

TEAM NEWS!

Congratulations to our National TOP testing qualifiers

Over 2700 athletes tested in USA Gymnastics TOP program this year. 100 athletes in the 8, 9, and 10 year old age groups are invited to the National TOP test, held at The Ranch in Houston, Texas. Arionne B. (10), Jessica J. (9), Jenni A.(9), and Olyvia S. (9) were invited to the National test! An athlete is tested on their strength and flexibility over the summer at regional testings, and must attain a certain score to advance to the National test. An added skill component is included in the National test, making it a two day test. A lot of time and dedication are involved in this process.

Congratulations Arionne, Jessica, Jenni and Olyvia on your qualification to the National TOP test!

The USA Gymnastics TOP program is a program designed to provide one path for gymnasts wanting to become elite level gymnasts. Top Olympian gymnasts such as Bridget Sloan, Samantha Peszek, Alicia Sacramone (2008 Olympic team) were National TOP team members!

The girls will head to Texas the end of September! Good job ladies!

Snacks during practice

Yes, we not only allow snacks, but encourage your child to bring a snack to practice. We want to encourage your child to stay hydrated and energized for their practice. If you choose not to send a snack, that is the parent's choice, but please make sure your child is not asking to eat other athlete's snacks. An easy way to stay organized is to plan your child's snacks for the week. Know what you are going to give your child and have it ready ahead of time. You will feel much more organized and confident knowing your child has a healthy snack at practice!

Please also be aware that there are athletes with peanut allergies! Avoid bringing snacks with peanuts!

Acceptable snacks:

- 1) Water bottle with a top
- 2) Fruit
- 3) Protein bars, granola bars, etc.
- 4) Trail Mix (select without peanuts)

Do not bring:

- 1) Colored crackers
- 2) Colored sports drinks (while good on occasion, there is a lot of sugar in these drinks)
- 3) Candy, cookies, etc

New Faces at MEGA

We want to thank our MEGA parents for making our new team members feel welcome! We wouldn't expect anything less. We want to welcome all of our new team members. Enjoy the journey as developing a gymnast takes time...it's like a marathon, and not a sprint.

We also want to welcome our **new coaches**:

Jennifer McCleese: Jennifer is our new Compulsory Team Director and General Programming Assistant. She will begin with MEGA on August 24th. As our team programs continue to grow, we will always work to find the right person to help make our programs even better. Jennifer is that person. Jennifer has over twenty-five (25) years of experience in the gymnastics industry, and is considered an expert with the compulsory levels. Jennifer has a high regard for learning and teaching, and has served as a clinician at many Illinois State training camps. She has produced numerous state champions!

Coach Jen grew up in Michigan, starting her coaching career at Northern Michigan Gymnastics in Traverse City. Jennifer moved to Illinois and has managed the Oswegoland Park District Gymnastics programs for the last nine years. Jennifer possesses a Bachelor's degree in Social Work, a Masters degree in Forensic Psychology, and is currently pursuing a law degree. We are fortunate to have Jennifer on our staff, as she will bring our compulsory program to an even higher level!

Here is what Coach Jen says: "While not a high level gymnast as a youth, I enjoyed competitive gymnastics immensely, and the physical skills I developed from gymnastic training significantly enhanced my abilities as a competitive cheerleader and recreational dancer. What is more important however, is the character development I derived from the sport. I learned to persevere through hardship, a fancy way of saying I learned to be a "fighter." I also learned that you "can't get something for nothing," and sometimes the only answer is optimism and hard work. Integrity is my highest priority, and is a value that I pledge to instill in my athletes, as well as inspire all of our staff."

Caitlin Stark: You have probably seen Caitlin working with the Pre-Team levels. Caitlin began working here at MEGA in May. Caitlin previously worked for Jen and Brian Lewis at the Sports Club. Coach Caitlin will continue working with our Pre-teams and compulsory levels! You will also see Caitlin teaching our Girl's classes. Caitlin has been instrumental in the development of our Pre-team gymnasts.

Here is what Coach Caitlin says: "I love gymnastics because it promotes self esteem, perseverance and discipline. I enjoy watching gymnasts improve their skills as they learn to love the sport as much as I do."

Jouni Mantyla: Coach Jouni is a Physical Therapist in Hartland, MI. Jouni's son, Jesse, is a member of our Boy's competitive team. Coach Jouni was a world class swimmer in Finland and is excited to join our staff. Jouni will be working with our athletes and their conditioning. We are excited to have his expertise in teaching proper mechanics, which aids in the prevention of injuries. Coach Jouni understands what it takes to get stronger for your sport, and expects all athletes to give their best!

Junior coaches Emily and Daisy: Coach Emily and Coach Daisy are both members of our competitive team program. They enjoy teaching, and are excited to serve as good role models for our younger gymnasts. They can relate to the obstacles that gymnasts sometimes face, and they will be there to talk with any gymnast who is working through a difficult time and might need some fellow gymnast guidance.

PARENTING AN ATHLETE

Tom Burgdorf is a business owner and consultant. He provides a monthly newsletter that provides great food for thought articles.

Desire To Excel

Important area for a child? Is there a more important trait to have? School work, sports or relationships. The desire to reach their potential, to excel. It is so enjoyable for the coaches to see an athlete who wants to work hard to excel. It is also very gratifying to see a non worker develop into a person with that same desire. It is life changing and sports help.

Parents have a responsibility to educate and motivate their children to excel. It is an attitude. Is it hard work? Yes. Striving to be better, and to excel, has huge consequences. Many children need to "learn" that excelling changes your life. This is one of those areas where I don't like the child having the choice to "choose" whether they want to coast or to push. They need to be shown that the acceptable behavior is to strive to be better, to improve. Even if it takes hard work. I hope less and less parents "accept" less than what these children can actually do.

Enforcing The Rules

When did it become acceptable to bend the rules and "cloud" the situation? Why can't we have rules? They are guidelines so that we all know what is acceptable and what isn't. Rules are GREAT. But to be important, they need to be enforced. To be important and effective the rules need to be fair and agreed upon.

I believe parents who set rules and then don't enforce them are confusing the kids. Sure enforcing the rules can be uncomfortable at times. Sure the kids are going to "test" us. Are you passing their test? Give in and you fail in that situation and they learn what? Clear cut

rules are easy to follow. "Cloudy" rules cause problems.

There are rules in sports and on teams, let's give the adults in charge the right to enforce the rules they deem necessary to run an effective team or organization.

Additional Adults In Their Lives

Today it is harder to raise a well adjusted child than it has ever been. So many distractions and pressures. Such an open society. They are bombarded by a lot. Because of that I say "circle the wagons" and use all of your assets to educate and protect your children as they grow. Every possible positive influence should be used to help you parent these children. The more adults in their lives the better to teach and motivate. All of the sports coaches, all of the school teachers, Grandma & Grandpa, everyone. Maybe even me as an outside voice who they might listen to just a little bit.

If these other adults are speaking close to the same messages as the parent, your job as parent should be a little easier. If the children hear the same message from others that you have been whispering in their ear, they may pay attention a little more. Get as many sane voices into the lives of your children to help you!

Expect Good Effort

Putting pressure on kids to win or get a perfect 10 isn't good. But to expect a good effort is absolutely okay. In fact, if we accept less than a good effort it isn't helping these children at all. As a coach, I get upset when I see less than a good effort. Making less than a good effort is usually a "choice." Children should be taught that effort is not negotiable. A parent, or coach, with high standards for "effort" are good for every child.

Parent Appreciation

You do all that you do and they still don't appreciate you? They "expect" more? What kind of life have they been taught to accept as normal? A parent is there for the pleasure of the child? The child gets everything? There are few if any

limits? "Hey, I want to be a kid again." What kind of life has your child grown accustomed to? Is it really the one you want them to learn from? And maybe copy for their children? (your grandchildren?)

A huge part of family life is about raising the children to understand the world around them. To teach them to work for what they get. To also understand that parents are human beings with feelings. That parents have rights and that parents are pretty nice to have around. I hope that you are raising your children to appreciate you and to show that appreciation once in awhile. When Grandpa pays for the family dinner at a restaurant you make all of the kids say thank you. When was the last time you got thanked as a parent when you buy dinner? If we don't expect them to be appreciative we probably won't get appreciated.

I like being appreciated.

Those interested in this monthly newsletter can contact Tom at Tom@gymsports.com.

COACHING YOUR ATHLETE

We feel very fortunate that we have one of the most successful competitive teams in the state, region and even the country. It takes most competitive teams many years to build the reputation that we have built in a short amount of time!

There is a process to our success. Juha and I developed our programs with experience (over 25 years), scientific knowledge, passion, proven techniques, other people’s ideas (why re-invent the wheel) and of course trial and error. WE know what works, what doesn’t, and know to make adjustments when necessary. We also look for ways (research, attending seminars, etc.) to continually improve our programs.

As stated in our team handbook, the **values** that we aspire to are:

- Trust, integrity, honesty
- Teamwork
- Open Communication
- Opportunity for growth
- Respect and Dignity

We expect all team members, coaches and parents to aspire to these same values. We know that there will always be bumps in the road, obstacles to move around, and times of uncertainty, but if you believe in the values of this program, you will also believe that we will survive, learn, and grow from anything that is thrown our way. We will make changes that are in the best interest of our gymnasts and this program. This does not mean that you, the parent, or the gymnast, will always agree with decisions that are made, but that

you will trust that it was made with the best interest of your child in mind!

Let me give you some examples:

1) **Trust the coaching staff that we have in place.** It is our job to hire coaches who believe in our philosophy and will be a good fit for our program, and your athlete. Yes, some may be older and some younger. It is our responsibility to mix the experienced with those who desire experience. It is our responsibility to mentor and develop young coaches and to provide continued education and support to our experienced staff. Believe it or not, I once had a parent (who does not possess the knowledge nor the know how of this sport) tell me how and who to hire for the team! Now I am certainly open to listen to suggestions, but please have some experience, logical reasoning, and intellect when making such suggestions.

2) **My child needs to be a level ___!** We all want our children to move up to the next level. It is also our goal for your child to continue to progress and excel. However, why would we want to skip mastering one level before the next! It just does not make sense to do this. And if we did, would we be setting that child up to be successful at the next level? Sure, many programs make the mistake of “skipping the basics” and advance their athletes to the next level just for the sake of moving up. I ask you to look at the results of doing this. Probably not great! Would you build a building without making sure you had a solid foundation? Some people do...and then they

Calendar

September 2
Team Orientation and BBQ

September 3-5
Labor Day Break- No practice

September 9-11
Girls-Hot Shot Camp @ Buckeye

September 17
National Gymnastics Day

September 30-October 2
National TOP test @ The Ranch

October 7-9
Girls-High Tech Camp @ U of M

October 22
Girls Judges Cup (L5-6) @ Eastern U

October 29
Girls Team sleepover (Fund raiser)

November 4-6
Girls-Forward Progress Camp

find themselves always repairing, or better yet, having to tear down and start over! Would you have your child doing multiplication before learning their numbers, then addition, subtraction? The point is that we want your child to understand that their goals are achievable, and that working hard and taking the time to do it right is okay! And in the long run, we will all experience the pleasure of success!

GO MEGA!