

**Little Stars**

# **Team Handbook**

for Artistic & Rhythmic Gymnastics competitive programs



## Welcome to the Team!

Little Stars Gymnastics Club would like to welcome you to our gymnastics family. If you are reading this team manual it is because your daughter/son has already impressed us with her/his gymnastics talent and potential. Through this team manual we hope to give you a better insight into how our program operates and answer many of your questions.

Gymnastics is a difficult sport, but it is a very exciting and satisfying one. Your gymnast will acquire, develop and hone many characteristics including confidence, poise, mental and physical discipline, appreciation of hard work and self-respect. In addition, gymnastics is one of the best sports to develop physical attributes including strength, flexibility, agility, power, coordination, grace and overall body and muscular control.

We hope your child's involvement in gymnastics with Little Stars will be a long and rewarding one and above all, we hope it will be fun!

### I. INVITATION TO TEAM PROGRAMS

Competitive Programs are by invitation only. Unlike our recreational program where gymnasts may sign up at any time, space and ability concerns limit the number of gymnasts who can be on part of the team.

Gymnasts may get on the team by several avenues:

- Already on a team program elsewhere; they are screened and evaluated during one of our team workouts and are placed accordingly.
- "Spotted" in one of our recreational class by a coach and are extended an invitation to join the team.
- Parent or gymnast asks to be evaluated prior to the start of the season.

**All invitations to team** should be viewed as a temporary position until a **probationary period of one term** has passed. This will allow the coaching staff time to fully evaluate the gymnast, as to how they cope with training (team) versus working out (recreational class program), their mental approach, how they handle stress, fear, etc. **The competitive team is a year-round commitment and summer/spring/winter camps are a requirement.**

### II. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM

Little Stars offers **Artistic Gymnastics** competitive training for both boys and girls following **USA Gymnastics** guidelines. Little Stars also offers **FIG training** to a select group of elite gymnasts.

The **Women's Junior Olympic Program** consists of ten levels. Levels 1-3 are considered "Developmental, level 4-5 "Compulsory" and levels 6-10 "Optional". The Team Orientation program at Little Stars prepares potential gymnasts for levels 1-2 of the program

The **Men's Junior Olympic Program** provides training and competitive opportunities for beginner to elite gymnasts from ages 6 to 18. The Junior Olympic Program is organized into ten different levels of training or competition. Levels 4 through 6, provide basic routines for all boys who desire to participate in competitive gymnastics. These start with simple basic skills experienced in Levels 1 through 3 and progress developmentally with each competitive level. The compulsory Level 7 is designed to encourage and prepare the gymnast for the transition from compulsory to optional routines at an appropriate age by providing skill direction and combinations which can be used as the basis for entry level optional routines. The optional levels, 8, 9 and 10, require the gymnast to fulfill most FIG requirements or the JO modifications for those requirements approved for the program.

Little Stars offers **Rhythmic Gymnastics** competitive training for girls following **FIG** guidelines. The Team Orientation group prepares potential rhythmic gymnasts for the competitive squad. Members of the competitive program will compete with individual routines both freehand as well as other rhythmic apparatus (rope, ball, hoop, clubs, ribbon) depending on skills attained.

Athletes in both programs compete at their designated level within their age group as per the host’s regulations.

### III. WORKOUT LOADS

The amount and intensity of the workouts vary depending on level. Generally, at the lower levels the number of days and hours is low and increases as the gymnast matures and improves. The intensity of workouts and level of expectations also increases as a gymnast moves up in levels. Below are **minimum** training requirements:

	Artistic Gymnastics						Rhythmic Gymnastics	
	Girls				Boys		Girls	
	Team Orientation	Squad Levels 1-2	Squad Levels 3-4	Squad Levels 5+	Team Orientation	Squad All Levels	Team Orientation	Squad All Levels
<b>Sessions / week</b>	Two	Two	Two	Three	Two	Two	Two	Two
<b>Length (hours)</b>	2	2.5	3	3	2	3	2	3

### IV. WHAT WE WILL BE WORKING ON?

Competitive gymnastics requires a gymnast to be strong, flexible, have higher level skills and discipline. A competitive gymnast does not aim to complete a skill but aims to perfect it. Little Stars competitive gymnasts will be working on five main components:

- **Discipline** – The gymnasts will be learning the behaviors expected of a competition team gymnast.
- **Conditioning/Strength Work** – This is required to not only complete the skills but also to have the body control to try and perform them perfectly.
- **Flexibility** – This is needed to help gymnasts with skill development and dance elements in their routines.
- **Perfecting current skills** – The gymnasts will be working on perfecting the skills they have learned in previous levels or classes.
- **Learning routine parts** – Gymnasts will start to learn parts of the routines required for their current level.

### V. QUALITIES THAT COMPETITIVE GYMNASTICS DEVELOPS

- a. **INTRINSIC MOTIVATION**- A GYMNAST UNDERSTANDS THAT THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND REWARDS COME FROM THEMSELVES RATHER THAN COACHES, FRIENDS OR PARENTS.
- b. **A HARD WORK ETHIC** – A GYMNAST KNOWS THAT BY GIVING 110% OF HERSELF AT EVERY PRACTICE, SHE WILL ACCOMPLISH WHAT SHE IS CAPABLE OF.
- c. **SELF CONFIDENCE**- GYMNASTS ARE PLACED WHERE THEY CAN SUCCEED. GYMNASTS ARE MOVED THROUGHOUT THE LEVELS AT A RATE WHERE THEY CAN CONTINUE TO DEVELOP SELF-CONFIDENCE AND PRIDE IN THEIR GYMNASTICS IN A SAFE MANNER.

- d. **TIME MANAGEMENT**- SCHOOL WORK IS A PRIORITY AS IS TRAINING. GYMNASTS ARE ABLE TO BUDGET THEIR TIME SO THAT THEY CAN BE SUCCESSFUL BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE GYM.
- e. **PERSEVERANCE**- WHEN OTHERS AROUND YOU ARE LEARNING SOMETHING QUICKER, A GYMNAST SHOULD REMIND HERSELF TO NEVER GIVE UP!

## VI. RULES OF A GOOD ATHLETE

1. Take care of your body! **Eat healthy** foods and snacks. Provide your body with food and drink that will help you do your best. You should drink water only during practice.
2. Know that you will experience **frustrations** and **setbacks**. Face them and learn from them. Keep a positive attitude while working through it.
3. Attend all trainings, scheduled competitions, and special events. Progression for competitive gymnasts involves a large commitment from both gymnasts and parents. **Regular attendance at training sessions is vital** if your child wishes to increase his/her repertoire of gymnastics skills and both maintain and improve his/her level of fitness. One week away from the gym can set back training by up to a month.
4. Gymnastics training is **exclusive to this club**. Gymnasts may not train at any other gym or camp while competing and/or representing this facility without explicit consent from the Head Coach.
5. Email or message the Head Coach before practice to alert the coaches if you will be **absent for any reason**.
6. Arrive on time and stay until practice is over. Arrive ready to participate with the proper attire, well rested, and ready to go. Make sure your hair is pulled back and out of your face. No jewelry of any kind may be worn during the workout (small stud earrings are acceptable).
7. **No food or cell phones** are permitted on workout floor. Water bottles are permitted in the designated area.
8. Gymnasts must stay off the equipment before and after practice.
9. Ask permission to leave the gym. This applies to leaving practice early, going to the restroom, or calling or texting parents. Your coaches must know where you are. **Calling, texting, or social media is not allowed at any time during practice, unless given permission from the coach.**
10. **DO YOUR CONDITIONING TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY.** Most of the athlete's time in the gym is spent doing what they are told to do under the direct supervision of a coach. However, it is important for athletes to develop their own self-discipline and self-motivation habits. Those habits are the ones that will stay with them long after they leave the gym.
11. **All injuries, no matter how small, must be promptly reported to the coach (this includes injuries that happen outside the gym).** It is preferred that injured athletes continue to attend practice sessions if the nature of their injury allows them to do so. A long period away from the gym can affect the gymnast socially as well as physically. They will be assigned a modified workout, keeping within their doctor's orders and restrictions.

12. You demonstrate **good sportsmanship** when you show respect for yourself, your teammates, your coaches. Talk politely and act courteously towards everyone. That includes your **teammates, opponents, judges, coaches and other team's coaches**.
13. **Making the team is a year-round commitment.** Unfortunately, there is really no way around this. To get better, and gain the strength and flexibility needed to improve, your gymnast must spend hours in the gym. Practices are on the schedule for the entire year. Every gymnast is expected to work hard, try their best, and bring a good attitude. This is all that we will ever ask of our gymnasts and this is always what you they should demand of oneself.

## VII. COMPETITIVE SEASON

1. All competitive gymnasts must demonstrate **proficiency in all skills appropriate to their competitive level** to be allowed to enter any competition. In addition, the gymnast must be in good health and have attended every workout the week prior to any competition.
2. A list of competitions for the academic year will be communicated to parents in advance and will be available in the Members Section of the website.  
All squad members should compete in **ALL national** competitions to which the coach has assigned them to unless they are sick or injured. No registrations will be accepted past the communicated deadline. Continuous failure to attend national competitions will be cause for dismissal from the program. Participation in international competitions is also encouraged.
3. All squad members need to obtain **club competition attire** (leotard and tracksuit). Additional team attire/accessories such as gym bag, strip bag, shorts etc. are also available. Gymnasts are asked to save competition uniform solely for competitions, this is necessary to maintain its smart appearance. We recommend that you label all your attire, so it is not lost or confused with someone else's. We also recommend checking the label on the inside of the leotard for washing directions.
4. It is important to **keep competition experiences positive**, and most importantly, be proud of the growth and development that takes place. Gymnasts are encouraged to strive to improve themselves and to work to their full capacity. Each gymnast is uniquely different, each with their own strengths and their own weaknesses. Gymnasts are expected to support and cheer their teammates and join in on all team activities such as group photos.
5. If a parent is unable to accompany an athlete for any reason to an away meet, coaching staff and/or other parents may be available to accompany those athletes (as long as prior arrangements have been made). For local meets it is expected that parents will accompany their athlete.
6. Little Stars is always looking for volunteers to help with the administration of home competitions. We realize your time is important and we appreciate everything you can do. The more you volunteer, the better the gym and event becomes.

## VIII. MOVING FROM ONE LEVEL TO THE NEXT

At the end of every competitive season, it will be decided if the gymnast will move up a level, move down a level or remain in the same level. The final decision of placement rests solely with the coaching team. Trust that we will do what is in the child's best interest. Moving up from one level to the next is decided not only based on

a **gymnast's competition score** (a minimum AA of 34.0 at final competitions), it is also based on his/her **attendance at workouts, skill level and the attitude of the gymnast.**

**Remember always that a score given to your child in a gymnastics competition is an evaluation of one single performance, not an evaluation of the child.**

Moving a gymnast to a different level before she has achieved consistency and proficiency may give the gymnast a temporary confidence boost, but will ultimately do more damage to the gymnast's development in the future.

## **IX. TRAINING AT OTHER GYMNASTICS INSTITUTIONS**

Training of squad members must be exclusive to Little Stars. Training at other institutions may lead to great misunderstandings and confusion on how skills and routines should be performed due to difference in training approaches, programs, policies and techniques. This can cause serious setbacks to skill progression as we cannot guarantee what is being taught at other institutions. This also interferes with the development of the coach/athlete relationship which is critical for long term success.

An exception to this rule can be made for gymnasts travelling out of town on holiday and looking to keep up their physical fitness while away from the UAE.

Your gymnast has committed to being part of a team, exclusivity of his/her training promotes team spirit and teaches commitment. Training at other gymnastics institutions without Head Coach prior approval will be cause for dismissal from the program.

## **X. BULLYING**

We believe it is very important for all people to feel safe in our facilities and programs. We have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance. We will do everything possible to ensure a safe and healthy environment is created and maintained for your family. A gymnast shall not intimidate, harass, or bully another participant through words or actions.

If a violation of this policy is observed, the following disciplinary actions will be taken:

First event: Warning - Coach will take child aside, review the bullying policy, and redirect that child. The incident will be documented.

Second Incident: Meeting with the Coach - Parents will be notified and a meeting scheduled. The child and his/her parent(s) will meet with the Head Coach to discuss the behavior and solutions to the problem.

Third Incident: In cases of repeated bullying, the child will receive a consequence, which will include time spent away from the gym and all team activities.

Separation: In the event repeated efforts to address a chronic problem have failed, the child may be asked to leave the program and/or forfeit participation at Little Stars.

## XI. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

When an athlete does not meet the expectations above the use of **3 Strike Policy** will be enforced.

1. Verbal warning; may include a strength exercise.
2. Time out on the bench
3. Meeting with parents

## XII. FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

1. **Registration fees:** it is the responsibility of the parent to fill in the Little Stars Registration form and sign the Waiver form on behalf of a gymnast and/or update gymnast information before the start of a new term. Please make sure to fill in all areas especially emergency contact details and highlight any medical concerns your child may have. A onetime registration fee will be applicable to all new comers.
2. **Term fees:** term fees should be paid in full by the first week of the term. The club runs on a strict no fees no train policy, failure to pay fees on time will affect your child's participation in classes. Details on class fees, registration fees, and term dates are available on club website and at club reception. If a gymnast decides to withdraw from the team mid-term, term fees are non-refundable. Missed classes cannot be transferred to the next term or any of the camps (please refer to make-up class policy).
3. **Competition entry fees:** entry fees will vary depending on the discipline and the nature of the event and will be charged separately from class fees. Entry fees should be paid to the club reception prior to the payment deadline scheduled for the event (advance notice of registration dates will be given). Gymnasts who are unable to attend a scheduled competition should contact the coach as soon as possible. All competitions require that the fees be paid in full in advance by Little Stars; gymnasts canceling or becoming ineligible may not be able to receive a refund if fees have already been submitted to the host.
4. **Competition support fee:** each gymnast will be charged a small fee to cover meet participation expenses. For national meets this fee will range between 15AED to 40AED depending on total number of Little Stars participants. Fees for international meets will vary and will depend on the location and nature of an event/meet as well as total number of participants. These fees DO NOT go to Little Stars, these fees are used to help Little Stars partially cover the costs related to a meet such as (but not limited to) judging fees, travel fees, housing fees, staff overtime...etc.
5. **Attire fees:** all Little Stars competitive gymnasts are required to acquire team uniform for meet participation. This normally consisting of the team leotard for the season and tracksuit. Details on cost and sizes will be available at the beginning of October of every academic year. It is recommended that parents provide the appropriate grips, wrist bands, sliders, tape, water bottle, plaster, extra leotard, scrunchie, sports band...etc. that a child may require during training sessions and/or competitions.
6. **Private classes:** private classes can be arranged for those that would like to get some extra practice time. Please contact the Head coach directly for bookings.

## XIII. PARENT COMMITMENT

Parents play a huge role in the development of a successful gymnast. Your role is every bit as important as that of the gym, coaches and the athlete. The following is expected of Little Stars Competitive Team member's parents.

Make sure your gymnast is **at every regularly scheduled workout, meet, and special functions.**

**Do not coach your child.** Your comments detract from what the coach is doing, they give the gymnast another thing to think about when most athletes cannot concentrate on more than one thing at a time, and it interferes with the development of the coach/athlete relationship which is critical for long term success. Please allow the coaches the courtesy to perform their role within the gym; a distracted gymnast is a prime candidate for injury. Contact the front desk or the Head Coach first if you need to communicate with a gymnast on the workout floor.

**Provide unconditional love, encouragement and support for your athlete!** It is unfair to you and your child to compare him/her to another athlete; it places unnecessary stress and pressure on your child. Each child is an individual with different talents and capabilities and. Rather, try to look for progress that your child is making in the gym and celebrate it!

**Be on time** for practice drop off as well as pick. **Parents are requested to leave the gym while practice sessions are in progress.** Concentration is vital to the development and progression of your child. Constantly viewing every single practice is counterproductive to your child's progress. There is mounting evidence that the over-involvement of parents in their child's practices can lead to increasing the prevalence of fear in the gym. The best way to support your child in this difficult and complex sport is to be consistently encouraging in good times and in not-so-good times.

**Show respect to judges, meet officials, coaches and other clubs during competitions.** Parents should remain off the competition floor at all times. Parents should not approach a judge or meet official before, during or after a competition. For any queries, please address all questions to your Head Coach.

Please come to your child's Head Coach if you have a problem or concern or have general questions. **Your thoughts are important to us**, but we cannot know what you need or are thinking unless you talk to us. We welcome questions, suggestions, comments, and discussion. A suggestion/ feedback box will also be available at the club for those that would prefer to submit their feedback anonymously.

#### **XIV. COMMUNICATION**

All club updates, competition schedules, information notes...etc. will be communicated by email and/or WhatsApp. **In case of changes to your email and/or phone number, please update the change at the front desk** to insure you are up to date on all Little Stars communications.

**If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our team.**

**Little Stars welcomes you to our Gymnastics Family 😊**