been working on the same skill or shapes for a very long time. What often seems to be the same skill, is really many different drills to transition that skill to a variety of uses. These are called progressions. Proper training and reinforcement of the right way to perform a skill will lead to not only greater long-term success, but also provides a much safer training environment.

I do not believe in letting gymnasts “throw” skills. I believe they are most successful (and safe) when they take the time to train them the right way. If I do not let your child do a skill you feel

they should be doing, there is a good reason for it. It is never a punishment, or because I don't believe they are capable of learning it. It simply means there are one or more things they need to work on before they tackle the skill.

Hard work and success is the "new" fun. Gymnastics should always be fun, however as your daughter strives for competitive success, fun comes from training hard with teammates, mastering new skills, and celebrating goals as they come. Success is not determined by winning a meet, or being the best. It is determined by the effort and the attitude a gymnast brings to their sport.

Each gymnast is different and has different strengths and different weaknesses. I will challenge your gymnast to put in their best effort. I will encourage them to learn and laugh through their mistakes, to face their fears by working through them (not avoiding them), and will ask them to give me 100% of their effort when they are at practice. I will celebrate their successes, but will follow each celebration with the next challenge.

I have high expectations for each gymnast. This is not a competitive drive – it is because I believe in their abilities and want them to experience the growth and the accomplishment that hard work brings. Not only does this make them stronger gymnasts, but it helps them grow as stronger, more confident individuals.

With this being said, gymnastics is only one component of your gymnast's life. I understand that there needs to be a healthy balance between family, school and gymnastics.

### **Team Member Expectations**

The decision to join the LAG Team program is a big one and reflects a commitment for an entire year. Once you commit to being a member of a team, you are making the commitment to yourself, your coaches and your fellow teammates.

#### **Gymnast's Commitment**

The following guidelines are expectations for ALL gymnasts in the LAG Team program:

1. Each gymnast is required to attend all regularly scheduled workouts. Be on time to all workouts. This means on the floor, and ready to work out when practice begins. If for some reason you will be absent, please let your coach know. We realize that our gymnasts have other commitments, but it is our expectation that these athletes learn to budget their time accordingly.
  - JO gymnasts can have no more than two non-approved missed practices a month (see definition below). If more than two occur, disciplinary action will take place such as being unable to compete at a meet. If attendance is frequently a problem, gymnast may be removed from the team.
  - Xcel and pre-team gymnasts do not need pre-approval to miss practice, but do need to let their coach(es) know if they will not be in attendance. If too

many practices have been missed leading up to a competition, the coach will determine whether or not the gymnast is ready to compete.

- Approved absences: Can include family vacations, religious commitment or occasional school-work commitment. These must be approved prior to missing practice by head coach.
2. Proper workout attire is a must. A properly fitted leotard is the only acceptable workout attire. Tight fitting workout shorts will be allowed. T-shirts and shorts make spotting difficult, and should not be worn. Hair should be appropriately pulled back so it does not interfere in any way during the workout. No jewelry, other than stud earrings, may be worn during the workout. For the courtesy of your coaches and other athletes, proper and appropriate hygiene is expected.
  3. Work hard and try your best. This is all we will ever ask of you and this is always what you should demand of yourself. Do not compare yourself with other gymnasts. You are different and will advance at different rates. Only concern yourself with things that YOU can control which are YOUR attitude, YOUR effort...YOUR gymnastics. Gymnasts who are being disruptive in practice will be given a warning. If they ignore the warning, they will have to sit out. If they continue to be disruptive, parents will be called to come and pick their child up. Practice time is not for socializing, but for improving skills.
  4. No food or drink (except for a water bottle) is permitted on the workout floor. All snacks must remain outside the gym. Occasionally we will hold candy challenges where this rule will be broken 😊.
  5. Gymnasts may not leave the workout floor without the permission of the coaching staff.
  6. Alert your coach when your body is telling you to slow down or stop. If you are sick, on medication, or are injured, we need to know. Pain is your body's way of telling your body to stop. You know your body best. In addition, alert your coach if you have engaged in any strenuous activity prior to the start of practice (ie practice for another sport).
  7. Treat your coaches and teammates with respect. **There is no place in the gym for rude or belittling comments, displays of anger or disgust, or talking back to coaches or other adults.**
  8. Be honest. Cheating is the ugliest form of disrespect. It shows disrespect to your coaches, your parents, and most importantly to yourself. If you cannot or will not complete an assignment, be honest about it.
  9. Maintain a positive attitude when facing fears and frustrations. Gymnastics is the most demanding and difficult of all sports. All athletes suffer setbacks, frustration, fear and defeat. Expect these things, learn from them, face them and overcome them. Set high goals and achieve them step-by-step.

10. No team member is allowed to use alcohol, drugs or tobacco products. We spend many hours together trying to be the best we can be. You simply cannot be the best you can be when you are using these products.

### **Parents' Commitment**

Before accepting a position on the team, you must determine whether or not this program is right for you and your child.

- Can your child handle the training time and the accelerated pace?
- Can she handle the discipline, commitment and conditioning required for a successful team experience?
- Can you trust a significant portion of your child's growth and development to our staff?
- Can you afford it financially?
- Can you make the time commitment to get your child to and from practices and meets?

If you accept, this means you understand you are a part of the team as well. In reality, parents have one of the most difficult jobs, since they have the smallest role in actually controlling the performance outcomes of their gymnast. At the same time, parents often have a higher sense of personal attachment to performance. This can cause a lot of stress, not only for the gymnast and coach, but also for the parents. Because of this, it is important that you fully understand your role.

1. Make sure gymnast attends all regularly scheduled workouts and special functions. Please have your child there on time – this means ready to go, not just walking through the door.
2. Communicate with the coaches regarding any problems. We are here to make your child stronger through this sport. We always have the best interest of your child and their teammates as our priority. Complaining to other parents cannot solve your problem, nor can we work to solve them if we are not made aware of the situation. We will not allow interference with our coaching. We are professionals who have trained and continue to train to do this job well. If you do not feel as if we are qualified, you have the ultimate control of removing your child from our program.
3. Check the bulletin board, gymnast mailboxes and your email regularly to stay current with team activities. E-mail is our primary source of communications, so please make sure we have up-to-date emails on file for your family.
4. Ensure that your child gets enough sleep, proper nutrition, gets to and from the gym on time and has proper clothing and equipment.

5. Provide unconditional love, encouragement and support to your young athlete. Please do not compare your child with other athletes. Each athlete is different, with different strengths and weaknesses. It is unfair to you and your child to compare her to another athlete. Instead, look for the progress your child is making in gymnastics and celebrate it!
6. Please do not coach your child. Your comments detract from what the coach is doing by giving the gymnast another thing to think about; it interferes with the development of the coach/athlete relationship, which is critical for long-term success.
7. Please stay in the lobby area while watching and waiting for your child. Parents are welcome to stay and observe practices from the lobby (or during watch week, come on in!). Young gymnasts tend to want parent's approval and therefore tend to look for you to watch them. This leads to less concentration, which could lead to falls and injuries, neither of which we want. Gymnasts must learn to listen to and trust their coaches while in the gym. If your gymnast achieves a new skill, we will always welcome you to come in after practice to see it.
8. Please let a coach know before practice if you think your child might have a problem due to illness, medication or injury.
9. Please attend parent meetings and respond to communications in a timely manner.

### **Financial Obligations**

You must be willing to undertake the expense of gymnastics. This sport is not inexpensive. You will be the bank for tuition and fees, uniforms, travel, doctors, meets, floor routines, USAG fees, etc.

Team fees are based upon the full year of participation. There will be vacations, closings, and possible cancelations during the year. There are no pro-rated fees due to missed or cancelled classes. These may include, but are not limited to school holidays, days missed when coaches are out of town with another team for competitions, or days missed for inclement weather.

Practice times may vary. In order to have the most successful program possible, we need to have full access to equipment and floor space, as well as qualified coaches available for each practice. This may mean shifting practices to accommodate for other classes or seasons. We will do our best to give adequate notice of any schedule changes.

**Each family will be required to sign up for one of the automatic payment systems with the LAR office.** Your monthly fees will be automatically deducted from the bank or credit card account of your choice. Any changes in fees will come with an email notification. All inquiries for billing need to be addressed with the LAR office at 320-762-2868. If you are withdrawing from the program, a written note will be needed to cancel the automatic payments from your account.

- There will be no pro-rated fees due to other activities. The only exception is for a family vacation. We understand that family vacations are an important part of life. LAG will pro-rate one week of tuition for vacation per 12 month period (September – August). When you would like to request a vacation week, please stop by or call the LAR office at 320-762-2868 at least 2 weeks in advance to insure that proper amount of tuition adjustment.
- Injured gymnasts are expected to participate in practice and gym activities to the extent possible. It is often possible to work around injuries and to turn a difficult time into something positive by increased work on flexibility, strength, specific events or skills. There is no reduction in fees until the total amount of time missed exceeds two weeks, and then ONLY if the gymnast cannot participate in workouts in any way. At that time, the tuition may be adjusted depending on the circumstances. Any gymnast who is out for two weeks or more and requests a tuition reduction MUST present a return to activity release signed by their doctor.
- We understand that your gymnast may want to participate in other sports. If this is the case, the Xcel program is the appropriate team placement for your gymnast. Xcel is designed to work around other sports and activities. The Junior Olympic program is designed to be your gymnast's sole extra-curricular commitment. Xcel gymnasts need to inform the coaches when their other sport begins and ends, along with their practice and meet schedules. There are no make-ups for missing their regular practice hours. In order to maintain a spot on the team, fees payments must be maintained during the time that is missed. For Xcel gymnasts who are taking off to compete during the HS gymnastics season, there will be a \$50 fee during November-February in place of the regular team fee.

If for some reason you are unable to fulfill these commitments, competitive gymnastics is not the sport for you and your child.

### **Fundraising**

Team fees are kept low in order to allow all who want to be able to participate to be able to do so. Because of this, we will have a need to do fundraisers throughout the year to upgrade equipment or for other program needs. It is expected that each family participates in these fundraisers throughout the year. A consistent failure to do so will lead to a discussion with the family and the potential for higher fees.

### **Mobility**

Mobility from one level to another is addressed on a number of issues – mastery of skills, poise, work ethic, meet performance, and attitude in practice. All are considered when making a determination whether a gymnast is ready to move up to the next level. As stated before, it is our goal to build gymnasts having strong basic skills that provide a foundation for future

success in the sport. I will keep an open line of communication with both gymnast and parent and answer questions about mobility concerns at any time.

**Mobility typically happens in June. 2<sup>nd</sup> year level gymnasts may have an opportunity to move up a level during a season at the discretion of the head coach.**

### **Private Lessons**

Private lessons may be scheduled with any of your child's team coaches. Currently the price is \$30 per hour, made payable to LAR. Up to two individuals may share a lesson if OK'd with the coach in advance. At all times the normally scheduled classes and events in the gym take priority over any private lesson. All team members taking private lessons must be current in their class fees and other obligations before scheduling a lesson.

Private lessons are best used for one or two skills where a gymnast may be struggling or falling behind compared to their overall level. They should not be used simply to gain a competitive advantage over another gymnast.

### **Gym Jumping**

Every gym has its own unique feel. It is your decision where your child trains for this sport, but once you make a commitment to LAG, it is expected that you do not train at other gyms without the permission of the head coach. This includes private lessons, open gym and gymnastics camps. Should you intend to evaluate another program to meet your child's need, please let the head coach know. This is not something that should be heard from another family or through the rumor mill. If you choose to leave LAG for any reason, your gymnast is not guaranteed their same position back on team.

When gymnasts from another gym express interest in our program, we will tread lightly, giving the utmost respect for the gym they are coming from. Gymnasts will be evaluated through a try-out process based upon availability of a team spot.

### **Communications**

We have an open communications policy on our team with gymnasts, parents and coaches. If any questions or concerns arise, feel free to contact the coach. They will listen and do their best to help or find a solution. There is typically one formal conference each year, but other meetings can be arranged upon request – please do not pull a coach from the floor to discuss a problem. If your child has a coaching issue, we ask that they address the issue with the coach. If necessary, you may be there to support them, but they should be the one to hold the discussion. It is an important life lesson for them to be able to handle conflict in this way.

We will do our best to communicate with you in a timely manner. When a response or a deadline is given, please do your best to communicate back to us in that timeframe.

Email is the preferred method of communication, so please make sure than any changes to email addresses are given to the head coach.

### **Locker Room and Cleaning**

Team gymnasts have a shared locker room at the gym. It is expected that all gymnasts help maintain a clean locker room area. Please eat food in the lobby, not the locker room. Improper use of the locker room area may result in the privilege being revoked.

### **Cleaning**

Team gymnasts and families are expected to help clean the gym two times per year. This will include general cleaning, rotating matting, cleaning the pits, common areas and locker rooms.

### **Emergency Procedures**

In the unlikely event of a medical emergency involving your child, the following procedure will be followed:

- A. Emergency first aid will be administered, including requesting emergency medical technicians and an ambulance if needed.
- B. You will be contacted using the emergency contact information you provided the LAG office.

### **Inclement Weather Procedures**

We take your child's safety seriously, and as such will not risk your safety or the safety of our coaches to hold practice if there are unsafe travel conditions.

Please check the LAG Facebook page, local radio stations or the gym phone voicemail for special announcements if you are uncertain whether practice will be held due to inclement weather. **If District 206 cancels school or school is let out early, we will follow the school policy and NO CLASSES will be held.**

In the case of inclement weather cancelations, we will not do make-up days. Tuition is based monthly, and not "per class". If there are excessive cancellations, we will determine an appropriate course of action.

## **COMPETITIVE SEASON INFORMATION**

Competition is one of the most exciting rewards of a job well done. Traveling to meets is not only a reward for the athlete's hard work, but is also a motivation for continued excellence and an opportunity to see and learn from others who may be performing at a higher level than they are.

Our program philosophy is based upon competing at a level where the gymnast is fully proficient at each mandatory skill. This does not mean making a skill once or twice and then competing it, but rather consistently performing the skill(s).

Winning is not our primary goal. We are more concerned about personal best scores and improving upon skills or sections of routines than whether or not we make it to the podium.

### **Meet Scheduling**

Meets will be scheduled between May and June, with a tentative meet schedule being available early summer. Gymnasts can anticipate competing in 4-6 meets per year. It is expected that gymnasts in JO Levels 3-10 and Xcel Levels Bronze-Gold attend all scheduled meets. Xcel Platinum/Diamond level meets will be registered for on a meet-by-meet basis due to some gymnasts participating in high school gymnastics during the season.

Host clubs determine the schedule. The meet schedule will list a range of dates. We will give you the exact date and time of competition when received from the host club (this is usually two-three weeks prior to the meet). It is best to make sure that your calendar is cleared for all days in the weekend as it is not uncommon for last minute changes to affect the schedule.

The average meet takes around three to three and a half hours to complete. Most run in a format of

- Open Warm-up – stretching and basics.
- Timed Warm-up – Warming up on their first event.
- March-in – Gymnasts march in and are presented. National Anthem is usually played.
- Competition – start at an event and rotate in Olympic order based upon where they started. Olympic order is Vault, Bars, Beam, Floor.
- Awards – gymnasts should plan on attending even if they did not place.

### **Meet Etiquette**

- Athletes should arrive at the competition site no later than 15 to 30 minutes in advance of their scheduled registration time. They should report to their coach upon arrival and

if their coach is with another level, wait in the bleachers with their teammates until their coach gathers them.

- Athletes should not wear nail polish, jewelry, or show visible tattoos. Hair should be competition ready. Gymnast should also wear flesh-colored under garments that are not visible.
- Gymnasts should have all necessary supplies in their bag. Grips, extra hair supplies, BandAids, athletic tape, etc. Please leave unnecessary items and winter coats and boots with parents.
- Gymnasts should always cheer for their teammates and the other team members they are rotating with.
- Gymnasts are expected to deal with frustration and disappointment in a disciplined manner. Crying and other uncontrolled emotions will not be tolerated and gymnast will be asked to remove themselves from the competition floor until they can regain control.
- Gymnasts should not concentrate on their score or placement during a meet – let the coach worry about that. Gymnast should be concentrating on their next performance.
- Be courteous, respectful and polite to all meet officials, hosts, competitors and coaches. The only time you should approach a meet official is to present prior to competition and to thank them following.
- Gymnasts should attend awards in their warm-ups. Accept your award graciously and congratulate fellow award winners.
- Parents are not allowed on the competition floor. We also ask that once your child enters the competition arena that you do not have contact with them until after the meet is over. Their job is to focus on their performance. Your job is to cheer and support them. DO NOT coach your child.
- No flash photography is permitted during a meet. This is for the safety of the gymnasts. Please check your device to make sure that it is turned off.
- Cheer on ALL gymnasts – not just your own.

### **Meet Eligibility**

- Each gymnast must be a USA Gymnastics Athlete Member. This fee is paid yearly in July and remains in effect for one season. The athlete must have their card with them at each meet and be prepared to show it if necessary.
- Gymnasts must be current on all LAG obligations – including fee payments.
- Attendance: Missed practices can mean missed competitive opportunities. If your gymnast is sick/injured the week of a meet this will most likely mean that the coaching staff will not recommend attending that meet. There are no refunds for missed meets.
- Athletes must be physically, emotionally and mentally prepared for competition. Coaching staff will determine if for any reason a gymnast is not ready to compete and communicate this information to the parent.

## Fees

Monthly tuition is based upon level. A late fee of \$10 will be applied if not received by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month. Monthly tuition is based upon 45 weeks of training per year. Class days and times may fluctuate, especially during the competitive season and the AAHS gymnastics season (since they train and hold meets at the gym).

The following are other fees that you will be responsible for and an approximate timeframe for when they are due:

- USAG and MN Head Tax Fee: Approximately \$75 per year – payable June/July.
- Meet/Coach Fees: Roughly between \$215 and \$260 per year – payable Oct 1<sup>st</sup> for Xcel and JO Compulsory gymnasts and January 1 for JO Optional gymnasts.
- Leotard – Between \$100 to \$200 – leotards are used for at least 2 competitive seasons – payable June/July.
- Warm-ups - \$125 – used for multiple seasons – payable June/July
- Bag – \$50 – optional expense. May choose to use a neutral colored bag instead. Payable June/July.
- Routines & Music – Xcel Levels Gold – Diamond and JO Levels 6-10. Choreography is \$100. Prefer to use in-house coaches with an understanding of routine construction. Music costs vary but run around \$55 when purchased from a reputable gymnastics company. Coordinated with choreographer. Schedule early for guaranteed placement.
- Grips – gymnasts will need grips shortly after perfecting their kip. These run around \$50. Optional level and upper level Xcel gymnasts should have two pairs broken in during the competitive season.

Meet fees are non-refundable. If for some reason a gymnast cannot compete, they do not get their meet fees returned. If a gymnast quits or is removed from the team during the season, there are no refunds on the above fees.

Thank you for supporting your child as they grow in the sport of gymnastics. Gymnastics is a fantastic sport that develops strong bodies and even stronger minds and spirits. I am excited to work in partnership with you and your gymnast and to providing a positive and rewarding gymnastics experience.

Coach Kelli

Email: [coachkelli.lag@gmail.com](mailto:coachkelli.lag@gmail.com)

Please sign and return:

## **Lakes Area Gymnastics Team Commitment**

I have read the LAG Team Handbook from cover to cover and understand and agree to the guidelines set forth.

I believe this sport has many benefits for me, my child and my family. In choosing LAG, I believe the program is a good fit for the goals we have set.

I make a commitment to fulfill my role to the best of my ability and to support this program in my words and actions. If at any time I feel that this is no longer the best program for my child, I will notify LAG in writing 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, my child will be asked to leave the program.

I also understand that policies and procedures may change throughout the year. Modifications to this document may be made via letters or electronic communications from coach or office.

Should I have any questions regarding any of the policies or procedures, I understand that I should contact my team head coach for the appropriate answers.

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Parent Signature

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Date

I have read the team rules and responsibilities. I understand these rules and make a commitment to do my best to fulfill my responsibilities on this team. As a member of the team, I commit to competing to the best of my abilities and working to be a positive and encouraging member of the team.

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Gymnast Signature

Date