



# VEGA USAG Team Handbook

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# Our Philosophy

## **Professional Training, Serious Fun.**

- Our ultimate goal is to have happy, healthy athletes, who achieve their greatest potential in competitive gymnastics.
- We strive to make a positive impact in the lives of our athletes by combining positive reinforcement and encouragement.
- We work to improve not only the physical athleticism of each of our gymnasts, but also their individual characteristics and work ethic.

## **What is Competitive Gymnastics?**

### **VEGA Expectations**

Joining any VEGA Competitive Team is a privilege and does come with certain expectations on behalf of athletes and their families.

### **Parent Expectations**

- Parents are encouraged to support their athlete in a positive way, be their fan, not their instructor. Parents may not coach from the sidelines during training. Teaching gymnasts is the coach's job; if you have any doubt or concern, you should speak directly to your athlete's team coach at the soonest time appropriate.
- Do not intervene during training. This allows gymnasts to better respect their coaches and learn to work together with their coach and teammates. If there is an issue that cannot be handled in the gym, your team coach will ask for your involvement outside of training.
- Always be respectful in the gym and away at meets. Keep negative personal opinions about athletes, parents, coaches, judges, and meet officials to yourself. Any concerns should be brought directly to the person of interest or your program director.
- Tuition and competition fees must be paid on time to ensure your athlete is able to attend all scheduled practices.
- Ensure that your coach and the front office have your most current email address as email is our regular form of communication... we do not want you to miss any important information.
- Your coaches will contact you with any questions or concerns and ask that you do the same to keep communication open.
- Athletes train best when well rested and nutritionally balanced; please ensure that your athlete is getting enough rest and eating well balanced meals prior to gymnastics. Do not pack cookies, cupcakes, candy bars, soda, etc. for their mid workout snack.

- Set up modified training with your coach for your athlete when injured or minor illnesses occur. Attending a partial practice or a full practice with 'lightened' training is very beneficial in keeping your athlete strong and flexible and their skills maintained until a full recovery.
- Be a positive reinforcement for your child. Do not compare them to other athletes and do not diminish their successes; always support your athlete.
- Call or email when your athlete will be late or will miss practice.

### **Athlete Expectations**

All athletes are required to:

- Attend all scheduled practices unless otherwise excused - Notify coaches of all absences prior to the event.
- Be on time to practice – warm up is crucial in the prevention of injury and also shows your commitment to your team.
- Attend all competitions unless otherwise excused.
- Come to work out prepared with:
  - o hair pulled back
  - o proper attire – Leotard and shorts for women, shorts and shirt for men
  - o tape and pre-wrap
  - o grips (if used per coaches approval)
  - o an extra leotard and pair of shorts
  - o water bottle. Please label clearly with your name to avoid mix ups
  - o an appropriate snack (fruit, granola bar, crackers and juice, etc.). Athletes will receive a short break if they attend any practice lasting three hours or more.
- Communicate with coaches. If you are feeling ill or are injured, let your coach know immediately. Notify your coaches of any recent injuries outside of the gym as well or any medication you may be taking due to illness or injury.
- Work hard and do your best, and maintain a positive attitude.
- Respect all coaches and fellow athletes.
- Accept all constructive criticism and scores in a positive manner.
- Keep your workspace clean. All mats and equipment must be put in their proper places before being dismissed from practice.
- Keep cell phones off the gym floor. Cell phones may only be used during break or for emergencies. (Notify your coach immediately if there is an emergency).

Any negative comments, foul language, or inappropriate attire in the gym will not be tolerated. Discouraging remarks, regardless of whether they are directed to themselves or others, formation of cliques (including parents), excluding others from activities, disregarding athlete responsibilities, or any other negative behavior will be grounds for immediate dismissal or receiving disciplinary action.

### **Disciplinary Action**

In order to support an optimal atmosphere of fun, respect, hard work, and success, VEGA has instituted a 'three strike' policy for athletes who repeatedly disregard the proper behavioral expectations. In most cases, discipline problems are minor and will be handled quickly and easily in the gym during workout. Significant or recurring instances will be recorded as strikes and kept in the gymnast's file and will affect their team participation as follows:

- **Strike One** – In the event that a problem persists or has large significance, strike one will be given to the athlete during practice. A meeting will be scheduled as soon as possible with the athlete, parent(s), and coaches to discuss the necessary steps to end the improper behavior.
  
- **Strike Two** – In the event of the recurring behavioral issue that earned strike one or of different improper behavior, strike two will be given. The athlete will be dismissed from practice immediately and will not be allowed to return to practice for a minimum of one week, during which time a parent/athlete coach conference will be held to determine the necessary actions to control the misbehavior. The athlete may return to practice after the behavior is under control and apologies have been offered. Missed practices due to strikes may affect the gymnast's eligibility to compete.
  
- **Strike Three** – If behavioral problems continue and a third strike has been given, the athlete's privilege of team membership will be revoked.

When a gymnast shows significant improvement with behavioral issues for a six month period, all previous strikes will be permanently removed.

### **Meet Etiquette For Parents**

Most of these expectations are those of USAG, not just VEGA. Ignoring these guidelines may result in lowered scores, a gymnast being scratched from their meet, or possible injury.

- Respect all meet officials and coaches. Under no circumstances is it appropriate for a parent to contact any official on the floor before or after the meet (judges, scorekeepers, announcers, etc.) Any concerns you might have, should be brought to your coach's attention following the meet.

- Respect all gymnasts – set the example of good sportsmanship! Refrain from making any negative remarks about gyms, coaches, athletes, etc.
- Be a part of the audience. Parents, family members, or any other spectators are not allowed on the floor of a competition. If there is an emergency, communicate with your coach, they will be responsible for your athlete during the time of competition.
- Please do not try to talk with your athlete during a competition. This is not about control, but focus. Competition can be a time of great stress and it is your coach's job to help your athlete in the appropriate way whether it be calming them down, pumping them up, encouraging them, etc. Any concerns you might have should be brought to your coach's attention following the meet.
- Do not coach from the sidelines; it is the coaches' job to coach and the parents' job to be their fan.
- No flash photography is ever permitted during a competition as it could result in injury.
- Remember that competitions are not only about your athlete's scores and award placements, but their overall performance and progressions. It may take years for athletes to feel comfortable in their competitive performances and expecting too much from them could result in low self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Always support your athlete regardless of how amazing or poor they feel their performance was.

**For Athletes:**

- Arrive 10-15 minutes prior to your session time starting. Find your coaches as soon as you arrive; you will be with your team and coaches from this point until the end of the meet.
- Your VEGA attire (leotard and warm ups) must be worn until the conclusion of awards. Be sure that any undergarments or sports bras do not show, all nail polish and jewelry is removed, and that hair is securely pulled back out of your face.
- Have your gym bag packed appropriately:
  - o Water bottle
  - o Snack (granola bar, crackers, juice, etc. – nothing sticky or messy)
  - o Grips (if used)
  - o Extra copy of floor music if you have an individually choreographed routine
- Athletes are expected to accept their place in line up and all scores received with a positive attitude. Crying and uncontrolled emotions are not acceptable and athletes

who persist with these behaviors will be scratched from the competition. Not only does this negatively affect their individual performances, but can also take a negative toll on the rest of the team. Athletes who are upset about a score or performance should talk with their coach.

- Athletes will be expected to help with moving boards, mats, bar settings, etc.
- Show good sportsmanship! Encourage and cheer for your teammates as well as other competitors. Negative comments toward yourself or other competitors will not be tolerated.
- We encourage athletes to come support their teammates who may be competing in a separate session, although they will be considered a spectator during this time and not be allowed on the competition floor.

### **Communication**

VEGA's primary form of communication is through email. Please ensure that upon enrolling in a competitive team, the office has the most updated email address for all primary contacts. If your primary email changes at any time, please let the office and your program director know immediately.

### **VEGA Booster Club**

The VEGA Booster Club (VBC) is a non-profit created to support VEGA Team Members through fundraising and volunteer opportunities. Additional information will be provided by the VBC throughout the year.

### **Financial Obligation**

Tuition is based on a 48 week year. Practices may be canceled or modified to accommodate competitions and parents should expect modified training during local school district Spring Break and Winter Break closures.

Auto-pay is the **required** method of payment. Tuition is run on the first of every month and will not be prorated due to missed practices. Accounts must be in good standing for athletes to attend work out and competitions. It is strictly the account holder's responsibility to check their account routinely.

In addition to monthly tuition and VEGA's annual registration fee of \$30, expenses are as follows:

- Annual equipment fee – Because competitive athletes use team/gym equipment, we share in the cost of acquiring and maintaining it for the best advantage to the athletes. This fee is based on all team members' usage and will process via auto payment on July 15th (\$75).

- Annual coaches' education fee – team coaches attend USAG Congress education workshops as well as other educational classes that are available to continue their education and training. This fee will help cover this expense will process via auto payment on July 15th (\$50).
- Annual USAG Membership – To be eligible to compete, all athletes must be a member of USA Gymnastics. It is the responsibility of the parent to complete the USAG Membership form and pay the USAG membership fee directly to USAG. Parent's will receive an email from USAG to complete these tasks.
- Team Uniform includes: competitive leotard, warm ups, and gym bag. The cost of uniforms vary from year to year. Uniform payments will process via auto payment on August 15th.
- Choreography and music - for information regarding choreography, see your individual coach.
- Competition Fees – Competition fees run the 15th of the month, September, October, November, January, February, March. Athletes competing beyond the regular season (ie Westerns, Regionals, Nationals) may incur additional competition fees in April.
- Travel costs to and from meets is the sole responsibility of each individual athlete and their family.

### **Competition Information**

A tentative meet schedule will be announced as soon as it becomes available. Meet schedules are confirmed as we receive information from the host gyms. Exact days and times may not be announced until a couple weeks prior to the competition.

### **Drop Off/Pick Up**

We ask that parents drop off their athletes no more than 15 minutes before practice starts and pick up their athletes no later than 5 minutes after practice ends. You are more than welcome to stay for the beginning and ending of practice to watch your gymnast, but due to the recreational class flow in our gym, we ask team parents to not stay the entire length of practice. Do NOT instruct your child to wait outside of the building for pick-up, we require that gymnasts stay inside until parents have arrived.

### **Attendance**

All Team members are expected to attend 100% of scheduled workouts unless otherwise excused. If a gymnast is unable to come to practice, it is their responsibility to notify their coach prior to their absence. There are no make-up classes for team participants and tuition will not be prorated due to absences.



### **General Rules & Policies**

- No entry onto the gym floor or any equipment will be allowed until coaches call athletes in.
- No athlete is permitted on any piece of apparatus or equipment without an instructor present.
- No gum, food, or drink is allowed in the training area, with the exception of water.
- Street shoes are not allowed in the gym.
- All jewelry must be removed with the exception of stud earrings.
- Do NOT bring valuables to the gym; lost or stolen articles are the responsibility of the individual owner, not VEGA.

### **USAG Men's D.P. Program Director – Zdravko Stoianov**

[zdravko.stoianov@vegagym.com](mailto:zdravko.stoianov@vegagym.com)

### **USAG Women's D.P.. Program Director – Shannon Michael**

[coachshannon@vegagym.com](mailto:coachshannon@vegagym.com)

### **USAG Women's Xcel Program Director – Elise Ekstrom**

[elise.ekstrom@vegagym.com](mailto:elise.ekstrom@vegagym.com)

## **VEGA Athlete Commitment Agreement**

1. I have read the athlete responsibilities and meet etiquette sections of the team handbook.
2. I understand how to behave at practice and at meets. I will treat my coaches, teammates, and parents with respect at all times.
3. I understand that if I do not follow the rules in practice or at a meet, I can be asked to leave practice, be prevented from competing or after a third strike, can be asked to leave the team.
4. I understand that gymnastics is both an individual and a team sport and that my actions affect my team.

Athlete Signatures -