



Competitive Team Handbook

Revised: September 2018

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Welcome to Twisters

Dear Parents and Gymnasts,

Welcome to the American Twisters Team Organization. We are very proud of our competitive team program over its 33-year history in south Florida. This program has produced 12 National Team Members, 6 Twisters who have represented the USA in international competitions, and 58 recipients of full gymnastics scholarships to college. We have won multiple state championships at every level along the way. Most recently American Twisters was voted by its peers to be both the Florida State and Region 8 “Club of the Year”. The American Twisters have qualified 11 or more girls to the Level 10 Championships for three consecutive years, 2016, 2017 and 2018. We are known for our “no-nonsense, blue collar” approach to training and we strive to get a 100% effort out our athletes on a daily basis.

Like any highly successful organization, we have strict rules and guidelines for our participants to follow. Please read over this Team Handbook carefully to learn more about our team regulations.

If you should have any questions or concerns about anything in this booklet, do not hesitate to contact the team coordinator or one of our head coaches that are listed below.

Go Twisters!!

Key Personnel in the Twisters Competitive Team Organization

Gary Anderson – Competitive Team Coordinator -- MrMVT@aol.com

Christy Ramirez – Optional Levels’ Head Coach -- TwistersCoachChristy@gmail.com

Erin Hall – Compulsory Levels’ Head Coach -- gymcoach84@gmail.com

Sara Kelly – Xcel Levels’ Head Coach – sarabkelly@gmail.com

Elayne -- Billing Questions -- Elayne Anderson -- elayne3333@aol.com

“Twisters Village People” ---- A large part of our success is because of the number of outside professionals we have affiliated and working for our program. PLEASE be sure to visit our website to learn more about them at: <http://americantwisters.com/team-twisters-village/>

- **Twisters Sports Psychology Program** Dr. Christine Hiler, PhD
- **Twisters Nutrition Program** -- Registered Dietitian, Nicole Marchand Aucoin
- **Team Orthopedic Doctor/Consultant**, - - Dr. Stephen Swirsky
- **BARWIS Performance Center for Sports Physical Therapy and Rehab** – Mike Barwis, CEO

Mission Statement

American Twisters strives to develop happy, healthy, responsible, physically fit children with a keen sense of self-worth and self-esteem. The American Twisters competitive program is committed to providing participants with safe skill progressions and a safe, positive environment conducive for learning gymnastics skills in preparation for participation in formal gymnastics competitions.

The Triangular Boat Philosophy

The Twisters Competitive Team Program believes in a “Triangular Boat” philosophy. In order to make progress in paddling a real triangular boat, the people in the various corners must each have their own specific job, yet cooperate and co-exist with the others in the boat in order to make progress and be successful. If no one paddles, the boat goes nowhere, if everyone paddles as fast and as hard as they can without communicating with the others, the boat will simply go in circles.

In gymnastics, obviously the coaches are in one corner of this triangular boat. Their responsibilities are to provide safe and logical skill progressions along with a master plan for each girl’s progress throughout the year and into the future.

The parent occupies the other corner of the boat and are responsible to pay the bills on time, get the athlete to practices on time and most importantly be a “warm fuzzy blanket” as a loyal and positive supporter of their daughter. Parents should use sentences such as “....I don’t care if you are the only one that can’t do a back handspring, I love you anyway...” and “....I am sure the coaches know what they are talking about and we really have to leave those types of decisions up to them....” Parents also have a MAJOR role in monitoring the athlete’s nutrition and rest.

Let’s not forget the athlete, who is in the third corner of our triangular boat. She has a responsibility of paddling as actively (if not more actively) than the others in the boat. She must come to practice both mentally and physically prepared to put in the hard work and remain focused on her goals. Without her doing her part, the efforts of both the coaches and parents are void.

Goals of the Twisters Competitive Team Program

1. To foster the growth and development of each gymnast by setting realistic goals that can be achieved through hard work and challenging training.
2. To provide opportunities for gymnasts to achieve high levels of gymnastics proficiency.
3. To help gymnasts work to their maximum genetic potential in the sport of gymnastics.
4. To become a viable member of a team that shares similar goals and aspirations.
5. To use their gymnastics training to build character, teamwork, citizenship, self-confidence and self-esteem.
6. To encourage athletes to do their best and to have both individual and team success in competitions.
7. To produce “champion” people who are also outstanding gymnasts.

Team Competitive Levels and Advancement

USA Gymnastics is the Governing Body for competitive gymnastics in the United States. As members of this organization, American Twisters follows the formal competition rules and regulations of this organization. American Twisters fields teams in ALL of the Jr. Olympic Programs', Levels 1 thru 10, and all of the levels of the USA Gymnastics Xcel Program. This provides a place for almost every girl that wishes to participate in competitive gymnastics, to compete against girls their same approximate age and skill level.

- Jr. Olympic Compulsory Levels 1 thru 3: These girls train 2 or 3 days per week with an option to add an extra day. This is the "entry level" for competitive gymnastics, and their competitive season involves 7 to 9 competitions from early January through early May. Each level has their own specific routines that are performed by all girls at that level. Competitions for these girls involve local level meets only.
- Jr. Olympic Compulsory Levels 4 & 5: These girls train 4 days a week and also compete prescribed routines for each level. They participate in 6 to 8 competitions which span from early September thru December. *Some* girls are invited to also participate in the Level 4/5 spring season (from January through early May) in an effort to accelerate their advancement to the optional levels. Competitions for Levels 4 and 5 go up to the State Championships.
- Jr. Olympic Optional Levels 6-10: These girls train 5 or 6 days per week for 4 ½ hours per day. They compete optional (not prescribed) routines in 6 to 8 competitions per season between mid-January and mid-May. Levels 6-8 can qualify only to the State and Regional Championships, but Levels 9 and 10 can advance from States to Regionals and onto the USA Gymnastics National Championships.
- The Xcel Program Levels Bronze through Platinum: These girls may select to train 2, 3 or 4 days per week. They compete in 6 to 8 competitions beginning in January and ending in early May. They perform optional routines, and their competitive level is determined by their optional skills.

It is normal for girls who are selected to compete in the Jr. Olympic Program to advance one competitive level per year until they reach levels 8 and 9. One they reach levels 8 & 9 it normally takes TWO years before the girls have learned all the skills needed to be successful at those levels. It is important to note that girls may progress faster or slower than predicted, since their movement through these levels is dictated by **ALL** of the following in a case by case evaluation:

- The Twisters Head coaches' assessment as to their current skill level and their potential success at the next level.
- Looking at the scores from formal competitions and/or verifications of skills in training;
- Attaining the "USA Gymnastics mandated score needed to advance to the next level" in a USA Gymnastics sanctioned competition;
- Earning the passing score needed for the "next level" on the Twisters Physical Abilities Test.

Schedules

Practice Schedule

The school year practice schedules (from mid-August through the beginning of June) for each level are sent home to parents in mid-July. Since we do **NOT** work on quotas for each competitive level, the days and times may vary slightly from year to year, based on the number of girls we are projecting to have at each level for the coming season. In many cases, the girls/families will have some flexibility in their selection of practice days and times.

The summer training schedules (early June through mid-August) for each level, are sent out in March. Summer workout times for the optional and compulsory levels normally shift to the morning and early afternoon hours at this time of year. Xcel team workouts remain in the late afternoon and early evening year-round. All levels have the weekends "off" during the summer months.

American Twisters closes to observe the following major holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years' Day, Fourth of July, and Memorial Day. We also close in early June for a pre-summer break and in mid-August for a post-summer break. Each of these breaks is one week and during these times our facility receives a deep cleaning and equipment is updated.

During the school year, normal practice times remain the same during school closings such as teacher workshops and teacher conference days. However, the summer workout hours are usually followed during major school breaks at Christmas and Easter. Parents will be notified of these changes several weeks in advance.

To get the maximum amount of training time each year, parents are encouraged to work their vacation plans around the Twisters closings and breaks.

Competition Schedule

Twisters' coaching staff will make the decisions concerning which competitions each level will participate in throughout the competitive season. These "competition schedules," with projected meet costs, are finalized in early September (mid-July for Levels 4 & 5).

Each Twister gymnast will only compete when she is physically, mentally, and emotionally ready for formal competitions. Each girl must pass the required Physical Abilities tests and skill verifications for the level she is attempting before competing at that level. A formal parents' meeting is held each fall to review the competition schedule, meet times, and the various qualification scores needed for the State, Regional and National level meets.

On occasion, a gymnast will not compete in the All Around (all four events). The event(s) each gymnast will compete (Vault, Bars, Beam, Floor) will be determined by the coaching staff. On the rare occasion that a girl does not compete in the All Around, the competition entry and coaches fees remain the same.

The majority of competitions will occur on a Saturday or Sunday. However, for large invitational meets and, in most State, Regional and National Championships, competition days can extent to Friday and/or Monday.

For safety reasons, Twisters has a "10-day rule" for participation in competitions. Gymnasts may not compete in a competition if they missed any practices 10 days prior to a formal competition. If they miss practice because of illness, injury, etc. then this becomes a "safety issue". This rule is spelled out very clearly in each years' Competitive Packets.

Practice Attendance

Attendance is expected at each practice. The coaches take attendance at the start of practice and attendance reports are sent home each month. We can statistically prove that those girls who attend more frequently and are on time, will advance more rapidly.

Being on time for practices is important so that the girls can fully participate in the entire “pre-practice warm-up”. Girls arriving early to practice must wait in the bleacher or team cubbies area until being called out onto the floor for the start of practice. Girls who arrive late for warm-ups will be marked as “tardy”. With the exception of those in the Xcel Program, if a gymnast has been tardy more than three (3) times, she will be assigned a later starting time for the rest of that month. This is to insure she gets a complete warm-up prior to the start of her practice and to insure she does not continue to disrupt the warm-ups of those who are there on time.

Parents are requested to pick up their gymnast on time after their practice session is over. If your child must leave practice early, please have the office personnel come onto the floor to retrieve her rather than calling or waving for her from the bleacher area.

If a gymnast is ill or must miss a practice, please email the head coach about this absence so they can plan appropriately. If a gymnast, possibly due to a lot of homework, can only practice for some of the entire practice time, it is better to come on time and leave early rather than coming to practice late.

All levels allow a “make up” if your daughter should miss a practice. Optional level parents must email the head coach to get permission to make up this missed practice on her normal day off. Compulsory and Excel parents do NOT have to email the head coach about a make-up, but simply show up for practice on a normal day off. Missed practices must be “made up” within 10 days.

It is important that parents communicate to the Head Coach any injuries your daughter incurs or may complain about. Do not assume the coaching staff already knows about it.

If a gymnast needs to be evaluated by a physician and/or physical therapist, this report and information must be shared with the Head Coach. By doing this, an appropriate rehab and recovery program can be established in conjunction with the medical personnel involved.

Competitive gymnastics is a year-round commitment. Twisters conduct scheduled workouts during the long school breaks at Christmas and Easter since this is during the start and end of the competitive season. These “special holiday workouts” are usually distributed 4 to 6 weeks prior to the holiday season. Ideal vacation times for gymnasts and their families are at the beginning and end of the summer. It is important to communicate with your Head Coach when planning any missed time due to vacations or holidays.

Tuition billing is based on the year long 50-week training schedule, taking into account the one-week closings at the beginning and end of the summer. Monthly tuition remains the same even though there are additional workout days offered in 9 of the 12 months each year. There is no tuition relief for missed practices or vacations. If a team gymnast should miss a prolonged period of time from the team workouts, they will need to be re-evaluated prior to her return to team status. **NOTE:** Twisters has a **very strict policy** of not allowing gymnast to participate in practices if their monthly tuition is not paid.

Gymnasts Rules & Responsibilities

In order to run such a successful, organized and disciplined gymnastics program there must be rules, guidelines and responsibilities for the participants to follow.

1. Improper types of behavior during practice and competition will result in disciplinary action. Examples of such behavior are:
 1. Talking over or arguing with a coach,
 2. Breaking gym rules,
 3. Cheating,
 4. Lying,
 5. Unwillingness to complete assignments,
 6. Stealing/going through another person's belongings/cubby,
 7. Disrespectful towards teammates (physically and/or emotionally),
 8. Poor sportsmanship,
 9. Bullying
2. Any of the above behaviors, depending on their severity and the gymnast's history, will be dealt with in the following ways:
 1. Time out,
 2. Removal from practice,
 3. Parental conference,
 4. Suspension from the team,
 5. Dismissal from the team,
3. Gymnast's Responsibilities:
 1. To attend scheduled practices,
 2. To wear a clean and appropriate leotard to all practices (no shorts or two-piece leos),
 3. To have your hair securely tied back in a bun or "waterfall". This may mean using several hair ties and scrunchies,
 4. To have NO JEWELRY on during practice (exception is one set of stud earrings),
 5. To leave all valuables at home; Twisters cannot be responsible for any lost or stolen items,
 6. To have your nails cut short so you don't scratch a coach or teammate,
 7. All team gymnasts aged 7 and older should wear deodorant (or earlier upon coach's request).
 8. To strive for excellence each day,
 9. To be attentive to coaches and to be cooperative with coaching staff,
 10. To complete all training assignments before leaving the gym (including strength and flexibility conditioning each day),
 11. To assist and cooperate with fellow teammates,
 12. To be safety conscious for oneself and for fellow teammates,
 13. To ask permission of a coach to use the phone or communicate with parents (cell phone are not permitted on the floor),
 14. To assist in cleaning and keeping the gym clean when asked,
 15. To participate in exhibitions, demonstrations, and clinics as requested,
 16. To maintain good habits, including maintaining a proper diet and rest,
 17. To abide by all USAG regulations and the policies put forth in this manual

Competitive meet schedules, meet rules of conduct for both parents and gymnasts, competitive team leotard and warm-up suit information is all addressed in the annual Twisters Competition Meet Packet that is sent home each September.

Commitment to the Twisters Competitive Team

American Twisters Competitive Team membership is a year-round commitment. We believe that the parents and child should seriously discuss all aspects of gymnastics training and commitment each September before making a one-year competitive team commitment. Children must learn the importance of honoring a commitment. It is a principle to be carried over into the adult world. All parents of American Twisters Team members must be responsible for supporting their gymnast in meeting their financial, practice and competitive meet commitments.

General and Miscellaneous

- Girls ages 10 + may be dropped off and picked up in the front of the gym. Girls 10 and under must be escorted in/out of the building by a parent/guardian who supervises them while waiting for practice to start.
- Compulsory girls without an adult waiting for them at the end of practice will be taken into the front office until a parent/adult comes to pick them up.
- Under no circumstances do any team girls wait outside the building for their ride home.
- Parents, please do not attempt to get your child's attention from the bleacher area. Not only is this a distraction for her, but also for her teammates. If there is an emergency or pressing situation, please contact or go to the front office and a staff member will come on the floor to get your gymnast.
- Each team girl is assigned a team cubby. Levels 1 through 3 share one and all others have their own. This cubby is on LOAN to your daughter and therefore, she should not put any stickers, graffiti, gum, trash, etc. in there. No food or beverages are to be left in the cubbies overnight. Snacks should be put in a bag or container and not left out in the open inside the cubby where they could be "taken/borrowed".
- Clothes, shoes, and a small bag with essential like hair ties, deodorant, snacks, water, grips and tiger paws are the only things that should be stored in the team cubbies during training.
- Twisters conducts an "open gym" on Friday's from 5:30 until 9:30 each week. This is FREE for any competitive team member, including the pizza that is served to the participants. In order to receive this "perk" a parent MUST sign her daughter up for "open gym" on a weekly basis no later than 7:00 PM on the Thursday before attending. NO EXCEPTIONS to this rule and a team girl could get "shut out" of the open gym if she fails to register prior to attending.
- Water is the only beverage allowed on the gym floor. Gymnasts are encouraged to bring water bottles with them to each event during training.
- Water bottles and clothes that are found out on the gym floor throughout the week are placed on marked bins in the team cubby area. Each Tuesday morning these items are taken to Goodwill if not claimed.
- Nutritious snacks are allowed but must be kept in the gymnast's cubby during practice. She may eat these during breaks or between event rotations throughout the workout. Cut fruit, pretzels, granola bars, veggies, go-gurt, protein shakes, etc. are the best choices. It is import that these are kept in a marked bag or lunch box inside the cubby to avoid having these eaten by another team member by mistake.
- Please do not bring in donuts, ice cream, cupcakes, cookies, popsicles, etc. to celebrate your daughter's birthday with the team. Fruit, popcorn, yogurt, applesauce, veggies, etc. are allowed to be distributed at the end of workout in the cubby or lobby area. Parents must take responsibility of handing out and cleaning up in relationship to any birthday party celebration.
- Be sure to communicate all injuries to the head coach. Attendance (at least for half of the workout time) is encouraged since many times modifications can be made for an injured person to do the majority of the conditioning exercises.
- The compulsory program offers an ACTP (Advanced Compulsory Training Program) from September through May of each year. This is a "no-nonsense" extra day of training for girls at levels 1-3. At ACTP, girls work on strength, flexibility and some specific skills and drills that lead to upper level skills. Parents will need to contact the compulsory level head coach to see if your daughter qualifies for this program.

Means of Communication Coaches/Team Parents

The main means of communication between coaches and team parents is via email. For safety reasons, coaches may not leave the gym floor and their assigned coaching rotation on the gym floor to talk with parents as this would leave gymnasts unsupervised at their event.

- Coaches send home “reminders” of upcoming events and any schedule changes on a bi-monthly basis.
- Attendance reports are sent home at the beginning of each month.
- Physical Ability Test results are sent home when given, which is approximately every 4 weeks for the Xcel and Optional level programs and every 6 to 10 weeks for the Compulsory program.
- Verification scores (skill testing done by coaches) are sent home when given. These are usually monthly in the 4 months prior to the start of the competitive season.
- There is a team bulletin board in the bleacher viewing area which is exclusively for team parent communications.
- Every 6 weeks each head coach conducts an informal 30-minute question and answer (Q & A) session at the beginning of a designated practice session (usually a Saturday). There is no agenda to these meetings. These are used to address any rumors and to entertain any questions or concerns from any team parent who wishes to attend.
- A team parents meeting for each level is held each September. Twister rules and regulations, competitive team documents, and projected competitive schedules are all discussed and reviewed at this meeting.
- When all other means of communication are exhausted, head coaches will make themselves available for private meetings.
- Team information, including all team manuals and packets can be found on line at <http://americantwisters.com/americantwisters/#>. Team parents should check this website on a monthly basis for new information.

Expenses

Competitive gymnastics, much like figure skating and equestrian, is a very expensive sport. Be sure you take into consideration the various expenses involved in this sport before trying out for or joining any competitive gymnastic team program.

At Twisters, along with the monthly tuition (which varies depending on the competitive level and the number of days and hours she spends training per week), there is a yearly team and national membership registration fee, a team travel fund fee, a competitive leotard and warm-up suit to purchase (these change every 3 years – 2016 – 2019 – 2022, etc.), and competitive meet entry fees and travel expenses to approximately eight different competitions each year. You will find some of these estimated costs in the following section.

Estimates of Additional Costs Related to Competitions and/or Training

ITEMS	Compulsory Levels 1-3	Compulsory Levels 4 & 5	Xcel Levels	Optional Levels
Grips	NA	\$45.00	Gold and above \$45.00	\$45.00
Wristbands	NA	\$6.00	Gold and above \$6.00	\$6.00
Grip Bag	NA	\$10.00	NA	\$10.00
Competition Warm ups	\$210.00	\$210.00	\$125.00	\$210.00
Competition leotard	\$126.00	\$189.00	\$189.00	\$260.00
Hair Bow	NA	\$12.00	NA	\$12.00
Competition gym bag	\$37.00	\$37.00	NA	\$65.00
Ankle Weights	NA	\$20.00	NA	\$20.00
Tiger Paws	NA	NA	NA	\$55.00
Seasonal meet fees	See Competition Packet			

The items listed below are considered “personal training items” that each girl must purchase separately for her training. The websites below are to just give you a starting point for getting these items for her. You may want to consult a coach about these items before purchasing them.

Ankle Weights ("Theraband" brand is recommended):

http://www.allegromedical.com/exercise-fitness-c523/thera-band-comfort-fit-ankle-and-wrist-weight-set-p566397.html?utm_campaign=Comparison%20Shopping&utm_source=froogle&utm_medium=feed&CS_003=9164468&CS_010=ff80818140124cc5014017ce0a8102dd&gclid=Cj0KEQjwl-e4BRCwqeWkv8TWqOoBEiQAMocbP_Hso8I6NLRf4lfOMDMrIRdlobL78leEaXm6ZOrjkKYaAjkn8P8HAQ&kwid=productads-adid^53190000973-device^c-plaid^157086647053-sku^999%20566397%2000@ADL4ALLEGRO-adType^PLA#999+566397+00

Tiger Paws: Needed to reduce the strain and “overuse” wrist problems that young gymnasts have when working vaulting and tumbling skills. Google search “Gymnastics Tiger Paws”.

https://www.google.com/search?source=hp&ei=6eaNW-7uGcf1zgLj-bdo&q=tiger+paws+gymnastics+sizing+chart&oq=tigar+paws+gymnas&gs_l=psy-ab.1.2.0i13l8j0i22i30l2.1960.6809..10408...0.0..0.84.1071.18....2..0....1..gws-wiz.....0..0j0i131j0i10j0i13i10j0i13i30.Vpc0hnRtz8w

The following are items will be needed when she get's her "dowel" grips

Grip bag: http://www.ebay.com/itm/like/231030762787?lpid=82&chn=ps&ul_noapp=true

Wrist Bands: These need to be long so they cover the area well above the wrist in case the bar grips or strap bar strap slides. These are regular tennis wrist sweatbands that can be purchased at sporting good stores or even Walmart. You can also purchase them at the front desk at Twisters.

Grips: You will need to purchase "dowel" grips.

For young gymnasts purchasing grips, "pixie" grips are recommended and can be purchased here:
http://www.ten-o.com/Pixie-Velcro-Uneven-Bar-Dowel-Grips,2849.html?gclid=CjwKEAjwXoG5BRCC7ezlzNmR8HUSJAAre36jkclFfr0rHeqGVOVyDxwZCfyBQ07YolLo_249L6KWKxoCxmHw_wcB

Older gymnasts will need to look at the women's sizes that can be found at this website:
https://www.google.com/search?source=hp&ei=Xu6NW9G8KJGtzwK6eg&q=women%27s+gymnastics+dowel+grips&oq=women%27s+dowel+gymnastics+grips&gs_l=psy-ab.1.0.0i22i30l2.2607.10037..15080...0.0..0.100.1722.30j1.....0....1..gws-wiz.....0..0j0i131.rD4ZxBAGqSU

Once you get the grips for the first time, **do not panic** if the finger holes are very, very tight or if she cannot even get her fingers in them. This does **NOT** mean that the grips are too small. It is actually good if these finger holes are tight. If your daughter cannot get her fingers into the grip holes, have her bring them to practice and give them to a bar coach who will stretch them out for her. The important part of "the fit" is the length of the leather strip that goes over the palm of the hand. A bar coach can also assess that this length is correct if the girls bring their grips in when they get them. Be sure to put your daughter's initials on each grip (usually on the wrist band part of the grip).