



# Competitive Team Handbook

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page</u>
Welcome and Key Personnel.....	3
Mission Statement &The Triangular Boat Philosophy.....	4
Goals of Team Program .....	5
Team Competitive Levels and Advancement .....	5-6
Schedules .....	6-7
Practice Attendance.....	7-8
Gymnasts Rules & Responsibilities.....	8-10
Commitment to the Twisters Competitive Team.....	10-11
General & Miscellaneous.....	11-12
Means of communication Coaches/Team Parents.....	11
Expenses .....	12-13

## Welcome to Twisters

Dear Parents and Gymnasts,

Welcome to the American Twisters Team Organization. We are very proud of our competitive team program that has been active in southern Florida since 1986. The Twisters Competitive Program has produced 15 USAG JO National Team Members and 6 USAG International Team Members, all of whom have represented the USA in international competitions, Twisters have had 73 recipients of full gymnastics scholarships to various Division I Universities, and this number continues to grow.

The Twisters have won multiple age group state championships at every level and were recently 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 on five occasions, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 & 2021. We are known for our “no-nonsense, blue collar” approach to training and we strive to get a 100% effort out of 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.

### Key Personnel in the Twisters Competitive Team Organization

**Gary Anderson** – Competitive Team Coordinator -- [MrMVT@aol.com](mailto:MrMVT@aol.com)

**Christy Ramirez** – Optional Levels’ Head Coach -- [TwistersCoachChristy@gmail.com](mailto:TwistersCoachChristy@gmail.com)

**Erin Hall** – Compulsory Levels’ Head Coach – [Gymcoach84@gmail.com](mailto:Gymcoach84@gmail.com)

**Cindy Keck** – Xcel Levels’ Head Coach – [cbkeck1@aol.com](mailto:cbkeck1@aol.com)

**Elayne** -- Billing Questions -- Elayne Anderson -- [elayne3333@aol.com](mailto: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 in 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 strive 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 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 follow the formal competition rules and regulations of this organization. The American Twisters field teams in ALL of the USAG Developmental levels Programs', Levels 1 thru 10, and all of the levels of USAG's Xcel Programs'. 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.

- USAG Developmental Levels 1 thru 5 – These girls train 2 -4 days per week with an option to add an extra day. This is the “entry level” for competitive gymnastics, and their competitive season involves 6 to 8 competitions from early September thru early December. Each level has its own specific routines that are performed by all girls at that level. Girls participate in the State Meet Championship each December. Competitions for these girls involve local meets, as well as meets as far away as Tampa and Daytona.
- USAG Developmental Optional Levels 6 thru 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 formal competitions per season between mid- January and mid-May. Levels 6 thru 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 Developmental National Championships.
- The Xcel Programs, Levels Bronze thru Diamond girls may select to train 2, 3, 4 or 5 days per week. They compete in 6 to 8 competitions beginning in December 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 USAG Developmental Program to advance one competitive level per year until they reach levels 8 and 9. Those levels normally take TWO years each, 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 thru these levels is dictated by **ALL** of the following based on 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 "USAG Developmental mandated score needed to advance to the next level" in a USAG Developmental 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 thru 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 thru mid-August) for each level, are sent out in March. Summer workout times for the optional levels normally shift to the morning and afternoon hours at this time of year. Compulsory and Xcel team workouts shift to the early afternoon and evening hours. All levels have the weekends "off" during the summer months.

American Twisters close 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 one-week pre-summer break, and in mid-August for a one-week post-summer break.

During the school year, normal practice times are followed on school closings, such as teacher workshops and teacher conference days. The summer workout hours are usually followed during major school breaks at Christmas and Easter for the optional level gymnasts. 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**

The Twisters coaching staffs will make the decisions concerning what competitions each level will participate in throughout the competitive season. These “competition schedules,” with projected meet costs, are finalized in July for compulsories and in early September for optionals and Xcels.

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). Which event(s) each gymnast will compete (Vault, Bars, Beam, Floor) will be determined by the coaching staff. On these rare occasions, when a girl does not compete in the All Around, the registration 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 should miss any normally scheduled practices 10 days prior to a formal competition. If they miss because of illness, injury, etc. this becomes a “safety issue”. This rule will be spelled out very clearly in each years’ pre-season formal parents meeting.

### **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 bleachers with a parent, in the team cubbies, or on the mats just outside of the team cubby 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”. Except for those in the Compulsory and Xcel Program, if a gymnast has been tardy more than three (3) times, she will be assigned a later starting time. 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 and Xcel Gold/Platinum/Diamond level parents must email the head coach to get permission to make up this missed practice on her normal day off. Compulsory and Excel Bronze and Silver parents simply sign up for a make up at the front desk.

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 family is 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 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 phones 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 prior to each competitive season.

### **Substance Abuse Policy**

The American Twisters employees and organization has a "NO TOLERANCE POLICY" WHEN IT COMES TO DRUGS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE. Any gymnast who uses or distributes any illegal drug (including alcohol, tobacco, Juul, etc.) for minors will be immediately dismissed from the competitive team program.

## **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 August 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.

### **Team Private Lesson Policy**

- Twister Team gymnasts are provided the opportunity to select from low, medium or high intensity training programs at every level. If your daughter feels she needs more training, you can seek out private lessons with one of our competitive team coaches by contacting the front desk. Barwis Performance Center also offers strength training in personal sessions for those specifically wanting to improve their PA scores.
- Competitive team Twister gymnasts are allowed to, and encouraged to seek additional dance (ballet, tap, jazz, etc.) training, yoga classes, running improvement instruction, and any additional general strength and flexibility training.
- Parent “help or assistance” at home is strongly encouraged in the areas of physical abilities test items, which include flexibility. Parents or outside sources should NOT be involved in developing specific gymnastics skills. Realizing there are several ways to successfully teach most gymnastics skills, the Twisters coaching staff makes a conscientious effort to use the same terminology and same techniques in teaching the basic skills for gymnastics throughout all our levels. When “outside” sources, such as parents or other coaches get involved with the teaching of skills, many times it is very confusing to the gymnast when different terms, techniques and spotting methods are used on them when trying to teach them the same skill.

### **General and Miscellaneous**

- **Drop off:** All gymnasts are to be dropped off at the front door or escorted into the building by an adult. Girls aged 5 and under must be escorted into the building by an adult. Adults of the children aged 5 and under must wait until the team is called onto the floor prior to leaving the building.

- **Pick up:** All gymnasts who do not drive themselves to the gym must have an adult come into the gym to pick them up.
- All 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 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 thru 3, Developmental, and xcel bronze and silver 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, gym, 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.
- 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 important 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, apple sauce, 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 and xcel programs offer an ATP (Advanced Training Program) from mid-August thru the first week of June of each year. This is a "no-nonsense" extra day of training for girls at levels 1 thru 3 and xcel bronze and silver. At ATP, girls work on strength, flexibility and some specific skills and drills that lead to upper level skills. Parents will need to contact the compulsory or xcel 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, leaving gymnasts unsupervised at their event.

- Coaches send home “reminders”, (via email) 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.
- Approximately every 6 weeks each head coach offers and conducts an informal 30-minute question and answer (Q & A) session at the beginning or end of a designated practice session. 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 at the beginning of each level's competitive season. Twister rules and regulations and 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 below.

Below you will find **estimates** of other additional competitive team costs that you may have in relationship to your daughters’ competitions and/or training.

ITEMS	Compulsory Levels 1, 2, 3 and Xcel Bronze & Silver	Compulsory Levels 4 & 5 and Xcel Gold & Platinum	Optional Levels
Grips	NA	~\$55.00	~\$55.00
Wristbands	NA	~\$6.00	~\$6.00
Grip Bag	NA	~\$10.00	~\$10.00
Competition Uniform: (leotard, warm ups, 2 shirts)	\$344.75	\$581.22	\$581.22
Hair Bow	\$12.00	\$12.00	\$12.00
Competition gym bag	~ \$65.00	~ \$65.00	~\$65.00
Ankle Weights	NA	\$20.00	\$20.00
Tiger Paws	NA	NA	~\$50.00
Seasonal meet fees	See Competition Packet	See competition Packet	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 examples.**

**Ankle Weights:**

[https://www.amazon.com/Elgin-Wrist-Ankle-Cuff-Weight/dp/B00658ZMGS/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?dchild=1&keywords=elgin%2Bankle%2Bweights&qid=1587852309&s=hpc&sr=1-1&th=1](https://www.amazon.com/Elgin-Wrist-Ankle-Cuff-Weight/dp/B00658ZMGS/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=elgin%2Bankle%2Bweights&qid=1587852309&s=hpc&sr=1-1&th=1)

**Tiger Paws –** <https://www.usglove.com/collections/tiger-paws>

They are needed to reduce the strain and “overuse” wrist problems that gymnasts have when working vaulting and tumbling skills. Those in XG, XP, XD, and Levels 6-10 should have them.

### **The following items will be needed when she needs “dowel” grips:**

#### **Grips:**

You will need to purchase "dowel" grips once your daughter is a level 4 or XG. Below is the brand most of our girls prefer using.

[https://www.ten-o.com/501-Blues-Double-Buckle-Straight-Strap-Uneven-Bar-Grip-FREE-SHIPPI NG,14843.html?b=s\\*buckle+grips&s=d&p=2&c=73](https://www.ten-o.com/501-Blues-Double-Buckle-Straight-Strap-Uneven-Bar-Grip-FREE-SHIPPI NG,14843.html?b=s*buckle+grips&s=d&p=2&c=73)

Once you get the grips for the first time, **do not panic** if the finger holes are very tight or if she cannot even get her fingers in them. This does **NOT** mean that the grips are too small. It is good if the 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).

#### **Wrist Bands:**

[https://www.amazon.com/Mcolics-Inch-Wrist-Sweatband-Wristbands/dp/B01BXT UP1U/ref=sr\\_1\\_4?keywords=Gymnastics+Wristbands+for+Grips&qid=1641320368 &sr=8-4](https://www.amazon.com/Mcolics-Inch-Wrist-Sweatband-Wristbands/dp/B01BXT UP1U/ref=sr_1_4?keywords=Gymnastics+Wristbands+for+Grips&qid=1641320368 &sr=8-4)

These need to be long, so they cover the area above the wrist in case the grips or strap on strap bar slides.

**Grip bag:** [http://www.ebay.com/itm/like/231030762787?lpid=82&chn=ps&ul\\_noapp=true](http://www.ebay.com/itm/like/231030762787?lpid=82&chn=ps&ul_noapp=true)