



Texas USAG Newsletter

DECEMBER 14, 2008

A note from Diane

It is hard to believe that we have said goodbye to another compulsory season. It seems like it was just last week that we returned from GAT and were getting ready to get back in the groove of competition again. Looking back I realize just how much has happened. Our US athletes returned from Beijing triumphant. We gave the world a one two punch with Shawn and our own Nastia. Texas left its distinctive brand on the games and we are so very proud of Nastia and Valeri Liukin! Go USA! Many clubs have felt the positive effects of our victorious team and have increased their enrollment. We thank our Olympic team for shining and bringing the boost in interest our way.

Just as clubs began enjoying the wave of the Olympics, Hurricane Ike decided to do the Texas two step, first threatening Corpus Christi and the southern gulf edge of Texas and then taking final aim on our Houston gulf coast with a force that has not been seen in a century. Galveston was all but wiped off the face of the earth. Houston and the surrounding areas still display a sea of blue tarps nailed to rooftops, piles of debris line roads and streams of utility trucks travel the highways trying to repair the massive damage to the electrical structure of our gulf coast. I would like to thank each and every one of you who kept us in your prayers. I can tell you that almost 3 weeks without electricity made me realize that I am NOT Laura Ingalls and not cut out for long term camping!

Most of our clubs are recovering well. Generators are now silent, and workouts are back to normal. I would like to say a special "thank you" to those who opened their hearts and gyms to make room for our refugee athletes. It is hard to realize that more than a thousand families are still living in tents, FEMA mobile homes and hotels. But with the grace of God, we have weathered the storm and proven that we cannot be kept down.

As we say farewell to 2008 and bring in 2009, my prayer is that we will find compassion for those who are less fortunate, that we realize the innocence of the young child, that we remember to pray for those men and women who serve our country to keep us safe at night, and that we find time to embrace our family and friends with a newfound respect for life.

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season,

Diane



IN THIS ISSUE:

- Pg. 2 – important items
- Pg. 3 – dress code, judges
- Pg. 4 – upcoming changes, state champions
- Pg. 5 – state champions
- Pg. 6 – 9 – Parents' Education Corner
- Page 10 – 11 – Just for Coaches

Additional Athletes to Level 8 Regionals!

At our Region 3 Board meeting we voted to allow an additional 50 “At Large” athletes. What does this mean? After we select the qualifying athletes by age group, we will take an additional 50 athletes by their all around score, regardless of their age group. Where do these athletes come from? The region will use a % of % to determine how many “At Large” athletes come from each state. Once the additional 50 athletes are added, the age groups will be redistributed to keep a balance of the entries in each age group. The addition of these 50 “At Large” athletes will bring the total of athletes at Level 8 Regional Championships to 300.



Contact Information – Are YOU in the Loop?

Professional members should make every effort to keep their contact information up to date with the national office. Texas USAG uses this database and the email address listed with the national office when sending out important emails. Please do not rely solely on your district representative to send you important notices. If the state sends out a mass mailing through the Constant Contact program, it goes to all professional members. Therefore, district representatives will not be duplicating that email, so keep up to date and stay informed!

Background Checks

November 26th, 2008 was the last day that Background Check Verification forms will be emailed to professional members that are pending for the background check requirement.

Professional members will **NOT** be released from pending, and therefore, no membership benefits will be released until the final result of the background check screening has been received by USA Gymnastics from the National Center for Safety Initiatives (NCSI).

If you have applied for your background check but have not received the results, please contact NCSI at 866-833-7100.



Professional Membership

It is a USA Gymnastics requirement that all professional members carry their professional membership card with them when attending meets. When a coach signs in, he/she **MUST** submit his/her professional number and safety certification expiration date. Non compliance will result in monetary fines.

Dress Code Clarifications

The following items will be added to the Texas USAG Dress Code:

Ladies Shirts:

- No razorback shirts
- No low cut shirts

Shorts:

- No blue jean shorts

Pants:

- Pants should not be suggestive or too revealing (no tights and spandex).

As a reminder, collared shirts should have either your gym's name or an athletic logo. T-shirts that are not collared should have your gym logo. Coaches' attire should reflect pride in the club that you represent and a professional look for our sport. All in all, we should not look as though we have just left a rock concert or a picnic. Failure to comply with the dress code will result in a monetary fine and a letter of discipline. We are not picking on coaches. Athletes wear their leotards, and judges wear their uniforms. Coaches should be easily recognizable as professionals on the floor.

Ranking of Judges:

Texas USAG is required to submit a list of judges to the Regional Board each season. This list is compiled by all elected officers of TXUSAG who score each judge based on professionalism, knowledge, and consistency of scoring.

Texas USAG will be evaluating all of the Texas officials after the competition season. These evaluations can be used as a tool when selecting the officials for the upcoming season. Please refer to the specific guidelines in the national *Rules and Policies* concerning the selection and affiliation of judges. Rotation can be considered but is not required.

Texas USAG will seek input from coaches, the state judging director, and NAWGJ area assignors for the purpose of evaluation and selection of judges. Other factors that may be considered will include, but not be limited to, the judge's support of our Texas USAG JO program, cancellation of meets, consistency of scores, and bias scoring for or against clubs or athletes. Availability for a specific meet does not guarantee an assignment of that meet. The committee selects the officials who they believe will field the best panel of judges for each competition from the list of available officials. It is never the intent to deliberately deny any official an opportunity to judge. It is the responsibility of the State Committee to attempt to select the officials who they believe will officiate in the best interest of the athletes. A rating does not guarantee a judge assignment to any competition.

Texas USAG does not assign invitational competitions. Those requests are submitted to and filled by NAWGJ.

Changes to the Texas USA Gymnastics Program for the 2009-2010 Competitive Season

The State Administrative Committee met following Level 6 State. The state committee members sought out the voice of the coaches and have made several changes to our state program. These changes will be in effect August 1, 2009 and will be posted in their entirety on the state website sometime this spring.

A quick overview:

Show scores for Level 2/3 competitions

Post Level 2/3 scores on the TXUSAG website

Add Level 4 Placement to the competitive program

Add Level 4 North/South State Championships

Add Level 5 State Championships – number to be determined

Allow Team competition at Level 5 State Championships

Terminate the Gold, Silver and Bronze divisions now used in Levels 5, 6 & 7,

Add more age groups to Levels 5, 6 & 7 (number of age groups to be determined)

MEET ENTRY FORM PROCESS . . .

There are many of you that are still confused about the information needed to properly enter a state sponsored meet. The rules have been in place for quite some time now and we are at a point to where the meet directors will be rejecting entry forms not properly submitted. Here are the basic items needed to enter a State sponsored meet:

1. A "Typed" State Entry Form – form can be found on the state web site.
2. A copy of your USAG Athlete Roster
3. A copy of your USAG Coach Roster
4. A check made out to the proper entity for the correct amount which includes athlete entry fees, team fees and late fees if applicable.

Some of you might ask **WHY?** do we have to type our entry forms ?? The answer is . . . to improve the accuracy of the athlete's names and birthdates, as well as, speeding up the process of inputting the information into the computer.

SUGGESTION! create master forms broken down by levels and then throughout your competitive season you can cut and paste students to different levels as needed without completely retyping the forms for each meet.

WHAT? is the purpose of the copies of the USAG Rosters?? Simple . . . the National USAG office requires all athletes and Coaches to be members and to help assure them that this rule is being adhered to we must require Rosters.

DATE DUE? Unless otherwise noted on your meet information, your meet entry form and fees are due on the day posted, not postmarked by that date. Meet directors are held to a certain time table to post information for state sponsored meets by a certain date or they can be fined, therefore accepting late entries would not be possible if it changed the structure of the meet in a way that the schedule would have to be changed.

We hope you have found this information informative and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to call or email a board member with your questions. Contact information can be found in your Blue Book.

And the winner is...

Level 6 State Champions

Jr. A Gold

Alexis Goodman
WOGA

Jr. A Silver

Gracie Hundley
US Gold

Jr. A Bronze

Alexandra Gutierrez
HGC



Jr B. Gold

Peyton Love
Sunbelt

Jr B. Silver

Destiny Garcia
National Elite

Jr B. Bronze

Haley Brewster
Acrofit

Jr. C Gold

Kylah Smith
Trevino's

Jr. C Silver

Dominique Spottswood
TBG

Jr. C Bronze

Emma Stainaker
Achiever's

Sr. A Gold

Kaitlin O'Sullivan
Zero Gravity

Sr. A Silver

Kendall Lyons
Cypress

Sr. A Bronze

Hannah Fritsch
Acrosports

Sr. B Gold

Allison Barkmeyer
ISunbelt

Sr. B Silver

Erin Davis
Achiever's

Sr. B Bronze

Marcela Lea
TAGS World

C
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S

Level 5 North State Champions

Jr. A Gold

Emma Lapinta
Kurt Thomas

Jr. A Silver

Alex Vinez
Eagles Wings

Jr. A Bronze

Makayla Black
Gymn. Powerhouse

Jr B. Gold

Susan Stringfellow
Kurt Thomas

Jr B. Silver

Morgan King
Zenith

Jr B. Bronze

Jaimelynn Watson
Gymn. Powerhouse

Jr. C Gold

Isabella Gordillo
Plano USA

Jr. C Silver

Payton Smith
NETE

Jr. C Bronze

Kelsey Blackshear
Acheivers

Sr. A Gold

Haylee Wilson
Kurt Thomas

Sr. A Silver

Avery Stuchell
Kurt Thomas

Sr. A Bronze

Danielle Cormier
Piney Woods

Sr. B Gold

Savannah Poppe
Sulpher Springs

Sr. B Silver

Kate Lenzen
Empire

Sr. B Bronze

Meredith Mills
The Rock

Level 5 South State Champions

Jr. A Gold

Ashlynn Way
Stars

Jr. A Silver

Janna Skinner
Cypress

Jr. A Bronze

Bailey Hunt
Cypress

Jr. B. Gold

Keara McGraw
National Elite

Jr. B. Silver

Michaela Dylag
WGA Texans

Jr. B. Bronze

Taylor Reinhold
Powerhouse TNT

Jr. C Gold

Macy Miller
Acrofit

Jr. C Silver

Abbi Atchinson
Mazeika's

Jr. C Bronze

Lauren Feiht
Cypress

Sr. A Gold

Jacqueline Sedillo
Olympic Hills

Sr. A Silver

Madeiline Sumner
United

Sr. A Bronze

Amber Hagemann
TAGS World

Sr. B Gold

Baylie Bright
National Elite

Sr. B Silver

Becca Mouton
AcroTex

Sr. B Bronze

Carling Williams
Katy Kips



Parents Education Corner



When we welcome a new athlete into the Texas USA Gymnastics program, we realize that we are also enrolling her parent(s). It is with that in mind that Texas USA Gymnastics will be developing a program to help educate parents on the working aspects of our organization.

Who do you call?

All of us at some time have found ourselves looking for the answer to a question. So whom do you ask? Here it is in a nut shell. We have set up a chain of communication to help you. The rule of thumb is to stay as close to "home" as possible. Example: Parents should communicate with their coach or gym owner. The coach or gym owner should communicate with the district representative. If the district representative cannot answer the question, he/she will refer them to the person who has the right stuff (competition chairpersons, the education chair or the state chair). District representatives are well versed in how the communication chain works and can get the answer much faster than a parent taking shots in the dark. We have this protocol so that we can assist as many people as possible in a timely manner.

In the past year I have noticed a big increase in the number of parents who are coming directly to me (the state chairperson) instead of contacting their daughter's coach. I don't mind helping people; however, since I do not have direct knowledge of the particular guidelines used by each club, I feel that it is important for parents to contact their coaches or gym owners for information first. The club should inform parents as their clients of the competition schedules, travel plans, meet results, and what to expect for their child while she is involved in the Texas USA Gymnastics program. If a competition is part of the Texas USAG competitive program, the schedule, directions, and other pertinent information is posted on the TXUSAG.com website. If it is not posted there, then we have not received it.

Our TXUSAG.com website is available to anyone who can access the internet; however, our primary goal is to provide communication and information for the professional members of Texas USA Gymnastics. Many clubs have their own websites set up to inform parents of upcoming events and other topics. Since each club has its own set of guidelines, it would be virtually impossible to provide everything that parents might want to have posted. The child's club should inform parents of its philosophy on the mobility of children in its program. This information should include its basic program philosophy including guidelines for competition, mobility number of training hours, and much more. Texas USAG does not have jurisdiction over clubs in respect to training hours, philosophy of competitions, and other issues that would fall under general business practices.

Where can I find the meet schedule?

Can't find the schedule for your daughter's upcoming meet? You should ask your coach or club owner for this information. It is the responsibility of your home club to inform you of the competition schedule. Parents **should not** call the club who is hosting the meet for this information.

Where are those meet results?

This is the most often asked question on a weekly basis. Meet results for all District Qualifiers, District Championships, Statewide Qualifiers, North, South and State Championships are required to be posted through the TXUSAG.com website. What do you do if you cannot find them? Your coach or club owner probably already has a copy of the results, so you should check with them. If they do not have a copy, have them call the gym who hosted the meet. Texas USAG DOES NOT post meet results from invitational meets (ask your coach if you are unsure about what kind of meet you attended).

Keep in mind that the webmaster cannot post what he does not receive. Our webmaster has done an excellent job with postings and almost consistently posts items within 24 hours of receipt of the item. So the rule of thumb is, if the results aren't posted, the host club did not send them.

Level 2 & 3

The philosophy of Texas USA Gymnastics is to offer a competition opportunity to the introductory Level 2 and 3 athletes that is fun filled. This experience is designed to help these inexperienced athletes learn how a competition functions.

They should learn through this experience how to follow directions such as warming up, lining up for march in, being introduced, listening for warning bells, rotating from event to event, and the general way a meet works. Beginning with the 2009 Compulsory season, scores for Level 2-3 athletes will be flashed at meets and posted on the website. Now this does not mean that parents should begin putting a lot of focus on those scores. Our first priority is for these little athletes to ENJOY the sport, so please do not pressure them about scores. Let them have fun.

Don't understand that score?

Remember, judges are not clones. Even though they test on the same routines and rules, gymnastics is a subjective sport. There WILL be differences in scores. There will also be differences in the performance of the athletes from week to week - sometimes slight and sometimes more severe. Week to week may bring different highs and lows in any given routine, and if you are looking only at the score, you may miss the big picture. All children should walk away from a competition feeling that they enjoyed competing and that their parent(s) enjoyed watching them.

You as a parent have a very important role in the future of your child's gymnastics career. You will be the "make or break" entity of whether she sticks with a sport or decides that the emotional price is too high to pay. Children need a safe haven. That haven should be their family. When they are at practice, the coach gives instruction to the child to correct technique and body positions. When they compete, the judges calculate a score that reflects the positive and the negative aspects of a routine. As the parent you need to let them know that no matter what, you love them, you enjoyed their performance. Assure them that in your eyes they are a 10.0, regardless of the errors in their routines or the scores they received. Even when you see those bobbles on beam or bent arms on floor, bars, or vault your child needs her mommy and daddy to see the champion in her.

Children are pure at heart. I have never met a child who thinks to herself, "Today I am going to really try to mess up and get a low score" or "Boy, if I can only keep my arms bent that will really make my coach and parent mad!" Errors in routines are natural, not deliberate. Just watch our professional athletes and you will see, no matter what, they are human and mistakes happen. That is why it is called a mistake and not an "on purpose"!

If I could encourage you to remember one thing, it would be to remember that we are teaching life skills through a sport. We are teaching children to learn how to accept accomplishments with humility and how to accept adversity and challenge with determination and acceptance. Hopefully we are teaching children that when they are adults, they can enjoy their achievements, while facing challenges in life with confidence. Hopefully they can problem-solve and realize that not every day will be a perfect one. But right now, they are children, and right now they need your encouragement and support. Childhood should be memories of what you did and not of what someone wanted you to do.

They have coaches and judges who give them corrective input. What they need from you is unconditional acceptance and love. If your child has a fall at a meet, tell them it was the prettiest fall you saw all day. Love them and let them be kids.

How do you know that your child is improving?

Several parents have contacted me with concerns that they cannot tell if their child has improved by just looking at her score.

The person who can answer that with confidence would be your child's coach. Improvement is not all in a score. In all the years of my involvement in the sport, I have never had a Level 2 or 3 ask me about a score. I have had children ask me if they could get a yellow ribbon instead of blue because they do not have a yellow ribbon and their friend has one. This shows the innocence of a child. They are excited to just be there, hearing the applause, performing, getting their name called out during the awards ceremony and showing off their medal after the meet. They typically don't care if they scored an 8.0 or an 8.5. They just want to have fun. When they show off their medal at a restaurant or school, I would bet that they are not asked, "Yeah, but what score did you get?" So relax and enjoy. Hug your kids and tell them that they are wonderful and that they did great!

Rely on your coach to let you know if they are improving and in what ways. Remember we are working on the development of athletes in more than one area. It just might be that the real improvement your daughter's coach is looking for in your child is self confidence, team skills, or even listening skills in different settings.

What should I know when I am contemplating moving my child to another gym?

It is always the prerogative of a parent to explore their options. With that being said, the gymnastics community is a very close knit group. Before you decide to move your child, make every effort to resolve issues with your current club. If you are unable to resolve the areas of concern, do the right thing. Let the current club know that you will be visiting other clubs. If you decide to move your child, have a face to face talk with your current coach or club owner. Make certain that you leave on good terms with all financial responsibilities current. Doing that will serve you well in the future because although you might think that you are pulling a fast one, gossip is lightening fast in the gymnastics world!

Although the clubs compete neck and neck at meets, there are strong alliances between coaches and club owners. When thinking about changing gyms, you should expect the prospective club to call your present club to verify that your financial obligations are current. It is a professional courtesy for a club to notify another club that a child would like to switch to their gym. These coaches see each other on a weekly basis and are more often friends or at least friendly. They may compete for gold but they have a deep respect for each other.

What not to do if you go to a new club.

1. Do not talk "trash" about your prior club. Remember, those coaches and that club invested a lot in the development of your child, and when you are talking poorly it will reflect on what they expect out of you at their club. Coaches have different techniques to teach children. If you find that the new club fits your child better, it serves no purpose to put down your former club. Again, the gymnastics community is small, and coaches begin to know which parents can stir up problems. If you were having conflict with your former club, there is a good chance that your new club already knows about it through the grapevine.
2. DO NOT contact the parents of athletes at the former club and encourage them to switch clubs. This should also not be done through your child. Do unto others...

Lead by example. Speak positively about the coaches who helped develop your child's gymnastics ability. Be a good role model. Teach your child that although they are no longer with a club, they do not need to bash their former club. Bleacher talk almost always makes its way out onto the floor! Children will want to remain friends with their former teammates. It is your job to help develop this trait.

Again, keep things in perspective. We are teaching life skills through a sport. None of these young girls is going to be doing gymnastics at 40. However, they are going to be in the work force and need to learn how to deal

with adversity as well as triumph. They need to know how to be friends with competitors. Sports should be an avenue to learn how to be a team player, how to respect authority, how to win, and how to lose. I encourage you as their parent to be their advocate and role model.

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Please see the Blue book

or

TX USAG website for contact info.

JUST FOR COACHES

Change of Club Etiquette

I must admit that although these things were on my list of newsletter articles, I “stole” some of these thoughts from Cindy Miyake, state chair from Colorado.

Hopefully the clubs in Texas will find these guidelines helpful in maintaining good relationships between clubs and your customers when a gymnast or coach moves to another club.

Professional Expectations When a Gymnast Changes Clubs

Customers have the right to register their daughter in a gymnastics club that they believe suits their expectations and one where they feel confident that their child will be successful and happy. There are times when parents decide for a list of different reasons to change clubs. As frustrating as it is to the club who is losing the athlete, in our society, that is the prerogative of every parent.

So how do we handle it? How do you keep from being bitter? No matter what a club does and how “perfect” they are, eventually they will lose athletes. It might be to another club, to a different sport, or to retirement. That is part of life. But when an athlete leaves one club for another club, it gives the owners and coaches the opportunity to review

their business practices. It is a good time to examine your program and consider changes that might be beneficial in the future. Are you losing a child because of finances, geographical changes, or is it another reason? Have you lost other athletes due to the same reasons or are you dealing with “the grass is always greener” philosophy? Have you stood by your philosophies and are you still committed to those philosophies? Could you make changes that would better serve your clients without sacrificing your basic philosophy?

I would venture to say that there few, if any, clubs who have not gotten an athlete from another club. So when it is you losing that athlete, remember there was likely a time when you were on the receiving end. Keep it in perspective. Athletes come and athletes go. As long as you are confident that your program is well founded, then just know that it is part of business and that it will happen from time to time.

On a different note, in my experience it is not common for a coach to actually recruit athletes from another club. It is much more common that it is the parent of a gymnast who is doing the “recruiting.” This behavior from parents, either directly or by way of their child, is not what we want in our program. Although parents recruiting athletes is not desirable or ethical, we have very little that we can do to prevent it. However, if those parents are making phone calls or texting other parents and gymnasts from your facility, you can do something about that. Don’t allow parents to give your gym a bad reputation in our gymnastics community. Remember if they do it to others, they will probably eventually do it to you!!

When you meet with a prospective gymnast and her parents, you should be asking the following questions:

1. What club are you presently training with?
2. Are your financial obligations current with your present club?
3. Be forewarned, if you decide to join our club, I will be contacting your present club as a professional courtesy and I will verify that you are leaving with no outstanding balance (remember, if you take them owing their last club, you will probably lose them owing you!).
4. Why are you exploring your options? (Please keep in mind that there are always 2 sides to every story and chances are that you will only hear the side that the parent wants you to hear.)
5. Have you tried to work out your differences with her present club?

We all know in our hearts that parents have the right to find appropriate placement for their child, but we have to remember that when working with children, we are working with the parents’ most precious commodity.

The bottom line is that as a professional you should really tell the present club that you have one of their parents interested in your program and to make certain that the financial obligations are all current. Try to encourage the parent to allow the athlete to finish the season with her current club if at all possible. Remember, you are very likely only hearing one side of the story.

Conversely, if your athlete is leaving your club, please act professionally towards the athlete, parents, and the club where she is moving in the same manner that you would like to be treated. It will serve you much better in the long run.

Professional Expectations when a coach decides to change clubs

If you are a coach and are changing employers, you should refrain from behavior that will follow you and will injure your reputation in the gymnastics community. How you leave will reflect your integrity and your moral fiber.

When a coach leaves, they may take proprietary information with them. These items may include team rosters, client lists, contact information, and other items. This is not legal, and the new club should advise the coach of this and instruct the person to either return the items or destroy the records from their former club. Please discourage coaches from bringing proprietary items to your gym; just remember, if they took it from one gym, it is likely they will do the same to you.

Parents will become aware that a coach has moved to another club and may switch clubs as well. Club owners should be very cautious if the new coach is promising that gymnasts or staff members will follow him/her.

Here are some good questions to ask:

1. What club are you currently coaching with?
2. Do you have any further obligations with your present or former club?
3. Be forewarned, if we offer you a job we will contact your former employer as a professional courtesy.
4. Why are you exploring your options (again, there are always 2 sides to every story)?
5. Remember, if they are bringing proprietary information or gymnasts with them, they may leave next year with yours!

All in all, we are running businesses and we should have the highest of integrity. Remember do unto others....