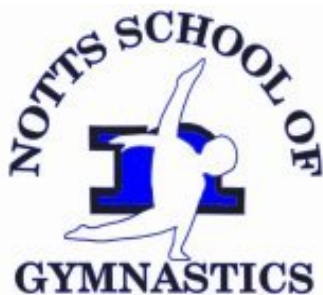


Club Manager, Sue Snelgrove
2 Old Lenton Close,
Cropwell Bishop,
Nottinghamshire,
NG12 3GP

Tel: 0115 989 9686
Mobile: 0775 196 4839
e-mail: sue@nottsgymnastics.co.uk

B.G. membership number 40110



Head Coach, Barry Winch
43 Burleigh Road,
West Bridgford,
Nottinghamshire,
NG2 6FQ

Tel: 0115 945 2164
Mobile: 0784 1111512
Email: barry@01winch.freereserve.co.uk

COMPETITION SEMINAR

This seminar is aimed at the parents of gymnasts who are setting out on the pathway of competing at county, regional, national and hopefully international gymnastics competitions.

1. HOW COMPETITIONS ARE RUN

1.1 Most competitions in the UK (and often abroad as well) are run by volunteers from local clubs. This means that they are not professionals and they are giving up their time voluntarily. Within the actual running of the competition, the people dealing with spectators, photo registration etc will have nothing to do with the competition itself. If you need information beyond what they can provide, you will need to speak to one of your coaches or to the competition organiser but except in cases of real emergencies, this should not be necessary!

1.2 Most competitions have the format of registration followed by a general warm up. The gymnasts then have apparatus warm up for a set period – usually about 1 hour for a men's 6-piece competition but it depends on the number of gymnasts entering. After the warm up, the gymnasts march on – they may march onto the floor and be introduced or may go straight to their first piece and line up in front of the judges. However, an alternative format that is becoming more popular is what we usually call “warm up and compete”. In this format there is only a short general warm up and then no general apparatus warm up before the competition. After the brief general warm up each group goes straight to their first piece of apparatus and has a slightly extended warm up on it before competing.

1.3 Once the competition starts, the gymnasts have a short warm up on the apparatus that they will be competing on and then they compete in turn. It is usual for the gymnasts in a group to “drop down” so the gymnast who competes first on the first piece will compete last on the second piece, and all the others move up one place.

1.4 Each routine is judged by a panel of judges – this may be only one judge in small competitions up to a full panel of A and B jury judges in a national or international competition. The A jury judges work out the “start value” of the routine and the B jury judges work out the deductions from 10.00 for any errors such as bent legs, falls etc. The A and B scores are added together to give the final score. Coaches are allowed to query the A score if they think that the start value is incorrect but they are not allowed to question the B score, however unfair they may think it is!

2. THE COMPETITION DAY

2.1 When you are given information about the competition, please read it carefully. Please note the Registration time and then plan to arrive AT LEAST HALF AN HOUR BEFORE. This is not necessary for the first competition of a day, when you just need to ensure that you are in good time for the registration, but for later competitions it is often possible to start early if all the gymnasts are present. If you are delayed for any reason, please send a text message to one of the coaches or phone one of the other parents present and ask them to tell the coaches so that they can make arrangements for delayed registration if possible (in some competitions it is possible to join in while apparatus warm up is still going on though if you are delayed beyond the start of the competition you will not be able to compete).

2.2 Consider what suits your child best for travelling arrangements. Some gymnasts are better travelling the day before and staying overnight before a competition. Others prefer to sleep in their own bed and to travel on the day if that is feasible. You will find out with experience what suits your own child best.

2.3 Plan carefully about food and drink – competitions are often at very awkward times for meals and also nervous gymnasts often don't have much appetite. A light meal that is easy to digest (high in carbohydrates) should

ideally be eaten 3 or 4 hours before the competition – if this isn't possible, make sure that the gymnast has eaten a light meal as early as practicable – for example if the competition registration is at 8am, then breakfast at 7am is reasonable. The gymnast should also have plenty to drink at this time. Make sure that the gymnast has a drink to take around the competition with them – either water or an energy type drink. Some gymnasts are also helped by having a small snack to eat during the competition. Most do not need anything to eat during a normal competition but some run low on energy. Do not have fizzy drinks or large quantities of sweetened drinks before a competition. See the Nutrition Information for more ideas on suitable food and drinks.

2.4 Make sure that the gymnast goes to the toilet before they go off to start their warm up!

2.5 If the coaches attending the competition are involved in an earlier competition, parents should register their child and get the number if these are being used. The gymnast should then wait with their parents until the coaches come to take them to the warm up. For older gymnasts, they may begin warm up before the coach has finished the previous competition – but they will know if they are supposed to do this.

3. **COMPETITION ETIQUETTE**

3.1 This is the behaviour that is expected of gymnasts, coaches and spectators and there are some very important rules – mostly for safety reasons and for consideration of other competitors and spectators.

3.2 Only competing gymnasts and accredited coaches are allowed on the “competition floor”. Gymnasts who are competing in later competitions, or who have competed in earlier ones must not move around the competition area unless they are given specific permission to do so either by their coach or by the competition organiser.

3.3 Parents or spectators must not come onto the competition floor under any circumstances unless specifically asked to by the coach or the competition organiser (for example if a child is injured).

3.4 Parents and other spectators should ensure that they do not distract competing gymnasts in any way – the gymnast is there to compete and needs to focus on what they are doing absolutely. Please do not wave to them, call out to them or attempt to speak to them if they are nearby – just give them lots of loud, general support! If they have forgotten something like an item of kit or a drink, please try and attract the attention of one of their coaches or you can also ask the competition organiser to pass essential items or messages.

3.5 Parents and other spectators cannot make any objections to the scores – whatever you make think of them!

4. **KIT**

4.1 Please check carefully what kit will be required!

4.2 Leotards – for individual competitions, the gymnast may wear whichever leotard they like. We prefer them to wear club colours with the red leotard if they are competing for the club. This can be either the red lycra or the red velour leotard. For team competitions, it is essential that all the gymnasts in the team wear exactly the same kit, so please check which will be required. In most cases if the gymnast is representing the club it will be the red velour leotard. Regional competitions such as the NDPs will usually use the Regional kit of blue leotard and white longs and shorts but may also be either Notts red lycra leotards with royal shorts and longs or Northampton black leotards with white shorts and longs – please make sure that you know which it will be.

4.3 At U14 boys are allowed to wear shorts on all pieces. At 14 and over they must wear gymnastic longs for pommels, rings, parallel bars and high bar and shorts for floor and vault. The club kit shorts are royal blue – make sure they are not too big - shorts for competition should be a neat fit. Boys may have bare feet or socks or gym shoes with shorts. Socks must be short (ankle socks or trainer socks) and must be PLAIN WHITE. They must not have any writing or coloured patches and should be clean and without holes.

4.4 Longs – royal blue again. They should be the right size so that they do not need to be turned over at the top and so that they do not look baggy round the legs. It is also essential that gymnasts wear socks or gym shoes with longs – if they do not they can actually lose marks! For team competitions, the socks must all be the same colour. For

most competitions we are now using royal blue socks to match the longs but sometimes we will use white ones – the requirements are as for socks worn with shorts – plain colour with no additional colour or writing.

4.5 It is sensible for the boys to use kit similar to their competition kit when they are training so that they are used to it when they compete – and that includes the socks.

4.6 Gym shoes – some of the boys use gym shoes for floor and vault. We do not encourage this but some of them find that they can make better landings with them. There are also gym shoes available with gel heel cups that can help gymnasts with Severs and other heel problems and in this case they can be advantageous. The boys should not use them for any other piece, as it often appears that they are not fully pointing their toes.

4.7 Guards / gloves & straps – boys who use guards for rings and/or high bar need to make sure that they take them to every competition! They should also have a spare pair of each that are fully “broken in”. If the competition involves strap bar, the boys should take their own gloves and straps with them – and it follows from this that every boy should have their own gloves and straps at the gym as well.

4.8 Tracksuit – the boys are representing the club whenever they compete at competitions and they should wear their club tracksuit for march on and for the presentations at the end. Please make sure that they have the correct tracksuit top (the East Midlands top, for example, is similar but should only be used for Regional competitions, such as the NDPs) and royal blue tracksuit trousers.

4.9 Warm up attire – gymnasts should wear a club t-shirt or a plain t-shirt for the warm up, if they need something over their leotard. As soon as they are on the competition floor, even for warm up, they must either wear their leotard correctly or keep a t-shirt or tracksuit top on over the top.

4.10 The gymnasts need a bag to carry kit around at the competition – they need to be able to carry a drink, guards or gloves and straps, plus possibly be able to put shorts and longs in it. Preferably they should use a boot bag or backpack with the club logo or alternatively a smart, fairly plain, boot bag or backpack.

4.11 Hair should be neat and tidy and not be able to obscure the gymnast’s vision. Ideally it should be short but if it is long it must be tied back for competitions (and for training) and if it can get into the gymnast’s eyes it will need to be clipped back.

4.12 Please note that incorrect attire or even just generally being untidy can lead to marks being deducted from the gymnast’s scores – potentially on every piece!

5. TYPES OF COMPETITION

5.1 Competitions can be individual or team competitions. Individual competitions can be all round or can involve apparatus titles, in which case specialists on a particular piece may enter and compete on one or two pieces.

5.2 Team competitions – we take the boys to many different team competitions and there are a variety of different formats. The most common in Britain is for a team to consist of 6 boys, for 5 of them to compete on each piece of apparatus and for the best 4 scores to count. However, at the NDPs all the team members compete, with the top 4 scores counting. These formats allow for one gymnast to have a poor piece and the others can then pull it back – this can be particularly helpful for young gymnasts as it can take some of the pressure off them. Other formats include 4 in a team, 3 compete on each apparatus and all 3 scores count or the most difficult of all – 3 in team, all 3 compete and every score counts. These formats are far more stressful as it means that one mistake can lose the competition!

5.3 The minimum number for a team is usually that of the number of counting scores, so for example at the NDPs if there are 4 boys in an age group from the East Midlands, they will form a team.

5.4 Selection for team competitions to represent the club is done on the basis of which gymnasts can make the best overall score for the team so in competitions where the team members do not have to all compete on all apparatus then it may be possible for a gymnast to be selected to compete on only one piece.

6. **ROUTINES AND WHAT THE JUDGES ARE LOOKING FOR**

6.1 Competitions for the younger boys usually involve set routines – these include the NDPs and the Elite Grades and also other competitions such as the London Development Open. These routines are marked out of 10.00. As the routines are set, the gymnasts should know exactly what they are aiming to achieve – the routines get harder for the older age groups so it is also possible to sometimes compete “out of age” doing the same routines as a younger age group, but against boys of their own age.

6.2 As gymnasts get more experienced they are likely to compete in voluntary competitions. The international gymnasts’ code is called the FIG code (Federation International Gymnastique). This is a set code used in all national and international competitions so that every coach and gymnast knows the value of each move, the requirements of the particular routines, any bonuses available and the specific deductions for any mistakes. Routines are required to have moves from a number of specific element groups (ie types of move) so, for example, on floor a routine must include a forward tumble, a backwards tumble, a sideways tumble, a strength or balance move and a dismount (which can be a forwards or backwards tumble that must finish on the feet). All the values of the element groups, the top 10 moves and any connection bonuses are added together to give the Start Value and this is added to the B Jury score, which is marked out of 10.00. The youngest national age group for voluntary competitions is U12 and this has a modified code that allows some additional moves and easier dismounts to count, lower equipment heights and additional matting.

7. **PARENTS’ ROLE!**

7.1 The parents’ role as part of the team is essential. Before competitions you need to build up your child’s confidence and help them get in the right frame of mind for the competition without unnecessary distractions. In their first competitions it is usually best to keep things low key so that they just take things in their stride. As they do more competitions, though, it may require a bit more positive input from the parents to keep the gymnast calm and focussed.

7.2 You need to be realistic though – suggesting they may win a competition that they are not in with a chance may make them feel they have failed twice. They will enter many competitions when it will not be within their capabilities to win at that stage of their development. Additionally, in gymnastics the result may depend on how others perform or performance of the gymnast may be reduced because they are injured or unwell. The offering of “extrinsic” rewards may also not be helpful – it can even change the child’s focus in that they are thinking too much about that promised Playstation game and not about competing and producing their best in the competition.

7.3 It is a good idea to talk to the coaches beforehand to find out realistic goals and then help the gymnast aim for them. The goal may indeed be to win or it may be a top 20 finish or simply just to remember the routines and complete them without any major mistakes!

7.4 During the competition your role is only as supporter and fan club! The gymnast needs to be completely focussed on the competition – ideally they should not think about the audience at all.

7.5 After the competition you need to be calm and positive and to always find something good to say about your child’s performance. Even if they have had a really bad competition and you are really disappointed, you need to find something positive to say. Remember that they will know if they have had a poor competition and they will get constructive feedback from their coaches. Remember, also, that it is the performance that counts, not whether they have actually won a medal – have they done their best, have they improved, have they concentrated and focussed well? In many cases they will have a great competition and not actually win anything – and on the other hand they may have a poor competition by their own standards and still come away with a medal. As coaches we value the first performance far higher than the second and we hope that the gymnasts will soon learn to do so as well! The ultimate, of course, is to have a great competition and to win – but that can’t happen every time! It is best to leave any criticism of performance to the coaches and just provide lots of praise for the child – however, if you are not happy with their actual behaviour then parental feedback on that is usually helpful!

7.6 Finally, after you have prepared your gymnast psychologically for the upcoming competition, fed him and organised his kit, you need to just hand him over to the coaches for the competition and sit back and hope that you can enjoy watching him and the other gymnasts and that he will compete to the best of his ability.