

HELPFUL INFO FOR THOSE WHO ARE NEW TO COMPETING

As a parent of a child who is competing for the first time, it is typical to have lots of questions about what to expect. We hope to provide you with some answers as well as some helpful tips.

WHAT TO BRING/PACK:

1. Gymnast:
 - a. Wear leo & warm up, slides and bring bag.
 - b. Pack in bag: a water bottle, a non-messy, healthy snack
 - c. Optional: extra hair supplies, hairspray, chapstick, pen & small notebook.
 - d. Note: when they compete, their warm-up & shoes go in their bag, so do not pack the bag full!
2. Parent: Bring cash....Money for admission, money for program (if you want), money for concessions (assuming you are not too nervous to eat), money for good-luck grams or the various things sold at a meet (if you get into that), money to go out for ice cream afterwards, money to bribe the judges (okay, not the last one) I have thought about bribing the meet host for a good seat though...
 - a. Camera, videocamera (Please note **NO** flash photography except during awards)
 - b. A stadium seat, cushion or towel is a great way to save your seat and provide just a little comfort (if possible on those bleachers!)
 - c. TIP: Sometimes gyms are really warm or really cold...dressing in layers is good!

BEFORE THE MEET:

Hair should be neatly done. Any style is fine as long as it is pulled back away from the face.

Hairspray (no glitter spray) and gel are your friends! Barrettes, ribbons, bows are fine, but no bulky hard plastic for safety reasons.

- No bobby pins
- No Makeup
- No jewelry except stud earrings, only earrings in ears are allowed and only one pair (so if your child's ears are pierced twice they can only wear one pair of earrings)
- No nail polish on fingers or toes (believe me, you do not want the judges focusing on toes!)

TIP: You can find directions to the meet and even upload to your GPS by going to our Booster Club website. Our site also has links to the meet websites which usually have info about admission price, awards, directions, etc.

Book your hotel room if needed. Meets have host hotels, but you can stay wherever you want. Many people book before they know which session their daughter competes, and then cancel as needed.

TIP: If the hotel you want is sold out, check again after the schedule has been published as people may cancel.

You will find out 1-3 weeks before the meet which session your daughter will compete. The info will be emailed and posted at both gyms. Feel free to check the meet website, but **DO NOT** call the host gym asking for the schedule.

Arrival:

Plan to arrive 30 minutes before the scheduled open stretch time unless otherwise instructed. Gymnast do not pay admission, but at some meets they will need to officially check in at a gymnast check in table. Gymnasts are not permitted to go out onto the competition floor until they are instructed to do so by their coach. Check your gymnast's hair, take her to the restroom, make sure she has her water, give good luck hugs...and when time hand her off to her coach...once she is out on the floor with her coach, **your job is done**. Spectators are not allowed on the competition floor. The only contact after this point should be cheering for her or a "thumbs up" if she should look in your direction in the stands. If your daughter has a need (lost her water bottle or her braid fell out..yep both have happened to my daughter..)the coach will make sure it is taken care of or she will send her to you or someone to get you if needed. Likewise, in the event your daughter is injured, the coach will signal to you if they want you to come out on the floor.

ABOUT ETIQUETTE:

- (1) **NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY OR VIDEO CAMERA LIGHTS.** (This is a rule, not just etiquette.) It is a safety issue. This applies to WARM UP AND COMPETITION. (Snap away with as many flashes as you want during March in and awards!)
- (2) Cell phones- Turn off or on Vibrate. Take calls outside as it is very annoying to those around you.
- (3) Cheering: Gymnastic events are not as quiet as a tennis match, but not as enthusiastic as a football game either. It is appropriate to clap and be supportive "Go Katelyn!" Just be aware that although you may want to scream at the top of your lungs for the "9.5" score that just popped up for your daughter's bar routine, a little girl may be attempting a handstand on the beam just as your are screaming out. (So save your really loud screams for awards). It is appropriate to commend all the girls efforts and cheer for all the girls on the team.
- (4) Keep in mind you do not know who is sitting by you in the stands. Some team may have horrible Leo's, weird hair or horrible music, in your opinion but those parents may be right next to you. Therefore, It is best to keep your thoughts to yourself about unusually creative hairstyles, neon orange leos (that you think make the girls look like pumpkins), coaches that spot their gymnast through an entire routine...
- (5) The gymnasts perform, the coaches coach, the judges judge, the meet director runs the meet, and the spectators are there to spectate and cheer. **You will enjoy the meet much more if you stick to your cheering job rather than trying to coach or judge.**
- (6) Be Positive...about your gymnast...her teammates...her coaches... all the other gymnasts...and... this sometimes is hard...the Judges. It is not okay to cheer because a girl in your daughter's age group just fell off the beam and now your daughter will place on the podium. (Yep, you would think I wouldn't have to say that, but I sat next to a mom once who did.)
- (7) Organizing and hosting a meet is a lot of work. If you appreciate how well it is run, find a volunteer and tell them. Be quick to complement and slow to complain.
- (8) Sometimes everyone is done competing except for that poor last girl on beam or floor. It is appropriate to stay until everyone is finished. Likewise, even though awards can sometimes last for what seems like longer than the entire meet, the gymnasts are required to stay for all the awards and cheer on their teammates and other gymnasts.

SCORING

All compulsory events are scored out of a possible 10.0. Then same is true in Xcel provided it meets all the requirements for that level. The all-around score is determined by adding the scores from the 4 events together, for a possible 40 points (I've never seen it). The judges deduct points for missing a required element, not performing an element to the specifications, falling, bent legs, bent arms, lack of toe point, pausing too long, lack of amplitude, lack of rhythm, lack of dynamics, lack of continuity, leg separation, balance errors, steps on the landing, incorrect body alignment on major elements, incorrect leg position on turns, too many steps before a tumbling pass...and many more-but you get the idea!

Sometimes as a spectator it can be very frustrating to watch as the scores come up and you have no idea why one routine scored better or worse than another. This is especially true in Xcel as girls may be performing very different routines and different kinds of skills. Just keep in mind that there are a large number of tiny factors that affect that score, not just the obvious things that parents notice. My best advice is to just try and enjoy your daughter showing off her routines and new skills and not to get too caught up in the scores. This is especially true as you are starting out in gymnastics as great scores or so-so scores at the Bronze or even compulsory levels really have very little to do with scoring well at optional levels when the skills become much more difficult.

It is common for scores to vary from meet to meet, and to vary between levels. (For example, it is typical for bronze scores to be higher on average than L3, and L4 scores are usually higher than L5). At the meet, there are electronic score boards for each event. After your child competes each event, you will hold your breath for what seems like forever, and then the score will pop up on the board. Most of the time it has their last name, their competitor number and then their score. Sometimes it is just their number and the score. Their number is always listed in the program. You can keep track of scores if you want, however, all the scores will be posted on-line following the meet, so do not worry about recording everything. You can usually find the scores on the meet website or at www.meetscoresonline.com. Scores may be posted instantaneously or sometimes it takes a few days or even a week.

AWARDS: The gymnasts are divided into age groups for awards. The groups may include only one age (i.e. 7 year olds), or an age range (i.e. 6-8 year olds). Generally you will not know how the meet is dividing the age groups or how many gymnasts are in each age group until you get to the meet and see the program book. However, this may not even be accurate due to scratches or accepting a late entry. Award guidelines are set by the SC USA Gymnastics Committee and all meets must adhere to the guidelines unless they opt to give out more awards than required. Age groups are designated by a letter. The program will list the level and age group letter for each gymnast. Gyms handle the presentation order of awards differently. They may do each age group's awards or do it by events. They may start with 1st place or start with 10th place. It is appropriate to clap for all the girls regardless of what gym they attend. Weather your child goes home with one medal or 5 first place medals, your job is to encourage and cheer them on! Team awards are done after individual awards. Team awards are determined by taking the top 3 scores on each event and adding them together. The entire team is awarded, there is no acknowledgement of individual accomplishments in the team award.

AGE DESIGNATION:

Your child's age group is determined by the age she will be at the final meet of the season. For example, if your child turns 8 on February 20th, she will compete as an 8 year old all season, even though she is actually 7.

AFTER THE MEET:

Congratulate your child. It is a huge deal just to get out there and compete. Rest assured the coach will be working on "fine tuning" at practice next week! Let the coach worry about improving for the next time around. Your job now is to be proud of your child for their efforts and take them out for ice cream.

TIP: Some meets have a photographer. Usually if you look around you will find a table where you can view the pictures instantly or information somewhere for the Photographer's website. You can go to their site and pull up pictures of your daughter and order them if you would like.