

## "COMPETITION TIPS"

Please read the following information carefully. These are competition tips that will help you with competitions this year (especially if you are a new competitive team member). You will learn a lot more and gain experience as you travel this journey.

**1. What are "Fun Meets" and "sanctioned" meets:** A Fun meet is exactly that, "FUN!" Your gymnast will have the opportunity to show you the hard work they have completed during their practice times. This is their time to shine and earn a ribbon or medal. This will help them overcome some fears being in front of crowds and to have complete concentration. It will also give them the experience needed for upper level competitions. There are no scores given at Fun Meets. A Sanctioned meet is a competition where scores are shown for each gymnast's performance. Gymnasts compete against each other in their designated age groups.

**2. What do the ribbons mean?** Fun Meets are not USA Gymnastics regulated, meaning that each "host" gym can choose their own reward system; whether it is ribbons, medals or trophies. This level of competition is strictly for "fun" and experience. At sanctioned competitions, depending on the level and type of meet (invitational, state) determines what kind of ribbons or medals (or other awards) are given. There are a certain number of places in each age group that receive awards.

**3. Exact date & time:** Rule of thumb; the information is usually given a couple of weeks prior to the meet. It would be wise to block off the entire weekend. The coaches will put the information into the gymnast mailboxes when it becomes available. Please do not contact the host gym directly.

**4. Every gymnast is expected to arrive 15 minutes prior to the meet start time.** This will allow the gymnast to find their coaches, teammates, check-in and last minute prep talk. If for any reason – your daughter will be late for some reason (i.e. car trouble, traffic backups etc...) PLEASE call a teammate or a coach. The coaches need to have the advantage of knowing where their gymnasts are at all times when it comes to all meets & all scheduled practices. So, please give them the respect that they need to carry out their duties as, "COACH!"

**5. Coaches cellular numbers are available ONLY for the above problem.** Please use these numbers for emergency purposes for meets only. Do not call during their off time. If you need to contact the coach for anything besides the problem indicated in #4. Please call MEGA's office number (248-344-9344) and make an appointment.

**6. TRY NOT to show how nervous and upset you may be to your child.** She will pick up on this, and it may affect how she performs. She will need to enter the competition with a clean refreshed mind set. POSITIVE!!!

**7. DO NOT coach your child on the way to the meet.** It is best to have your daughter focus on "having a good time and doing her best." She is already nervous enough, and will probably forget what you say - let alone what her coach has told her. Don't overload her with anything extra. Let the coaches do their job.

**8. Get up the morning of the meet with PLENTY of time to do what you need to do.** There's nothing worse than trying to rush a nervous gymnast and watching her fall apart. Please make sure she eats something good.

**9. Make sure to lay out ALL the clothes (leo, warm-up, scrunchie, etc.) that you'll need the NIGHT BEFORE!** This way you'll know if you need to do a quick wash load or whatever.

**10. Your gymnast is expected to arrive with the whole attire on from head to toe. DO NOT** walk into the competition gym with your street clothes on, and plan on changing into your warm-up once you get inside! Once you get to the competition gym and you get out of your car, you are representing Michigan Elite Gymnastics Academy. Anything you do, say or look like will be a reflection of Michigan Elite Gymnastics Academy and you would be expected to look your best and be on your best behavior at all times!! Let's make the first one, the best one!!! (This is true of **EACH** meet!)

**11. Hair...this is a tough one.**

The coaches expect each gymnast hair in a bun on top of the head(not directly on top), with hair clips to hold the bun and hair in place. **DO** plan on using plenty of hair "goop" (like Dep, Dippity-Do, the gel stuff) and hair spray in your gymnasts' hair - if you don't already - **AND BRING IT WITH YOU** for those last minute touch-ups. Many girls

have those "little pieces of hair that won't stay put" and use those hair clips. Those are great, be careful on how many you put in her hair, again it's the distraction thing. **DO BRING EXTRA CLIPS AND ELASTICS** just in case they're needed. Of course, if you're bringing all this extra hair stuff, don't forget the comb and brush too! The safest rule is to bring it and not need it, rather than need it and not have it! That would be just one more thing to upset your gymnast.

If for some reason you can't seem to get the bun in your daughter's hair – please make arrangements with another mom. This must be done before they enter the gym before the meet. (see item #10) Please do not expect the coach to do this – it is their soul purpose to "coach" and not maintain hair or any other accessory with the gymnast. So, please have your daughter ready to go – looking professional in hair and outfit. If your daughter needs help from a coach, please discuss this before the competition takes place.

**12. Lots of girls end up sleeping on the way to these meets. So bring a pillow and a blanket for her in the car - she'll be glad for it after the meet!!!**

**13. Many girls bring a good luck charm with them in their gym bag** - this could be anything from a reasonable-sized stuffed animal to a rabbit's foot or something. Whatever makes her happy!

**14. Please make sure your gymnast brings her gym bag with these items:** snack (see below) and a water bottle (do not put with leotards or other items in your bag, generally the side pocket is best), one roll of tape, grips (if you wear them), plastic bag for any extra leotards you are carrying.

**15. FOOD.....This has several sub-groups to it...**

**A. The night before** (and actually 2-3 days before) it is recommended that the gymnast eat a high carbohydrate meal...like pasta, baked potatoes and stuff like that. Stay away from the fatty, greasy, real spicy foods that may not settle well on a soon - to - be nervous stomach. The morning of the meet also eat the carbohydrates, but also eat some **NON-ACIDIC** fruits. Examples would be: bananas, strawberries, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, watermelon, apples and grapes. **STAY AWAY** from oranges, grapefruits, citrus-type juices and that stuff. Acid on acid is a no-no. The fruit gives them a short-term boost of energy and the breads/carbs give them a long term "energy bank." Pancakes and bananas are a great pre-competition breakfast.

**B. You've probably caught on to the carbohydrate theme. Carry this theme through what you pack in their gym bags for a snack.** Some of these meets are long, and your kid IS going to get hungry. You want to pack them snacks that **THEY** like, not necessarily what you make them bring. You want to put them in small containers that are reseal able - there's nothing worse than having crackers crunched all through your gym bag during a meet, if your gymnast is only going to eat part of that item.) Choose items that are bite-sized to a certain degree, no gooey fillings, and kind of fun to eat. Here are some ideas: pretzels, carrots, grapes, small chunks of bagels, celery, wheat thins, granola bar bites (or whatever they're called!), **NO CANDY or COOKIES.....** I'm sure you get the idea by now. By the way, it is **YOUR** responsibility to make sure your daughter has her food items and water bottle with her for a meet. **DO NOT WAIT** until you get to the meet and hope they have water there. Get the water **BEFORE** you leave your house. [Taking a "side-road" here, Chap Stick is a good thing for them to carry with them, as well as a small baggie tissues.]

**C. This last sub-group of "food" covers what happens AFTER a meet.** After the meets the gymnast love to go out and eat to share the competition experience with their teammates. It's also a wonderful bonding experience for parents, coaches and gymnast.

**16. Don't plan on too much comfort for yourself for these meets.** They are long and they tend to get **HOT**. Dress in layers so you can peel off the layers as you get hot. Usually a meet depends on how many gyms & gymnast that are competing. From the time you get your gymnast there (plus the 15 minute early arrival time) – it could be a 5/6-hour meet. All gymnasts must remain with their team and coaches to the very end. Remember to wear you MEGA team apparel. We want all parents showing support for our teams!

**17. It may be a good investment to you to obtain some "Stadium seats/cushions" to sit on.** Bleachers get pretty hard on the **BE - HIND** as well as your back. These cushions help A LOT!!!

**18. Is there a cost for these meets:** Yes, they range from \$5.00 - \$30.00 per person. Sometimes it's only the parents and little children are free - but it's rare. So, expect to pay something.

**19. Most of the meets you go to will have a concession stand of some type.** Sometimes these things are way over-priced, sometimes not. Bring money for this if you want to. Some people bring their own snack foods/drinks with them instead. Be careful of this though, some gyms won't let you bring food in from the outside. In that case, you make a lot of trips to the car or eat what they have at their concession stand.

**20. In addition to the food concessions, some gyms sell awesome T-shirts and gymnastic pins that are a big hit with the girls.** Besides, the T-shirts make great P.J.'s!!

**21. Check your directions over well the night before and have an alternate route picked out if you can.** Sometimes traffic will bog you down and you may have to make a split second decision to take another route. If you looked this over the night before, then you would have this in mind when the situation presents itself. Again, please call if you hit traffic that will cause you to be late or just barely making it (have your daughter ready). Please look at the weather and give yourself plenty of time to get to the meet. If the competition site is over a 1.5-hour drive, you must stay at a hotel if you have an 8:00am session. Use common sense. **DO NOT EXPECT** your child to perform well if they are sitting in a car before they compete.

**22. Plan on buying a program for each meet too.** These usually have a page or two in them that you can write all the scores down for your gymnast (if this is an option). It helps to keep track of the rest of the team too. Make sure you bring a pen too!! Coaches always keep track in case you miss a score/ribbon. This is not for you to compare your daughter to another gymnast from her team or from another gymnast from another gym.

**23. Remember, video cameras are O.K. to bring, but NO FLASH CAMERAS are ever allowed at any meet.** The potential for distracting the gymnast, any gymnast, is great and thus an injury may happen.

**24. You may want to bring a book for yourself to read while they warm-up.** It will be less of a long day for you if you have something to keep you amused.

**25. Bring some Tylenol/ibuprofen along.** Chances are good that you'll need it before the end of the day. Besides, if your daughter needs it while you're there, you'll have some. (I know the older girls carry a few tablets with them in their gym bag, but this is something you will need to decide about, depending on the age of your child).

**26. Not to jinx anyone, but if there is an injury to your daughter at a meet, DO NOT jump up and try to run down to her.** I know that sounds cruel, but there is a reason for this. It may be a situation where she fell (and she's alright) and scared the poop out of herself, and the coach and the medical person (that each meet generally has on site) can coax her back into competition. If you go running down there and get in the middle of everything, the kid will fall apart at the sight of Mom and Dad. In this instance, 9 times out of 10, the kid can't get composed enough to go on with the meet. **IF** she is seriously hurt - they **WILL** come and get you. I know all this sounds extreme, but your daughter getting hurt **ALSO** affects **ALL** the other girls at the meet. They **DO NOT** need a hysterical parent going off the deep end. That will affect how **THEY** perform the rest of the day too. It is very hard to think of others when your child is the one that is hurt, but **YOU HAVE TO TRY** to do that for everyone's sake. USA Gymnastics does NOT allow parents on the competition floor (unless you are working at the competition). Stay calm and say a prayer.

**27. This is one of the most important reminders that I could tell you: UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES IS IT ALLOWABLE TO APPROACH ANY OF THE JUDGES AT YOUR DAUGHTER'S MEET TO QUESTION THEM ABOUT A PARTICULAR SCORE YOUR DAUGHTER WAS GIVEN!!!!!!** This holds true of contacting your daughter's coach during the meet to question a score that was given to her. So, **DO NOT TRY TO CONTACT YOUR DAUGHTER'S COACH DURING A MEET EITHER.** There is a particular procedure that your daughter's **COACH** must go through to "discuss" a score with a judge. This must wait until the meet is over and you have a chance to find the coach and ask her **WHY** your daughter received a certain score that she did. The coach may have a perfectly good explanation, but you will **NEED TO WAIT!** The coach may agree with you or may not. They will let you know their thoughts on that score/event and whether your daughter deserved that score or not. You cannot do anything about the score; your daughter needs to earn each score on her own. This is a very hard learning experience for "new" competition parents to learn. But in any event, just stay away from the judges!!! The coaches know what they are doing, they know the deductions. When seeing your daughter and another gymnast do the same routine and come out with two different scores – there is a reason. The judges have a point system

that they must follow – it is the same system used in the upper levels regulated by the USA Gymnastics commission. It is one good reason why we leave the coaching to the coaches and the routines to the gymnast. Each gymnast knows what is expected out of them when entering competitions. Just sit back and enjoy the ride.

This is a lot of information to absorb. Be patient. You will learn as you take on this incredible journey.