

TOP 5 Do's and Don'ts

FOR COACHES ON COMPETITION DAY

Sometimes it can be hard to know exactly what to do in your role of a coach to make sure your athletes are having the best experience possible. Here are a few do's and don'ts for competition day to help keep your program calm and you stress-free.

DO

- Arrive calm, collected, and excited. Your energy is contagious.
- Separate the team from distractions. Parents and friends mean well but can be very distracting. Athletes need to be focused on the team and the team's goal to execute what they have practiced in the gym.
- Praise athletes that pleasantly surprised you. When an athlete feels noticed they will most likely repeat this behavior.
- Edit routines ahead of time. In order for athletes to achieve perfect routines with elevated showmanship, they need to be confident in what they do. If its not 10 out of 10, it will probably show on their faces.
- Shower everyone with sportsmanship. Everything is easier when you feel uplifted and supported. Encouraging others is a great way to produce this synergy in your team.
- Have Fun. It seems a little cliché but at the end of the day, if kids are not having fun they are likely to search for other outlets to find it. We want them to remember these experiences as something positive so they will be excited to return year after year.

DON'T

- Don't change anything. Kids will be nervous and make mistakes in the warm-up room. Unless you are making it easier, limit the amount of things you change for an athlete on event day. They will be thinking about that small change the entire routine and you may risk sabotaging other sections that are usually performed with ease.
- Don't let 1 athlete/issue steal your full attention. It is easy to focus on the things going wrong. In the bigger picture, there is usually much more going right! Address the issue and move on.
- Don't be too hard on kids that make mistakes. Athletes almost never mess up on purpose. They are likely beating themselves up over their mistakes and the peer pressure is probably also getting to them as well. Use mistakes as teaching opportunities to strengthen the confidence the athletes have in each other moving forward.
- Don't raise your voice. Critique athletes face to face with clear direction. Shouting criticism can cause the team to become concerned and distract them from their job. Performing self-conscious or embarrassed is 100 times more difficult than when you are performing confident.
- Don't play the blame game. Teaching young athletes to deal with the realities of a competition atmosphere is difficult. It is difficult but not impossible. Accountability, absolute responsibility, and humility are all qualities great athletes possess. The conversations between the coaching staff/ event staff/ parents are not always the same conversations that need to be had with the team. Use every outcome as an opportunity to teach.