

# THE GREATER BUFFALO GYMNASTICS & FITNESS CENTER TEAM HANDBOOK

WELCOME – WE ARE PLEASED TO HAVE YOU ON OUR TEAM!

<p><b>PART 1:           INTRODUCTION TO GREATER BUFFALO GYMNASTICS CENTER</b> <b>COMPETITIVE TEAM PROGRAM</b></p>
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**Mission:** *The Greater Buffalo Gymnastics Center strives to be a positive educational force in the community. Our goal is to allow every child the opportunity to feel like a champion. We strive to introduce life skills through the sport of gymnastics that will enrich children and produce success.*

Being a member of a USA Gymnastics Junior Olympic team is a substantial commitment both on the part of the gymnast and the parent/parents. When a family joins our team program, they receive a welcome packet and a team parent’s handbook. Please read the information carefully and contact your liaison, your head coach, or our team office manager with any questions or concerns you may have.

Our philosophy at the Greater Buffalo Gymnastics Center focuses on the education and betterment of children - our most vital resource for the future. We believe that young people can learn to develop coordination, motor skills, and body control, as well as the more important mental qualities: self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-awareness through physical activity. Motivation, problem-solving and patience are qualities that are emphasized at our center. Most importantly, young people will learn to develop respect for themselves and others. Our coaching staff reflects this philosophy of teaching and, uses a positive approach to place the emphasis on the individual. We will help the students to accept individual differences in skill levels and success rates.

At Greater Buffalo, proper staff selection and development is the key to ensuring that a high quality activity such as gymnastics creates a positive learning experience. Our trained staff will use the sport of gymnastics as an avenue to develop positive personal qualities in all of the participants of our program. These qualities, nurtured at an early age, will be utilized in all areas of the individual's future. Whether a recreational or a competitive gymnast, we are confident that our staff will be able to help each child reach his/her potential, while enjoying all aspects of our program.

## Who's Who at Greater Buffalo

Board and liaison positions are volunteer. Board for 2 years

Girls Parent Board Officers	
President	Mary Mongeon
Vice President	Charlie Steffan
Secretary	Kathleen Juenker

The boy's team does not have a parent board. However, Vicky Greiner and Annette Wittenberg can answer questions and coordinate the boys' team functions

Team Head Coaches	
Girls Level 1-3	Coordinator: Sharon Hirsch
Girls Level 4	Danielle Benevento
Girls Level 5-6	Keesha Keilly
Girls Level 7-9	Margaret Read/Torey Hirsch
Boys Level 4-5	Tom Groom
Boys Level 6-10	Scott McKee
Team Office Contact	Sharon & Sheryl

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### Selection for Team

Initial placement and subsequent advancement from one team level to the next will be determined by the Greater Buffalo coaching staff. Where possible, objective measures of learning potential will be used. However, subjective predictors such as courage, commitment, desire, "coachability", and integrity will also be considered. A trial period will be offered in order to assess the gymnasts' placement, readiness for training, parental support, and compatibility with the team.

**Keep in mind that team participation is by invitation only. Remaining on the team is also by initiation only and is dependent upon the athlete and parents' attitude and behavior, athlete work habits, and coachability.**

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### Moving from Level to Level

Moving up from one level to the next is decided by the coaches based upon attendance at workouts, skill level, attitude of the gymnast, and with higher levels score achievement set by USA Gymnastics is necessary. This decision will be made in the best interest of the child. As a gymnast moves up, his/her responsibility to workout and to participate in scheduled meets increases.

## Competitive Gymnastics-What Does It Mean?

***The decision to enter competitive gymnastics is an important and exciting step in the life of your child!*** You are to be congratulated because you are taking the time to think through the prospect of team membership. Many parents are so thrilled when their child is asked to be on the team they do not take the time to assess the level of commitment.

We believe that gymnastics is the greatest overall body conditioning activity in which your child could be involved. However, competitive gymnastics is a unique sport requiring the backing and support of the entire family for any gymnast to be successful. Therefore, when making the selection for team gymnasts, we also look closely at the team parents. Can they also make a commitment to the program? This should not be a difficult or demanding task, only one that shows each family is interested in and committed to providing their child with a positive learning experience through the competitive aspect of men's/women's gymnastics.

### PARENTS - Please Note:

**USA Gymnastics recommends that the following paragraph be presented to all parents of gymnasts enrolled in a gymnastics program.**

*"By the very nature of the activity, gymnastics carries a risk of physical injury. No matter how careful the gymnast and coach are, no matter how many spotters are used, no matter what height is used or what landing surface exists, the risk can NOT be eliminated. Risk can be reduced, but never eliminated. The risk of injury includes minor injuries such as bruises and more serious injuries such as broken bones, dislocations and muscle pulls. The risk also includes catastrophic injuries such as permanent paralysis or even death from landings or falls on the back, neck or head."*

*USA Gymnastics Safety Handbook (1998). USA Gymnastics Publications. Indianapolis, IN.*

*At Greater Buffalo Gymnastics Center, safety is our most fundamental coaching concept. We hold safety in the highest regard and have taken steps to ensure the safest and most enjoyable atmosphere possible. **Gymnastics is inherently a very dangerous sport. This fact combined with the high difficulty level many gymnasts at Greater Buffalo will achieve only adds to the potential for injury. All parents must be fully aware of the risks involved in the sport of gymnastics. Speed, motion, height, flipping and the difficulty of the skill put our athletes in potentially life-threatening situations on a daily basis.** Our staff is continuously learning new and improved spotting and coaching techniques to help guarantee the safety of your child. We believe in spotting whenever there is a doubt as to the consistency of a skill. We believe in padding, matting and using any training devices designed to make learning as safe as possible. One of the most noticeable signs of this is our staff's National Safety Certificates given to them by USA Gymnastics for completing a comprehensive safety course. The certificates are proudly displayed in our main lobby.*

## Life Changes to Keep in Mind

If you are joining the team at one of the entry levels, familiarizing yourself with this information will prepare you for the future as your child develops his/her gymnastics proficiency and competitive success.

- At the lower levels, the number of hours of practice per week is relatively small. As your son/daughter progresses up the competitive ladder, the hours and days of workout will continue to grow.
- You will have to change your schedule to the extent that you are available to drive your gymnast to practice and pick him/her up. You may want to start a carpool with other team parents.
- There will be gym meets that consume a number of weekends during the competitive season.
- Homework will have to be done much more efficiently and with better study habits due to shorter periods of time available. *(It has been the experience of most coaches that students who are involved in a team program such as gymnastics tend to have good grades and are better at studying because they have learned to budget their time more effectively than their peers.)*
- Time management skills will become a necessity in all areas of your child's life (and yours). Your son/daughter will have less time at home and less time to spend with friends outside the sphere of gymnastics influence.

Be warned, however, that once a child has developed a taste for the sport of gymnastics (*especially the competitive aspect*) it is an addiction that can grow and become a part of your child for life!

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## Competitive Team Philosophy

Competitive Team: The Greater Buffalo competitive team consists of USAG Levels 1-10. These athletes train approximately 3-7 hours for Levels 1-4 and 11 hours and up for Levels 5-10 per week and compete at several competitions per year. Please see the description of each level in the Appendix. Our goal for competitive athletes is to help them go as far in gymnastics as their ability and desire will take them. Our team coaches will place gymnasts at the level where they can be happy, safe, and confident. This means every gymnast must be able to perform the skills and routines required at a given level comfortably. The skills should not be at the edge of or beyond his/her ability level. We can never ask or expect our athletes to perform skills or routines in a competition which they cannot perform consistently in practice. Therefore, our gymnasts will compete at minimum of about 75-80% of their current skill level.

## Injury Policy

While a member of our competitive team, all tuitions are due on time each month of the year. Tuitions for summer are slightly different from the rest of the season due to a difference in hours per week that are available. **Tuition is not negotiable due to illness, injury or other absence.** Tuition is required to hold the gymnast's place on team.

During the competition season (September to June), there will be meets that the gymnasts will sign up for. **Each meet will have a fee for participation, which is not refundable due to illness or injury after the deadline for submission has been passed.**

Team gymnasts pay a lower per-hour tuition rate, therefore there are no make up classes for team members for any reason. If the gymnast becomes injured and needs to take time to heal, the following shall apply...

- A. Minor injury is one that requires rest of a body part for up to two practices. The gymnast will then be expected back in the gym for flexibility and strength training of all healthy body parts, and to return to full workouts as soon as possible.
- B. If an injury requires more than two practices off, then a physician's note must be obtained and brought to the office for our records. This note must contain a diagnosis of injury, an expected duration of absence for healing of injured area, and a list of all areas of the body that may still be trained for strength and flexibility. (i.e. broken wrist will still permit splits and assisted shoulder stretch, as well as strength training for abs and legs.) The gymnast is expected to return to the gym after diagnosis so that she may maintain as much of her strength and flexibility as possible.
- C. In the event of a serious injury requiring full time away from the gym, a meeting with Torey Hirsch and your child's coach must be arranged.

Any injured gymnast that has been seen by a physician must bring a **full release** of restrictions from their physician before being allowed to return to regular training. If any restrictions are listed by the physician, then a release date or return visit to the physician must be in writing. The gym will not allow a gymnast to begin full training until the release is received by the office and discussed with the coaching staff.

The sport of gymnastics is one of the most demanding on the human body, and injuries do require time to heal. In the event of an injury, first aid procedures will be performed, and an injury report will be filled out and kept on file. No child will be asked to perform activities that put the injured area in danger of further injury.

The time that a gymnast spends away from the gym is time that she/he is losing two fold. Not only is she/he missing progression, but she/he will also start to lose strength and flexibility very quickly once the body is at rest, which makes the return to team practice after an extended absence very difficult.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter. Our goal is to offer an environment for your child to reach their gymnastic goals and dreams while safeguarding their health and wellness for all future endeavors.

## PART 2: COMPETITIVE PROGRAM POLICIES

### Trial Period

- All incoming competitive gymnasts will be evaluated by the coaching staff concerning acceptance and placement in our competitive program.
- After evaluation new competitive gymnasts may be able to practice with our team for a period of time on a trial basis.
- Parents of potential team members will be informed of club policies and philosophies concerning our competitive program.

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### Team Guidelines

The decision to join the Greater Buffalo Gymnastics Team Program is a big one and reflects a commitment to the team for an entire year. Team members do not move on and off the team based on illness, injury, conflicts or the like. You are either on the team or you are not. The following are guidelines which all team members are expected to follow:

1. We recommend pre-participation physical examinations for all team members.
2. Each gymnast is required to attend all regularly scheduled workouts. ***Be on time to all workouts.*** That means on the floor ready for practice when your workout begins, not talking in the bathroom or hanging out front. If for some reason you will be late or absent you are required to call the office before the start of your workout and notify the coaches so that they may adjust the workout accordingly. Being responsible can never start too soon or last too long.
3. Proper workout attire is a must.  
For Girls: A properly fitting leotard and leo-shorts are the only acceptable workout attire. No shirts are allowed. Hair should be appropriately tied, and NOT hanging in the gymnast's face so as not to interfere in any way during the workout. No jewelry, other than stud earrings, may be worn during the workout. For the courtesy of the coaches and other athletes, proper and appropriate hygiene is appreciated. You will be notified when your child requires extra equipment such as grips.  
For Boys: Boys should wear a T-Shirt that is able to be tucked into the entire circumference of the shorts. No jerseys! Shorts must be athletic shorts and should not cover or reach below the knee or have a drawstring waist: no cargo or jean shorts. You will be notified when your child requires extra equipment such as grips.
4. Each competitive level gymnast **MAY** bring a non-breakable re-usable plastic water bottle with a cap to practice and keep it with them every day. The water bottle should be labeled with the athlete's name. **Please bring only water as sports drinks tend to make a sticky mess in the gym.** It is also each gymnast's responsibility to take it home at the end of each practice! The water fountain is free and you don't have to remember to take it home or have it thrown out.

5. Work hard and try your best. This is all that 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 all different and will advance at different rates. Only concern yourself with things that YOU can control which are YOUR ATTITUDE, YOUR EFFORT... YOUR GYMNASTICS!
6. No food, drink (expect water bottles), or candy is permitted in the gym.
7. Gymnasts may not leave the workout or competition floor without the expressed permission of the coaching staff.
8. 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, and you need to listen to your body. Pain is the body's way of telling you to stop. In addition, alert your coach if you have engaged in any strenuous activity prior to the start of practice.
9. Treat your coaches and teammates with respect. Be kind to those gymnasts younger than you; they look up to you.
10. Do not hold yourself out as better than other gymnasts. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. All team members must attend the dates and times designated for his/her level. At the lower team levels, the number of hours of practice per week is relatively small. As your child progresses up the competitive ladder, the hours and days of workout will continue to grow. Team members may not switch days and times or come for less than the required amount of days or hours per week. This is due to staff scheduling and the number of team members already in the gym at that time.
14. There are **no make-up classes** for individual team members for missed classes. Team members and parents will be notified in advance if a team workout has to be re-scheduled or cancelled for any reason.
15. Each team member will be responsible to help with our annual candy sale in the fall. The proceeds from this sale will be used for various team activities including the end of the year awards banquet. Any team member not wishing to sell candy will have the choice of directly contributing to the team an amount equal to the team member's profit.
16. Each team member will be responsible to help with our annual car wash in the summer. Information on this can be found in the team parent commitment information handout.
17. The end of the year banquet is held in June and will be open to all team members, family and friends. Information will be given to your child when available.
18. Conferences may be scheduled with a team member and his/her parents at any time to discuss the gymnast's progress, evaluation and goals. The gym will also schedule interim conferences if problems/situations arise which affect the gymnast.
19. We may have the opportunity for our team members to perform exhibitions and demonstrations throughout the season and summer. If these become available, we will hand out information as soon as we have it. This is

an excellent time for our gymnasts to "show off" and perform in a non-competitive setting. Please give your child a chance to participate whenever possible and demonstrate what they have worked so hard to achieve.

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## Rules and Policies

1. **Seasonal tuition** is divided into 12 equal monthly payments, **regardless of gym closings, holidays and absences**. Our registration fee covers insurance, but it is not an accident policy- each student must be covered by his/her own health insurance throughout their enrollment period. Payments may be made in CASH, CHECK payable to Greater Buffalo Gymnastics & Fitness Center (GBGFC), Master Card, VISA, or Independent Health Flex Fit Family. Tuition is due by the 1st of each month regardless of the day of the week that the 1st falls on. There is a \$5 late fee/child if received after the 10th. A **\$25.00** fee will be charged for all returned checks. A drop box is provided for monthly tuition checks and any other payments. Checks may also be mailed to the center. Please be sure your child's name and level is on the front of your check. If a problem with payments arises, please call the office at 639-0020. The Junior Olympic team program is a year round program and team members are expected to pay the monthly tuition and meet the summer requirements. Each gymnast, based on his/her level will be required to attend a mandatory number of weeks during the summer (July - August). Parents are expected to pay summer tuition to remain on the team regardless of the gymnast's attendance. Gymnasts may attend up to eight summer weeks for the same cost as their minimum required weeks.
2. Family Discounts: All team members receive a discounted per-hour tuition depending on their level and hours scheduled in the gym. As a result, there are no family discounts or make up classes given to our team members.
3. Students should be ready to start workout at the scheduled time. Please do not drop your child off at the gym more than 5 minutes prior to the start time. Please be on time to pick your child up after workout is dismissed. We will not be able to provide staff to watch your children and provide for their safety for extended periods before workout begins or after dismissal. We prefer you come in to the facility to pick up your child. If you will be late picking up your child, please notify the Center. Parents - please remind your children to wait inside the building to be picked up.
4. Please notify the gym as soon as possible if your child is injured outside the gym or is diagnosed with any communicable diseases (i.e.: chicken pox, mumps, Fifth disease, conjunctivitis, etc.) and will be missing an extended number of workouts. Medical releases are REQUIRED before returning to workout for any child who has been seen by a doctor or under medical care for an injury or illness which necessitated prolonged absences from classes. NO child will be allowed to participate in workout until the release is received by the gym.
5. The Center will NOT be responsible for lost items or articles of clothing. Please do not allow your child to bring valuable jewelry, clothing or other items to the gym. Label clothing so it may be returned if it is misplaced. Students may NOT bring MP3 players, CD players, video games or radios to the gym. There is a lost and found bin in the parents' waiting room. Please check there for lost items.
6. Parking or standing in front of the building, curbs or retention ponds is PROHIBITED while dropping off or picking up children. For the safety of the children parents should park in allotted car parks and escort children in and out of the facility.

7. **PARENTS OR UNREGISTERED CHILDREN ARE NOT TO ENTER THE GYM AREA AT ANY TIME.** If you need assistance, please come into the office. Parent viewing is available and encouraged from the Parent Waiting Room on any workout day. Upstairs Observation Days will be posted, please be sure to watch for these dates. During upstairs observation time, parents, siblings, and friends may watch from the second floor viewing area. Parents are reminded to keep all small children away from the stair areas, balcony and off the balcony railing. Parents are responsible for the safety of siblings during watch day. Also please note, as per USA Gymnastics, no flash pictures are permitted in the gym during practice or competition to ensure the safety of all gymnasts. No food or drink, including water, is allowed on the balcony.
8. There is no food, gum, or drinks, except water allowed in the gym area, locker rooms or on the second floor viewing area. Please do not send any of these items with the student to workout. Children will not be permitted to sit on the sinks or hang on the partitions in the locker rooms. Anyone found doing any of the above will be excused from workout that day.
9. Withdrawal From Team - Written notification to the office, not the coach, is required 2 weeks in advance prior to withdrawing a student from team. Payment is required until the final day of withdrawal. Every attempt should be made to complete a seasonal commitment.
10. Parents - please feel free to ask your head coach about your child(ren)'s progress at any time during the year. Please do not give your child's coach information to pass along to the office staff. Coaches cannot be expected to do this. Parents are responsible to contact the office.

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### Parent Commitment

1. Make sure your gymnast attends all regularly scheduled workouts, meets and special functions. If your child must miss a workout for any reason, please call the gym office.
2. Communicate with the coaches regarding any problems. Your thoughts are important to us. **COMPLAINING TO OTHER PARENTS CANNOT SOLVE YOUR PROBLEM, NOR CAN WE SOLVE THEM IF WE DO NOT KNOW ABOUT THEM. We feel that the support of our team parents is important for team morale and unity. We will come to you if we hear that you have been making negative comments regarding the team program. Please come to us first if you have concerns!**
3. Check the bulletin board, team mailboxes and your **e-mail** regularly to stay current with team activities. **E-mail will be our first means of communicating this year. Please give us as many email addresses as you like!**
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 unique with differing strengths and weaknesses. It is unfair to you and your child to compare him/her to another athlete. Rather, try to 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 waiting area and out of the gym while waiting for your child.
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 team parent meetings which will be held two or three times per year. The meetings are an opportunity for coaches and parent board officers to communicate detailed information with plenty of time for questions and answers.
10. All parents of team members competing at a home meet will be required to help at the meet. Each family is required to help set up or break down plus work an area during the meet. Sign up sheets are always posted on the parent's team board. Any team member without a family representative to either set up or break down and to work the meet, will be assessed a \$50.00 fee to be made payable to the team fund. This fee was decided by the parent's organization. Remember, we need your help, not your money.
11. Meet fees are paid for by each individual team member by the due date. We will give meet fee deadlines, which must be adhered to. Meet fees received after the deadline, even 1 day late, will incur a late fee charge of \$10.00. Unless we receive a written note to the office BY THE DEADLINE that your son / daughter will not participate in a meet, your child's entry fee will be submitted and are then responsible for that meet fee. Do not ask for special favors or extra considerations - other gyms expect us to meet their deadlines so we in turn must meet ours. Please do not repeatedly ask if we have meet information. As soon as we receive it, you will be given notices, and the information will be posted on the team board. Again, please read this board on a regular basis.

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### Disciplinary Actions

The rules and policies which govern the gymnasts and their parents have been outlined here in the Boy's/Girl's Team Handbook. In the event that there is an ongoing pattern of disruption or there are major rule infractions, it may become necessary to impose some disciplinary action in an attempt to improve the situation.

The list and procedures noted below are not intended to be all-inclusive. They are presented as an expression of our beliefs as to what disciplinary actions are necessary and appropriate. We will treat all of our gymnasts and gym parents as individuals and will seek to impose the most effective disciplinary actions based on each unique set of circumstances.

1. The gymnast may not be permitted to rotate with her group at the designated time. He/she will have to stay and finish or repeat an assignment on a particular piece of equipment. No gymnast will be left without supervision, however the rest of the class may be allowed to move on to the Tumble Trac, while a gymnast is kept on balance beam to finish an assignment. The coach can easily supervise both of these events from a central point for safety.

2. The gymnast may be asked to sit and watch. Or the gymnast may be given appropriate conditioning to perform which will help focus their attention and build strength to accomplish the task at hand.
3. The coach may request a meeting with a parent.
4. The gymnast may be excused from the team for one or more practices or may be scratched from a competition. Please note that if the gymnast is suspended from a competition due to poor attendance, a poor work ethic or a negative attitude, the entry fee is nonrefundable.
5. The gymnast may be asked to leave the program if we cannot get him/her to conform her behavior to the expectations of the team, the coach, or the gym.

The first two items on the above list are fairly common and we will not generally communicate these disciplinary actions to the parent of the gymnast. The development of the coach/gymnast relationship is paramount. We cannot and will not run to the parents every time we have a problem. We will attempt to build our own relationships with our athletes. Those relationships are built on time shared, belief in the same dreams and values, work performed together and the emotional ups and downs that are all part of important ventures. The fourth item, requesting a conference, signifies a need to work outside the coach/athlete relationship. In this instance, we need your help to overcome a challenge that is too large for us to accomplish on our own.

The final two items on the list are reserved for the most serious violations of our rules and policies. They are seldom used. They are reserved primarily for times when there is an ongoing problem with disruption and disrespect within the gym that has proven resistant to improvement. We will not let the bad attitude of one gymnast bring down the spirit and work ethic of an entire group.

**It is also possible that a gymnast will have to leave our program because of the actions or inaction of his/her parents. While we never want to punish a child for the actions of their parent(s), we will not tolerate parents who, by their words and actions, do not support the policies and values of our team program.**

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### Emergency Procedures

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

- A. Greater Buffalo staff will assess the situation and emergency first aid will be administered, including requesting of emergency medical technicians and an ambulance if needed.
- B. You will be contacted using the emergency contact information you provided to us in the annual team registration packet. Your instructions will then be followed.
- C. In the event we are unable to make contact with a parent, we will attempt to contact the medical staff and hospital you indicated as a preference in your annual team registration packet.

## Acceptable Competition Attire

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Girls Competition- the competition dress code is set by USA Gymnastics and failure to comply can result in deductions from the gymnast's scores, the inability to receive awards, or disqualification.

Stretch- Greater Buffalo warm-up suit

Warm-ups- A Greater Buffalo or gymnastics related t-shirt, competition leotard, and a clean, intact pair of socks. Manufactured braces/ supports may be worn when needed throughout warm-ups and competition.

Competition- Greater Buffalo leotard. A Greater Buffalo or gymnastics related t-shirt or sweatshirt, or the gym's warm-up suit should be worn after competing on an event.

Awards- GBGC warm-up suit must be worn in order to receive awards. There are no shoes or boots of any kind allowed during the award ceremony.

Jewelry- There is no jewelry allowed during competition.

Boys Competition- the competition dress code is set by USA Gymnastics, and failure to comply can result in deductions from the gymnast's scores, the inability to receive awards, or disqualification.

Stretch- Greater Buffalo warm-up suit

Warm-ups- A Greater Buffalo or gymnastics related t-shirt, black athletic or competition shorts, competition pants (white or black), and a clean, intact pair of socks. The Greater Buffalo bodysuit must be worn underneath all other clothing during warm-ups. Manufactured braces or supports may be worn on any event when needed throughout warm-ups and competition.

Competition- Greater Buffalo bodysuit, competition shorts, competition pants, and a clean, intact pair of black socks. A Greater Buffalo or gymnastics related t-shirt or sweatshirt, or the gym's warm-up suit should be worn after competing on an event. Socks and/or gymnastics shoes, along with competition pants must be worn on Pommel Horse/ Mushroom, Still Rings, Parallel Bars, and Horizontal Bar. The gymnast may perform on Floor Exercise and Vault wearing shorts, socks, gymnastics shoes (slippers), or bare feet.

Awards- Warm-up suit must be worn in order to receive awards. There are no shoes or boots of any kind allowed during the award ceremony. Look sharp!

Jewelry- There is no jewelry allowed during competition.

## PART 3: COMPETITION SEASON INFORMATION

### Meet scheduling

At the beginning of each season (October), a preliminary schedule of meet locations and dates will be handed out to the gymnasts. Meets may be added, changed, or canceled.

Our "FUN" meet will be scheduled during the season, mainly for those who have not competed before, Level 1-3.

Gymnasts in levels 4-10 must attend 8 meets to progress at an average level and be considered for future advancement. Gymnasts are encouraged to attend as many meets as they wish. The more experience you obtain the better you will become. Gymnasts in levels 1-3 are encouraged to attend any and all meets for their level (between 2-5 per year).

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### Meet information sheet

About one to two weeks before a competition, eligible gymnasts will receive a meet information sheet that includes meet location, projected costs and fee due dates and host hotel information (if needed). **Gymnasts invited to a meet will be given only one notice. No other reminders will be given.**

Host clubs will set a deadline for meet entries. After this date the host club will set the final meet schedule depending on the number of entrants. It is not uncommon for host clubs to send out final meet information late or make last minute changes. Information in many instances is not received until a few days before a competition. It is a good idea to clear the whole weekend of a meet on the chance that there will be last minute changes that could conflict with your previous plans.

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### The Meet Takes How Long?

**The average meet can take as little as two hours or as long as five hours.**

Most competitions run in a format similar to the one listed below.

**Open Warm Up** – Usually a half-hour long. This time is for general stretching and getting equipment settings specific to the gymnast.

**Timed Warm Up** - Every gymnast present warms up on each of the apparatus. This procedure can take from an hour to an hour and a half, sometimes more.

**March In** – All the gymnasts line up and march into the gym to be presented to the audience and judges; the National Anthem is usually played. This takes about ten to fifteen minutes.

**Competition** – The gymnasts now actually compete and receive scores from the judges at each event. This may take an hour and a half to two hours to complete. It will take longer if it is an optional meet and one touch warm ups are necessary.

**Awards** – If the organization running the meet is on the ball, you may only have to wait five to ten minutes before the awards are handed out. It has been known to take significantly longer to get the awards ready. Once they are prepared, it can take from fifteen minutes to half an hour to hand out the awards.

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### Requirements for Competitive Eligibility

1. USA Gymnastics athlete membership. Annual membership is \$54 for USAG/USAG State for boys & girls Level 4-10 and \$20 for the level 1-3 girls. The USAG (level 4 and up) athlete should be prepared to show her membership card at all sanctioned meets. The athlete number and card are obtained each year prior to the competitive season. (Parents are asked to purchase a luggage tag for their child's USAG card to place on their gym bags)
2. **Gymnasts must be current on all Greater Buffalo financial obligations.**
3. Attendance: missed practices can mean missed competitive opportunities.
4. Athletes must be physically, emotionally and mentally prepared for competition. The coaching staff will determine when each athlete is competition-ready and relay this information to the parent.

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### Meet Fees and Travel Expenses

Each gymnast is responsible for paying his/her own meet fees. These fees will vary depending on the type of meet (*I.E. local qualifying meet, invitational or state meet*). Meet fees are generally between \$55.00-\$65.00 for the lower levels and \$75.00-\$120.00 for USAG. Each gymnast is responsible for her own transportation to the competition, hotel (*if needed*), and restaurants.

Admission is charged to spectators at meets.

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### Meet Etiquette for Gymnasts

- ◆ Athletes should arrive at the competition site no more than 15 minutes before open stretch is scheduled to begin.
- ◆ No food or drink is permitted in the gym area.

◆ Gymnasts must present themselves in proper attire. Competitive wear and/or warm-up suit must be worn for opening, closing and awards ceremonies. Gymnasts should be well groomed. No jewelry (earrings included) or nail polish should be worn. Long hair should be pulled back and sprayed in place, no metal clips or barrettes. No Greater Buffalo gymnast will be permitted to accept awards or be on the awards stand if not in Greater Buffalo attire.

◆ Athletes must remain in the designated competition area throughout the course of warm-ups and competition and obey all warm-up regulations and procedures.

◆ We expect all team members to act responsibly and politely at meets or other places we attend as a team. We expect that all property at other gyms will be treated as if it were ours. Team members and their families are to follow all rules established by the host gym.

◆ **Each athlete should accept their place in the line-up and the scores they receive with dignity and without criticism. There is no place for crying and uncontrolled emotions during gymnastics' meets. Athletes cannot control the scores they get nor can they control the performances of any other gymnast. Athletes can only control their own performance.**

\* NOTE TO ATHLETES: If you do not do your best and receive a disappointing score, ask your coach about it when the meet is over. If you make mistakes and are disappointed in your performance, do not make matters worse by becoming emotional and jeopardizing your chances for good performances on upcoming events. Remember, too, that you are part of a team. The team needs you to be in control and ready to perform. They do not need you bringing the spirit of the entire team down by feeling sorry for yourself.

◆ Be courteous, respectful and polite to all meet officials, hosts, competitors and coaches. The only time you should approach a meet official is to **thank them** for hosting or judging a meet.

◆ Gymnasts should have a competition bag and keep all of their belongings in the bag during the meet. GBGC will be offering a once per year ordering of "team backpacks" that have the GBGC logo on them and your child's name.

◆ Athletes should stay with the team until competition is over and the coach releases them. Once a gymnast has entered the competition area there should be no contact between the gymnast and his/her parents unless there is an emergency.

◆ Athletes should stay for awards dressed in their team uniform. Most meets have a formal system for presenting awards. As a participating athlete you have an obligation to stay for all the awards and to accept any award presented to you with courtesy and gratitude. It is customary to accept awards with a firm handshake and a warm smile. Congratulate and shake hands with the other athletes as well. Remember that you are not just representing yourself; you are acting as a representative of Greater Buffalo Gymnastics Center as well.

◆ If you are staying to watch another teammate compete or you have arrived early for warm ups, stay seated in the bleachers do not to wander out onto the competition floor.

◆ Keep in mind that each meet is a learning experience. Have fun, be positive and realize that if you are unhappy with your performance, you need to work harder for the next meet.

### Meet Etiquette for Parents

1. Team Spirit is a big help... Wear our team colors or one of our team parent t-shirts.
  2. Please show proper respect to all Officials and Coaches at every competition. They are all there for one reason, to support your child's interest in gymnastics. **Under no circumstance should you attempt to contact any official on the competition floor during or after the meet (judges, score keepers, etc.)** If you have any questions regarding the meet or your child's scores you must contact your coach. Even the coach is not allowed to approach the judges regarding routines or scores during the meet, but must submit an inquiry through the Meet Director. Points could be deducted not only from your gymnast but the team score as well for failure to follow these rules.
  4. Please show proper respect to all competitors. You **NEVER KNOW** who is sitting near you (*i.e. parents of the gymnast you just made a remark about*).
  5. Once a gymnast has walked into the competition area for warm-up, he/she will not be permitted to have contact with parents, family, friends, etc. until competition is completed for **ALL** team members unless given permission by the head coach. This has less to do with control than it does with FOCUS. The coach's job at the meet is to monitor the gymnast's condition and teach her/him to respond appropriately. If the gymnast is too excited, the coach calms him/her down. If the gymnast is too complacent, the coach pumps him/her up and motivates her to do his/her best. The emotional dynamic is fluid in a competition. An excellent vault score may cause a gymnast to be over-confident. A terrible bar routine may actually provide an educational moment. At these times, the gymnast needs to focus on his/her coach's advice.
- As coaches, we know that you mean well with your comments, but they may not be appropriate for the long-term training of your gymnast. If you have any questions about what happens at a meet, talk to the coach **after you have returned to your gym and you have had time to reflect.**
6. In any competition, parents, friends, and relatives of the gymnast ***ARE NOT ALLOWED*** onto the competitive floor. ***YOU MUST*** remain in the spectator's area along with all other relatives and friends. Your child could be immediately scratched from the meet if a parent is in the competitor's area.
  7. In case of injury during warm-up or competition at a USAG sanctioned event, ***YOU MUST*** stay in the spectator area until your coach flags you onto the floor.
  8. ***DO NOT*** coach your child. Coaches should coach, everyone else should encourage. Injury may result from changing the gymnast's focus away from the coach's technique. Even the most helpful comment from you could have disastrous consequences.
  9. ***NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY*** is permitted during a meet. The sudden flash of light could cause a gymnast to be injured. Check out your camera in advance. Many cameras come with an automatic flash that will go off if it detects low light levels. If you cannot manually disable this device, please do not take pictures during the competition.

**10.** On the day of competition your child should eat a well-balanced meal about three hours prior to the actual competition. This energy will carry them through the entire competition. If necessary, a gymnast may carry fruit juices and pieces of fruit in their gym bag to curb hunger pangs: no candy please!

**11.** All gymnasts are expected to stay until the end of the awards ceremony whether they are receiving an award or not. They need to cheer all award recipients - especially their teammates.

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### Expectations

Problems occur when a parent expects too much from an athlete who is new to the competitive arena. (*New is defined as having only competed for two or three years.*) It takes a number of years of quality competition for a gymnast to develop the poise and grace to continuously take top honors in a gymnastics competition. Some parents seem to have developed their own system of evaluating the scores their children earn during a gymnastics competition. The key is to recognize when your child is working up to his/her potential. If he/she completes all her skills for the first time, without a fall, that is a winning routine regardless of what score he/she receives. Comments from you should be congratulatory and positive. No mention should be made at that time of what he/she can do better, that would lessen the effect of this "victory" for him/her. The week after the meet your son/daughter's coach will go over those elements that need work and congratulate him/her on the elements he/she competed correctly.

**Any score she receives during a competition is no reflection on you as parent.** There is no reason for you to feel embarrassed if your child is having a bad meet. Everyone has good days and bad days and it is how he/she learns to react to them that illustrate his/her development as a competitor. Remember that a score given to your child in a gymnastics competition is an evaluation of one single performance, not an evaluation of the child.

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### Some Guidelines for Parents Feeling Stress as suggested by USAG

We know that you are excited about your child's participation in gymnastics and want him/her to be successful, but as a parent you actually have the least amount of control over your gymnast's performance. This combination of high emotional stake in the performance with little or no direct control over the outcome can produce stress and can lead to some bizarre behavior. Danger Signs: Watch for these. If you recognize yourself in these descriptions, you probably need to reevaluate your actions, your role, and your attitudes.

*\*Wanting to observe every practice intently.*

*\*Praising or punishing your child for what you see during observations of workout.*

*\*Finding your sense of worth and happiness dependent on the success of your gymnast.*

*\*Constantly comparing your child and her progress to others in the group, on the team or in competition.*

*\*Verbally abusing the gym, the coaches, and the program while still placing your child under their care.*

<b>Inappropriate Comments</b>	<b>Appropriate Comments</b>
<i>"You finally beat Sally"</i>	<i>"You scored your highest yet!"</i>
<i>"How many (current difficult skill) did you make today?"</i>	<i>"How was practice?"</i>
<i>"I'll give you \$20 if you win today"</i>	<i>"Do your best and have fun"</i>
<i>"That judge always scores you low"</i>	<i>"Work hard and next time you'll do better."</i>
<i>"I cannot believe they moved Sally up and not you!"</i>	<i>"As long as you are happy, safe, and progressing, I'm happy."</i>

### **Description of USAG Junior Olympic Levels**

**Level 1-4:** These are an entry-level competitive level. Compulsory routines are competed on all four events. Compulsory means that all gymnasts at this level compete the same exact routines.

**Level 5:** This is also a beginning compulsory level. These routines are designed to help gymnasts develop required skills and technique.

**Level 6:** This is a compulsory level very similar to level 5 but with slightly more difficult skills.

**Level 7:** This is a compulsory/optional level. The gymnasts create their own routines but must include certain compulsory elements.

**Level 8:** This is a beginning optional level, which means the gymnasts make up their own routines meeting specific difficulty requirements. Competition is at the local, state and regional levels.

**Level 9:** This is an intermediate optional level. Gymnasts are allowed to do more difficult skills with some restrictions.

**Level 10:** This is the highest level in the USAG Junior Olympic age group program. It is an advanced optional level. Gymnasts are allowed to compete any skills with no restrictions.

**Elite:** This is the top level in gymnastics. Perhaps 1% of all gymnasts compete at this level. Gymnasts compete up to the National and International level and hope to represent the USA in International competitions including the Olympics.

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### **Team Family Requirements**

Our main objective as parents is to support our children. The support we show them through participation will help them realize that their dreams are also important to us. Every bit of help you give to our gym goes directly to helping your child.

At Greater Buffalo Gymnastics, we do not have an organized "Booster Club" as do many other teams in the area. These Booster Clubs require parents to pay an annual fee, usually between \$50-\$150, in addition to the

fundraiser requirements. We prefer our Parent Group, which conducts fundraisers to pay for the many fees, amassed throughout the course of the competitive year, without asking you, the parent, to fork out more money.

These fundraiser events happened throughout the year. Parents and team members are expected to participate. Families who do not participate will be charged a \$50.00 fee for all events/shifts they miss. The following are required fundraisers:

1. Home Meets- Greater Buffalo Gymnastics hosts two large meets each year, the Girl's and Boy's Jacquie Hirsch Memorial Buffalo Challenges as well as a few smaller meets. Hosting meets is great moneymaker and this money is used to offset coaching fees. Each family must help set up or break down AND work a specific area during the meet (admission, concessions, raffle, timers, etc.) Parents may be required to work more than one session depending on the size of the meet. Any gymnast without a family representative will be assessed a fee paid to the team fund. This fee was established by the parents' board, not the gym office.
2. Annual Candy Sale- Each team member is required to sell a certain number of candy bars depending on their level. This fundraiser is usually held around the beginning of October. Money from the candy sale is used for the Team Banquet and for coaching fees. In the past, some of this money was also used to help defray uniform expenses.
3. Annual Car Wash- The car wash is held on National Gymnastics Day, which is usually on a Saturday in August, and proceeds help to defray the cost of traveling. Each gymnast is required to sell a certain number of tickets. Any additional tickets sold will benefit the gymnast's individual account to be used for meet expenses. Gymnasts are expected to work shifts, and parents are needed to supervise short shifts.
4. Uniform Exchange- A parent is needed to coordinate bringing in and selling outgrown uniforms to new gymnasts.
5. Advertising- A parent is needed to organize selling of advertisement spots in meet programs to local businesses. We hope to take advantage of any "connections" you may have, either for advertising or for donations.
6. Team Banquet- (End of June) A parent is needed to organize the end-of-season banquet and awards ceremony.
7. Halloween Sleepover- Gymnasts are invited to bring a friend for a spooky sleepover in the gym. Costumes are required, and no parental help is needed.
8. Team Holiday Party- Usually held the weekend before winter break. Gymnasts bring a donation for the charity the gym chooses. No parental help is needed.
9. We ask that parents write meet articles to submit to the local bee newspapers.

10. Throughout the season, there will be other fundraisers that you will be responsible for; these fundraisers are chosen by the parents' board, not by the gym office.

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**Helpful Websites:**

Greater Buffalo Gymnastics & Fitness Center: [www.buffalogymcenter.com](http://www.buffalogymcenter.com)

USA Gymnastics: [www.usa-gymnastics.org](http://www.usa-gymnastics.org)

New York State Gymnastics: [www.newyorkstategymnastics.com](http://www.newyorkstategymnastics.com)

Boys Regional Gymnastics: [www.region7gymnastics.com](http://www.region7gymnastics.com)

Girls Regional Gymnastics: [www.region6usag.org](http://www.region6usag.org)

Thank you for taking the time to read this team handbook. We take great pride in our team program and look forward to giving your child a wonderfully positive athletic experience! Please sign below to acknowledge that you have received and read this handbook. Detach at dotted line and hand in the bottom part of this page to the gym office.

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**Parent / Gymnast Acknowledgement**

I have read the document titled "Greater Buffalo Gymnastics Center's Team Handbook!" from cover to cover and understand and agree to the guidelines set forth. I also understand that the policies and procedures may change throughout the year. Modifications to this document may be made via letters or communications from Greater Buffalo Gymnastics Center. Should I have any questions regarding any policies or procedures, I understand that I should contact the office or coaches for the appropriate answers.

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Parent Signature

Date

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Gymnast Signature

Date