



2007-2008

Swiss Turners  
Boys Team Booster Club  
Parent/Gymnast

**HANDBOOK**

## **WELCOME TO SWISS TURNERS BOYS TEAM GYMNASTICS!**

Congratulations on being invited to one of the best boys gymnastics programs in the country. This program has produced State, Regional, National and even World Champions, but even more that that we have produced great kids.

We hope this handbook will give you an overview of what to expect in this wonderful, but sometimes-wacky world of competitive boys gymnastics. Obviously we can't cover every situation or question that might arise, so please feel free to ask questions to any of the board members, or any other team parent you see hanging around.

### **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Swiss Turners Gymnastics Academy celebrated its' 100th anniversary last year. Since its' founding in 1904, the academy has persevered through wars, social changes, and technological advances. Through it all Swiss Turners has adhered to its founders' philosophy of developing a sound mind in a sound body. The academy's longevity is a testament to the perseverance of every gymnast who has been associated with this organization and the dedication of the members of the Swiss Society, coaches and parents who support them.

Through the years, Swiss Turner's gymnasts have met great success. As early as 1911, members of the Swiss American Gymnastic Association began participating and medalling in national competitions. In the 90 years since, Swiss Turner's gymnasts have made their mark on the national and international stages. The discipline and character these young people acquired through gymnastics helped them achieve great successes in other areas of life as well.

It all started with the Swiss groups that immigrated to America. In 1904, a group of "Turners", as Swiss gymnasts were called, decided to form an organization, like in the old country, that would help perpetuate the sport of gymnastics. For 100 years, the Schweizer Turn Verein Helvetia, the Swiss name for Swiss Turners, has carried on its multifaceted organization through its gymnastics, the Swiss Singers, the Swiss Men's Fraternal Society and the Swiss Ladies Society. To this day you can see many of them in their red aprons frying up apple fritters at the International Folk Fair and participating in various other fundraising events to support the gym.

Today the Swiss Turner's teams are under the tutelage of Head Coach Stacy Maloney and his wonderful staff. Stacy's involvement as a coach for the Olympics and the World Championships has given Swiss Turners international recognition. Stacy achieved history book status this summer when his gymnast of 13 years, Paul Hamm, became the first American male gymnast to win the World All-Around Championship, along with the gold medal on the floor exercise. As Head Coach at Swiss Turners, his gymnasts & teams have brought home over 25 national championship titles, as well as, multitudes of regional and state titles. USA Men's Coach of the Year in 1999 and Olympic Gymnastics Coach of the Year in 2000, Stacy has continued the Swiss Turner's tradition for excellence in exhilarating style.

Participating in gymnastics is a family affair. It takes the commitment and sacrifice of the entire family to enable the gymnast to compete. Not only do the families support them at the meets, they also have to arrange their schedules to make sure that dinner is ready early or that it is still warm when the gymnast

gets home. They do the miles of driving to and from practice every day and get their gymnast to the competitions. The families are truly the team behind the Swiss Turner's team member.

## **PROGRAM FORMAT**

The Swiss Turners Gym is committed to providing a positive gymnastic experience for everyone, regardless of level of ability. Our gymnasts range from first time walkers to Adults. Swiss has 2 major divisions, recreational gymnastics and team gymnastics. Gymnasts who display an interest, talent, and level of commitment are invited to the team program.

### **TEAM GYMNASTICS**

The Swiss Turners Gymnastics Team separates the girls and boys teams. This handbook only deals with the boys program.

- ❖ Level 4 – This level is made up primarily of gymnasts entering their first year of competition. This is a *compulsory* level, which means that all gymnasts perform the same routine. Level 4 competes at meets in Wisconsin, and their season finishes with the Wisconsin State Championships. This level practices 4 hours per week.
- ❖ Level 5 – This level is also a compulsory level. Level 5 competes at meets in Wisconsin, and one in the Chicago area. The team competes at the Wisconsin State Championships, as well as the Region 4 Championship. This level practices 8 hours per week. The top 20 boys in the 7-9 age group are named to the Wisconsin All-State Team.
- ❖ Level 6 - This level is also a compulsory level. Level 6 competes at meets in Wisconsin, Chicago and Iowa. The team competes at the Wisconsin State Championships, as well as the Region 4 Championship. This level practices 10 hours per week. The top 20 boys in the 8-9 age group are named to the Wisconsin All-State Team.
- ❖ Level 7 - This level mixes compulsory routines with a wider variety of optional skills that can be performed. This level again will increase the number of hours it has practice. The team will have a more limited meet schedule in Wisconsin, and is more apt to travel outside the state, and usually at least once outside the Midwest. The team competes at the Wisconsin State Championships, as well as the Region 4 Championship. The top 6 boys at the Regional Championship are named to the Regional Team, and are invited to an expense-paid week at the Lake Owen Gymnastics Camp.
- ❖ Level 8– This was a new level for 2005. This is an optional level, for gymnasts who typically do not fall into the age group levels of levels 9-10. This level competes at most of the same meets as the level 7-10's, and the season ends with the Region 4 Championship. Swiss does not currently have any boys in this level.
- ❖ Level 9-10 – These are the highest levels of gymnastics offered by the Junior Olympic program of the USAG. This team also travels more often for competition, as there are fewer gymnasts within the state at this level. The team competes at the State Championships and Regional Championships. The top 6 boys at the Regional Championships are named to the Region 4 team and are also invited to the expense-paid week at the Lake Owen Gymnastics Camp. The Region 4 team also competes for the region at the National Championships. Individual gymnasts at Regionals that receive a qualifying score may also compete at the National Championships as individuals. The top 14 boys at the National Championships in level 9 are named to the National team. The top 12 level 10 gymnasts at both the 14-15 and the 16-18 age groups move on to the USA Championships, where they each vie for one of 7 National Team spots.

Region 4 Consists of the 6 States: Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Iowa. Regionals rotate among 5 states (North and South Dakota share their turn). In 2008 Iowa will host Regionals (in place of the Dakotas); 2009, Minnesota; 2010, Iowa; 2011 Wisconsin, etc.

The Junior Olympic Nationals may be held anywhere in the country, typically the first week in May. In 2008 they will be held in Michigan.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **PRACTICE SCHEDULES**

The practice schedule for team gymnasts is interwoven with the recreational practices. This is because many of the boy's team coaches also coach recreational classes. Therefore it is very difficult for the gym to change practice times to meet individual family needs. There may be slight changes in the summer schedule vs. the school year schedule. There are no "make up" practices.

### **LOCKER ROOM RULES**

The use of the locker room is a privilege. No horseplay, or rowdy behavior will be tolerated. As a limited number of lockers are available, gymnasts are encouraged to share to make sure everyone has one.

### **PRACTICE GEAR**

Gymnasts are expected to wear shorts, with no zippers or denim. Some coaches want the boys to have socks also. Your son's coach will let you know when you need grips, usually when he moves to level 6. Each gymnast will need two pairs of grips, one for high bar and one for rings. Each pair costs around \$40.00. If possible, consider getting a large group together to get a group discount. Each boy will also need a roll of tape for rips and such. A small bag to put the tape and grips in is a good idea. Also it is a good idea that each boy has his name on all of his training gear in case it gets lost in the gym.

### **MEMBERSHIP LIST**

All gymnasts and their families are listed on a membership list. The list contains each family's telephone number and address as well as each gymnast's name and level. If for any reason you prefer not to be listed, please inform the office at time of registration. Please inform the office of any changes to this information so that our records are correct and current.

### **ATTENDANCE AT PRACTICE**

Gymnasts are expected to arrive on time for practice and be ready to follow the direction of the coaches. It is not necessary to send a written note if your gymnast has missed practices. However, you may wish to inform the coach if absence was due to illness or injury and your gymnast is not physically able to give full participation during practice.

### **PICK UP AND DELIVERY**

Parents are asked to schedule their arrival at practice no earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of the session. Pick up should be scheduled no later than 5 minutes after the session's scheduled finish time. We are able to maintain supervision only within these limits and therefore request your compliance with these guidelines.

### **MOVING UP TO A NEW LEVEL**

Gymnasts usually move up to a new level at the beginning of June. It is at this time that the new practice schedule (and team fee), are applicable. Generally a gymnast will spend one year each at level 4 and 5, and two years at each subsequent level. If parents have any concerns whether their child will be moving up or not, they are encouraged to talk to their child's coach.

### **PRIVATE LESSONS**

Private lessons are a great way for gymnasts to "catch up" on a skill, or even move ahead of the pack! The times and days are worked out between the family and the coach. 2 gymnasts may share the lesson,

and the cost is split evenly. Cash should be paid directly to the coach, and payment is due at the time of the lesson.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Effective communication is key to enjoying your gymnastics season. Misunderstandings, gossip, and confusion can be easily avoided by just asking! Every team family has a mailbox by the front doors. Check it often! Important information regarding upcoming meets, fundraisers, and booster club dues statements are put there. Please never leave cash in someone's mailbox. Copies of information are also put up on the boys' team bulletin board.

Swiss Turners also has a great web site. Information on gym hours, staff biographies, special events, etc. is listed here. There is also a section dedicated to the boys' team, where the scores are kept updated. This is a great way to see your child's progress throughout the season. The Wisconsin men's gymnastic program, as well as the Region 4, and J.O. programs also have great websites.

### **END OF YEAR BANQUET**

A great way to celebrate our gymnasts is at our end of year banquet. This is a great time to get to know the other parents and the coaches in a social setting. This event is usually held in the middle of May and is just for gymnasts and their parents. Each gymnast receives recognition for his entire season.

### **FUTURE STARS**

The Future Stars Program is sponsored by USA Gymnastics and is open to 8-9, 10-11, & 12-year-old age groups. Additional skills (different from regular competition) are required for the Future Stars National Championships which are held at the Olympic Training Center, Colorado Springs, CO. Gymnasts must qualify at Regional Future Star Evaluations to be eligible to attend the Championships, usually held in October. Top qualifiers are named to that year's National Development Team and may be eligible to attend the Future Stars Camp held at the Olympic Training Center (1 week camp is free to gymnast). Gymnasts are exposed to 'National' level competition and meet gymnasts from around the US.

### **COMPULSORY ROUTINE UPDATES**

Every Olympic year, USA Gymnastics updates the Junior Olympic Gymnastic Codes. Last year they also renamed the different levels/classes (see above). The code lists the compulsory routine requirements, as well as optional routine skill requirements and bonuses. So the compulsory routines the gymnasts learn will stay the same until the next Olympic year. The code also updates execution deductions and bonuses. Throughout the 4 years, and even within a year, revisions and clarifications are made as deemed necessary by the USAG and it's member coaches.

### **SCHOLARSHIPS**

In Wisconsin there are no high school men's gymnastics teams. The only way for interested boys to compete in this sport is through local clubs, like Swiss Turners. It is also through these clubs, and through Regional and National competitions that colleges recruit gymnasts for their gymnastic teams. Several Swiss gymnasts have gone on to college on gymnastic scholarships.

### **MENTORS**

Each new Swiss Gymnast will be assigned a mentor family closer to competition season. These are families who have been with Swiss for several years, and have learned the ins and outs of gymnastics. If you have any questions about competing, feel free to contact your mentor family, or any one of the Booster Club Officers.

### **GIFTCOLLECTIONS**

From time to time a collection may be taken to give a gift to the coaches or a gymnast. This may be for the Holidays, end of year, a graduating senior, etc. No one should feel obligated to contribute; these are gifts and are not mandatory. Any dollar amount a family feels appropriate is fine. Swiss has a wonderful history of generosity, and these collections are a reflection of that giving spirit.

## **SWISS TURNERS BOYS BOOSTER CLUB (STBBC)**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the STBBC is to promote and support the boy's gymnastic program of Swiss Turners. Dues are collected by the Swiss Turners Boys Booster Club (STBBC) to offset the cost of meet entry fees and coach's fees at meets. A budget is created based on the meet schedule for the year, and the total is divided among all gymnasts. Families with more than one boy on the team receive a 50% discount on each additional child. Therefore the STBBC is truly a "booster" club, in that every family is helping out the entire team. All families are automatically members of the STBBC upon invitation to the team.

### **CONSTITUTION**

The STBBC operates at the goodwill of the gym, but is not part of the gym. The Swiss Turners Boys Booster Club Constitution governs the STBBC, which is on the web site. Please read it carefully.

### **MEETINGS**

The date and time of booster club meetings are set at the August meeting. Notices are put on the bulletin board to announce any date or time changes. Please try to attend as many as you can! Every family has a say in which competitions we attend, what fundraisers we will offer, etc. Your input is valuable to a successful program; we need your help.

### **DUES**

Dues are the amount that each family owes to cover the cost of competition. This is paid directly to the booster club, and should not be confused with the monthly gym fee. The gym fee should be paid to the office and pays for the practices. A conservative estimate of dues is determined at the time the budget is created. In years past this has been \$500-\$800. This amount is broken up into 3 or 4 payments.

Please note that if dues are not paid, the family loses the support of the STBBC (per the constitution). What this means is that the gymnast's meet entry fees will not be paid, nor is the gymnast eligible for support if he makes it to the J.O. National competition. If a family needs a flexible payment plan, they are encouraged to discuss it with the STBBC Board before they fall behind on their dues. All such discussions will be kept confidential.

### **FUNDRAISERS**

Many different fundraisers are offered to help offset the cost of dues. Each family can choose which, if any, fundraisers in which they would like to participate. Examples of fundraisers currently offered are: Gold C Books, Wreathes, Candy Bars, and Candles. Other fundraiser ideas are always welcome, and if you would like to head up a fundraiser please speak up!

At times a mandatory fundraiser may be used. Families are given the option to "buy out" of any mandatory fundraisers. All money raised from mandatory fundraisers is for the STBBC General Fund, not individual family accounts.

### **VOLUNTEERING**

The STBBC is a volunteer driven organization. It is only as successful as the people who are working to make it a great booster club. There are more than 75 opportunities to volunteer, and it is recommended that every family volunteer in at least one area every year. A list of openings is presented in the beginning of the year, and families can sign up for an area that interests them. Volunteer opportunities

include: heading up a fundraiser, assisting at uniform fittings, being on the activity committee, etc. There are plenty of ways to be involved!

### **SWISS CUP**

The Swiss Cup is the boys' gymnastic meet hosted by the STBBC. This is a general fundraiser for our booster club, and every family receives a share of the profits to help offset the costs of the competition season. Therefore every family is expected and required to work the meet. This not only provides us with money to offset our dues, but it gives us a chance to get to know each other better, and advertise the Swiss name by running a professional and fun meet. It is not an option to not help and just pay more. At Swiss, we all work together.

Swiss Turners is one of the only clubs that gives us the gym to use for free for our meet, despite losing birthday party and open gym income. Therefore it is a great opportunity for us to utilize for our fund-raising efforts.

### **COMPETITION INFORMATION**

#### **UNIFORMS**

Uniforms are ordered in fall. We receive trial sizes from the manufacturer, so that gymnasts can try on the size that they want before ordering. Level 4 only order the bodysuit and shorts; all other gymnasts must have shorts, bodysuit, pants, and warm-ups (jacket and pants). The costs for the uniforms are paid directly by each family, with no mark-up by the gym or booster club.

#### **MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS**

All gymnasts are required to be members of the United States Association of Gymnasts (USAG) in order to compete. The boy's booster club president handles the application for USAG membership, and the cost is part of your dues. All members of USAG receive a free quarterly magazine.

#### **MEET REGISTRATION/FEES**

Each family will be contacted as to whether they will be attending a particular meet or not. The meet fees are then paid by the STBBC. Please respond quickly so that we can avoid late fees. If you are unable to attend a meet, it is very important that you let the meet registration coordinator know as soon as possible. We are sometimes able to get registration fees refunded, but there is usually a cut-off date.

In addition to the USAG member ship fee that all gymnasts are required to have, the Wisconsin State and Region 4 Head Taxes are also paid directly from the STBBC General Fund.

#### **BOYS COMPETITIVE MEET SEASON**

Gymnastic meets are organized events where gymnasts from different clubs get together to compete against one another. The boys compete individually and as a team at each meet. The season typically begins in January, although sometimes a "practice meet" is held in December. Meets are divided into different "sessions", with each session containing one or more levels (i.e. all the level 4's, and all the level 5's in one session, all the level 6's and 7's in another). Each session runs between 4 and 6 hours.

#### **WHAT TO EXPECT AT A MEET**

There is usually an admission fee collected by the sponsor team at the door. This fee can run anywhere from \$4.00 to \$10.00 per person. Many gyms also sell a program that lists the name of all competitors. Sometimes the program also has a blank score sheet. NOTE: Flash photography is never allowed while gymnasts are warming up or competing, but don't forget your video camera!

At the start of each session there is a “warm-up & open stretch”, usually for about 30 minutes. It is very important that the gymnast is there 5-10 minutes early, which gives the gymnast a chance to get better acclimated to the environment which will help him to better listen to his coach. The warm-up is usually held on the floor, and all teams are grouped there together. After the warm up the teams are then broken up in to their rotation groups. Teams are usually kept together, but if there are more than 6 teams, there may be more than one team in a rotation group.

All meets follow “Olympic Order”, which is Floor – Pommel – Rings – Vault – Parallel Bars – High Bar. Each group will begin on a different event, and continue in this same order.

In a *traditional* format meet, the warm up is followed by the event warm-up, where each team is allowed 10-15 minutes to practice an apparatus. Then the meet director will announce that the warm-up time on that event is over, and they will move to the next apparatus to warm-up that event. This continues until the gymnasts have warmed-up on all 6 events. The event they warmed up on last is the event they will compete on first. Between the event warm-up and actual competition the National Anthem is usually sung, and the teams, coaches and judges introduced.

In a *Capitol Cup* format meet, there are usually 2 entire sets of apparatus, and the teams are broken in to 12 groups. After the open stretch, while six groups are competing, the other six are warming up on the other set of equipment. Then after each event, the teams switch. This way the team gets to warm up an event, and then compete that event before moving on to the next event. This also helps in very large meets to keep things moving in a timely manner.

In a *Modified Capitol Cup* format meet, the teams will also use the “warm up an event – compete that event” format, but there is only one set of equipment and 6 groups of teams.

## SCORING

A gymnast’s all-around score is the total of their scores on all 6 events. Most meets do give awards in each event, as well as in the all-around. Some meets give each gymnast a ribbon for the events and then medals for the top placers in the all-around. Some meets give medals for events and trophies for the all-around. Some meets also give out participation awards. There can be a great variance between meets in how they want to do awards, so it is a good idea to prepare your child for this. The higher all-around score breaks ties in events, and the highest event score breaks ties in the all-around.

The team score is the total of the top 3 scores in each event. These do not all have to be from the same gymnast. Team awards are usually given to the top teams in each level. Some meets the team awards are divided by age group, and at some meets the awards are divided only by level.

How a score is calculated may seem like one of life’s great mysteries. Two gymnasts may appear to perform the exact same routine, but one will get a higher score. Many parents ask “How did that happen?” It can lead to a frustrating and disappointing experience if not understood. The following is an excerpt from Doug Hill’s “Ten Questions Parents have about Judging Gymnastics” from the 2007 Winter Cup Challenge.

*The **Base score** is the highest score a gymnast can get if he does all the parts of an exercise with no bonus. The **Start Value** is more important. It is the value of the exercise. You begin with the base score. From there if a requirement is left out the Start Value goes down. If a bonus is given the Start Value goes up. The **Start Value** is the **highest score the gymnast can get with no deductions.** The **Final Score** is **Start Value minus Deductions.***

*The important thing to understand about **deductions** is that each type of deduction can be taken on each skill. This means that deductions for bent knees, hooked feet, bent arms, incorrect angles, etc. can **each** be taken for **each skill**. This is true even if the deductions add up to more than the value of the element itself. The deductions come in four types: -0.1 for a small error, -0.2 for a medium error, -0.3 for a large error, and -0.5 for a fall.*

*For the compulsory levels (4,5,6,7) in each routine there are two **Specified Bonus** skills each worth +0.2. There is a **GPA (General Performance Award)** +0.1 for routines with less than 0.5 total deductions. There is a **Virtuosity Bonus**, up to +0.2 for skills that are deductionless and 'above the required level of performance'. Virtuosity is rarely given. There is also a **Stick** bonus of +0.1 for a perfect landing. Most routines in the compulsory levels have a **Base Score** of 9.2 These bonus options give a gymnast the chance to raise his **Start Value** to 10.*

**Note:** At this time the scoring system for optionals is still in discussion for change to the FIG new scoring system (no more perfect 10's), so it won't be discussed here.

*Judges do not make allowances for younger gymnasts. A leg bend is still a leg bend. The idea is '**equal protection**'. All gymnasts at all levels have deductions taken in the same way. What are different are the levels of the routines. The skills and opportunities for bonus get more challenging as the gymnast moves up the levels. So for younger, less experienced gymnasts, that's how allowances are made. Deductions, though, are taken the same for everybody.*

*By far the **most important thing** a gymnast can do to get a good score is fulfill every basic requirement. For a compulsory gymnast this means he must do all the required skills. Missing a required skill is a deduction of -1.0, the same as two falls! If a gymnast can also earn bonus without deductions, he should. The problem with bonus is the reward is small and the risk of getting deductions is great.*

## **BETWEEN PARENT AND COACH**

A successful gymnastics program requires a sufficient level of understanding and cooperation among parents, gymnasts, and coaches. The progress your son makes depends in large part on how well this triad functions. As in any relationship, we know there will be times of frustration and doubt as well as elation and success. With this in mind, we ask you to give careful consideration to the comments, which follow.

You, as a parent have created the growth environment for your child. Your child is a product of your values, training and example. Most of us as parents have hopes, aspirations and expectations for our children, and at times these factors impair our objectivity in matters concerning our children. Make sure that win, lose, scared or heroic your child knows you value their efforts and are not disappointed in them. We hope the guidelines below will help you keep your child's development in proper perspective.

## **THE PACE OF DEVELOPMENT IS UNIQUE**

Every individual learns at a different rate and responds differently to the various methods of teaching skills. The slower learner will take more time to achieve these skills, and this requires more patience on the part of parents and coaches. Try to be completely honest about your gymnast's athletic ability, competitive attitude, and their sportsmanship and skill level. All parties concerned must remember that the gymnast's ultimate potential has nothing whatsoever to do with how fast a gymnast acquires the various skills involved.

## **YOU MAY GET WORSE BEFORE YOU GET BETTER**

When an athlete first joins the team and starts practicing, it is possible for him/her to worsen rather than improve. It takes a great deal of a gymnast's attention to master training drills. These new sets of habits are the basis for later improvement. As training proceeds, additional stress is placed upon the muscles, which will at first break down and then gradually strengthen to improve performance.

## **PLATEAUS ARE INEVITABLE**

Plateaus will occur at one time or another in every gymnast's career. Plateaus occur in both competition and in training. It is important to explain to the child that plateaus occur in all fields of physical learning. The most successful gymnasts are those who are determined to work through this momentary delay in improvement.

## **INCONSISTENCY**

Ten and under athletes are the most inconsistent in terms of performance. These inconsistencies can be frustrating for parents, coach and gymnast alike! We must be patient and permit these youngsters to learn to enjoy the sport. These inconsistencies in a gymnast's performance are most prevalent in their first year at a level, due to all the new skills they have to learn.

## **COMPETITIVE DRIVE**

Parents must realize that slow development of competitive drive at an early age is normal, and perhaps even more desirable than a precocious or forced early development. It is important that gymnasts learn to compete and develop some competitive spirit. The spirit of competition, however, can be overdone. Avoid comparing your child to his nearest competitors; this creates vendettas within the team and gymnastic community and often leads to poor sportsmanship and feelings of low self-esteem.

## **INFECTIOUS ATTITUDES**

Parent's attitudes "rub off" on children. Children continuously and subconsciously absorb your feeling and biases on many topics. If you want your gymnast to be motivated, you should be enthusiastic about taking your child to practices and meets, participate in fund raising projects and in general become involved with the club. Remember particularly in the case of younger gymnasts, the attitude, behavior and outlook of parents on the sport of gymnastics has a great effect on the child.

## **STRESS, DISAPPOINTMENTS, FEEDBACK**

It is valuable for children to learn to adapt to reasonable levels of emotional stress including disappointment. The small disappointments we experience as children prepare us for those we must handle as adults. The gymnast can experience stress when constructive criticism is offered on his/her performance. Remember that this is the coach's job...yours as parents is to offer love, support recognition and encouragement as needed. Young gymnasts need to feel good about them selves and parents are in the most powerful position to help them achieve this. Gymnasts who receive constant negative feedback from parents will soon lose interest in the sport. In gymnastics as in life, nobody can win or succeed all the time - there will be some disappointments. And consider this; success is the by-product of continued failure! When learning anything of considerable difficulty, it is our continued attempts – or failures that eventually help us succeed. What is most important here is having children not give up.

## **MONITORING PROGRESS**

It is not uncommon for many competitive youngsters to become discouraged when they attend meets and don't do as well as they expected. There are many good gymnasts in Wisconsin, and meets are frequently quite competitive. You may wish to keep your gymnast enthused by recording his scores. This is a great way to see the progress made throughout a season. What is most important here is that the gymnast is progressing and improving.

It's very easy to get caught up in the competitive aspect of gymnastics; sometimes winning becomes too important to parents as well as child. Don't think of the outcome of a meet in terms of winners and losers. Everyone who competes is a winner; the only losers are the ones who will not even try. Remember, not every child (no matter how great we know they really are) is cut out to be an Olympic gymnast. And some gymnasts who went on to make the Olympic Team were not particularly successful when they were young. Instead they reached their potential later in their careers.

### **SUCCESS**

**ALWAYS REMEMBER** – Success is relative. The criterion most often used to measure success is if a gymnast wins a meet or an event. This measure to some extent is valid; however, it should not be the only criteria used. A score, which wins in one meet, may not place in another. So much depends upon the level of competition, that perhaps we should view winning as a “fortunate circumstance.” A more important factor in evaluating success is the quality of the gymnast's effort, and the more objective reality of a “personal best” score or performance.

### **DON'T FORCE THE ISSUE**

Be sure that your child is at the gym because he/she wants to be there. Self-motivation is the best stimulus for success.

### **THE COACH IS ALWAYS RIGHT**

If you have any questions regarding your child's training or team policies, contact the coach. Questioning the coach in front of the gymnast undermines the coach's authority and impairs the athlete-coach relationship, which is critical for success. Differences of opinion are always best dealt with in private. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate both when praised and when critiqued. Temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting. Parents should never approach the coach on the gym floor. Call or e-mail the coach when you have had a chance to think things through, and are able to discuss the issue calmly.

### **SPORTSMANSHIP IS FOR PARENTS TOO!**

**No parent should behave in such a way as to bring discredit to the gymnast, the team or the sport. Any disagreement with a meet official should be brought to the attention of the coach, and handled by the coach.**

### **TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR PARENTS**

**I. Thou shalt not impose your ambitions on thy child.** Remember that gymnastics is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes and don't push them based on what you think they should be doing. The nice thing about gymnastics is every person can strive to do his or her personal best.

**II. Thou shalt be supportive no matter what.** There is only one question to ask your child "Did you have fun?" If the sport is not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.

**III. Thou shalt not coach your child.** You have taken your child to a professional coach; do not undermine that coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to support, love and hug your child no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or meet strategy. That is not your area. This will only serve to confuse your child and prevent that gymnast/coach bond from forming.

**IV. Thou shalt only have positive things to say at a gymnastic meet.** If you are going to show up at a gymnastic meet, you should cheer and applaud, but never criticize any child, coach, or judge.

**V. Thou shalt acknowledge thy child's fears.** A first gymnastic meet or new skill can be a stressful situation. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event or skill if your child was not ready to compete it.

**VI. Thou shalt not criticize the officials.** If you do not have the time or the desire to volunteer as an official, don't criticize those who are doing the best they can.

**VII. Honor thy child's coach.** The bond between coach and a gymnast is a special one, and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child or any gymnast; it will only serve to hurt that child's performance.

**VIII. Thy child shalt have goals besides winning.** Giving an honest effort regardless of what the outcome is is much more important than winning. One Swimming Olympian said, "My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. This does not make me a failure, in fact, I am very proud of that performance."

**IX. Thou shalt not expect thy child to become an Olympian.** There are tens of thousands of athletes in U.S. Gymnastics. There are only 6 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are less than 1 in 25,000. Gymnastics is much more than just the Olympics. Ask your coach why he/she coaches. He may or may not have been an Olympian, but still got enough out of gymnastics that he wants to pass that love for the sport on to others. Gymnastics teaches self-discipline and sportsmanship; it builds self-esteem and fitness; it provides lifelong friendships and much more. Most Olympians will tell you that these intangibles far outweigh any medals they may have won. Gymnastics builds good people and you should be happy your child wants to participate.

**X. Be involved with your child's activities.** In this day and age, parent-child time is decreasing. There are many club jobs or activities that need volunteers for meets or daily functions. By getting involved in your child's club you will help the team function better, your child will see that you're interested in their interest and you get to make new friends while spending more time with your child.