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Alton Gymnastics Club

RiskassessAGC.002

Risk Assessment for Coaching Gymnastics.

This risk assessment applies to coaching gymnastics at recreational (general) and squad competitive level, unless stated otherwise herein.

Alton Gymnastics Club run classes and training sessions at Alton Sports Centre, Chawton Park Road, Alton Hampshire. The training sessions and classes are run either on badminton courts 5 and 6 or badminton courts 1,3 or badminton courts 1,3 and 5 in the main hall of this multi-sports facility.

The equipment is laid out in one of several arrangements, depending on which badminton courts are being used. The equipment is rigged and de-rigged every session, so equipment is checked regularly for wear and damage each session, the equipment is checked to ensure it is correctly and safely erected. Documented equipment checks are carried out regularly with any defects being rectified within a reasonable timeframe. Equipment deemed unsafe for use is taken out of use until it is repaired to full working order. Although the Staff at the Sports Centre bring the equipment out of the cupboard and place it in the hall, it is the job and responsibility of the Club Coaches to erect and make safe the various items of equipment before it is used. Club Coaches know and understand the correct set up of equipment and are aware of the inherent dangers of faulty equipment or set ups. The risk of injury caused by faulty equipment is therefore minimised to almost none by this process.

Recreational gymnastics is not considered to pose a particular risk, except in the case that the gymnasts are unsupervised. Alton Gymnastics Club maintain a sensible coach to gymnast ratio and this ratio is less in terms of gymnasts for younger children.

Gymnasts are not allowed to use the equipment if a qualified coach does not supervise them. If this rule is broken, the club reserve the right to exclude the gymnast from training. This rule is consistently re-enforced and made known to all gymnasts throughout all sessions.

Older recreational gymnasts and those who are involved in competitive training are at certain risk when they start performing inverted skills such as backflips, somersaults and dismounts from the beam and bars. These skills are first learnt using foam safety mats that are at least 30cm thick with adequate landing matting beneath and with coach support. The coach must make the decision about when it is considered safe for the gymnast to attempt the move without assistance. At this stage, it is more likely for gymnasts to make a mistake and for this reason, adequate matting should continue to be used.

Risks associated with Coaching gymnastics and the measures taken in the prevention/minimisation of these risks are described below.

1) Risk: Injury from coaches demonstrating gymnastics skills as part of their coaching.

In the instance that Coaches choose to demonstrate a gymnastics skill as part of their coaching, please refer directly to the Risk Assessment that applies to Participation in Gymnastics as the same guidelines apply.

2) Risk: General risk of injury including bruises, muscle strains, bad sprains, ligament damage and minor or major fractures whilst coach is spotting, supporting or in close proximity to the gymnast.

- The risk of injury in gymnastics coaching cannot be entirely removed.
- Most injuries occur due to gymnast error. The gymnast losing special orientation or scaring (bailing) out of a move can often cause an element performance to go wrong. The latter is most dangerous and most difficult to anticipate.
- A coach may have to step in to catch a gymnast and 'break the fall' or to re-direct their path to keep them out of danger. These are often split second decisions and the coach is considering the safety of the gymnast above their personal risk of injury.
- The risk of severe injury due to element performances 'going wrong' is very small in recreational gymnastics as the level of skills that are taught mean that it is very unlikely that recreational gymnasts would ever be performing a skill with the speed and height to create sufficient impact forces to result in severe damage to the gymnast or coach.
- Squad gymnasts as they advance are required to perform much harder and more dangerous skills and thus the risk is increased.
- Risk of coaches being hit by misplaced arms or legs tends to be a factor at all levels.

Prevention/Minimisation:

- Coaches should only support / spot skills for which they have had adequate training.
- Coaches should use reasonable judgement with regard to the size and weight of the gymnast they are spotting or supporting in relation to their own size and capabilities.
- Coaches should ensure they are on a stable surface whilst spotting or supporting gymnasts.
- Coaches should not spot or support gymnasts if they themselves have an existing injury that will affect their ability to do so.
- Coaches should ensure that thorough physical and cognitive preparation of the gymnast has taken place before attempting a skill or preparation exercise that requires them to spot or support.

These measures serve to minimise the general risk of injury whilst coach is spotting, supporting or in close proximity to the gymnast but they cannot remove the risk altogether.

3) Risk: Overuse Injuries.

- Coaches can suffer overuse injuries, particularly when spotting a numbers of repetitions of the same or similar skill. These are rarely serious but they do need time to heal.
- Overuse injuries can affect any part of the anatomy, but in coaches they are most common in the upper extremities, shoulders and back.

Prevention/Minimisation

- The measures to prevent injury in general should be applied
- Coaches should balance supporting and spotting skills with preparation exercises that the gymnasts can perform without physical assistance.
- As far as possible coaches should avoid high repetitions of complete skills – if the gymnast requires supporting for a skill over a long period of time for many repetitions then the gymnast may not be fully ready to perform the skill and the best course of action may be to return to earlier preparation exercises.
- Some gymnastics skills do benefit from repeated support from the coach – in particular those that require an understanding of complex timing. Such skills, whilst they may require coach support over a period of time, should be balanced with appropriate non-contact drills and preparation exercises to minimise the risk of overuse injury to the coach.
- Coaches should review any supporting techniques that they find uncomfortable.
- Coaches should stop the activity if it becomes uncomfortable for them – this is for the safety of gymnasts as well.
- Coaches should avoid bearing the full weight of a gymnast where it is not necessary to do so (mainly for gymnasts over a certain size, age and weight).

4) Risk: Risks of Injury resulting from the in the Gymnastics Environment such as injury from tripping, falling or unintended contact with apparatus.

- Due to the nature of gymnastics equipment and set up there are many uneven surfaces on the gymnastics environment. Any uneven surface or step represents a certain risk that someone could trip, fall, stub a foot etc.
- It is the responsibility of all members of the Coaching team to maintain the safest possible environment for coaching and training gymnastics.

Prevention/Minimisation

- The measures to prevent injury in general should be applied.
- Coaches should ensure they know and understand the correct set up of equipment and are aware of the inherent dangers of placing equipment thoughtlessly.
- Coaches should assess the safety of set ups with regard to themselves as well as the safety of participants.
- New set-ups should be evaluated by the Head Coach or other fully qualified coach in order to ensure they do not represent any additional risk or increased risk of injury to participants or coaches other than that inherent in the general activity of gymnastics.
- Fully qualified (e.g. Level 2 or above) coaches should also seek the consult of another equally or more qualified coach when designing new set ups for training or activities.
- Gymnasts and coaches move around the gym in a controlled manner, with running only as part of the training.

- Items of equipment that are not in use are placed in back in the store or at the side of the gym out of the working area.
- Items of equipment are placed tidily around the gym, with particular care taken with regard to the placement of mats and items of equipment at floor level that are most likely to represent a trip hazard.
- Gymnastics Equipment that is placed on top of other equipment (eg safety mat on top of floor mat) should be contrasting in colour to provide visual cues.
- Trailing wires or leads should be suitably secured so as not to present a trip hazard.
- Shoes should be worn during any time when large or heavy items of equipment are being moved around the gym and when entering the store cupboard. This includes when other people are moving equipment – as a general precaution to protect the lower extremities from injury should an incident occur. To this end, coaches and other members helping with rigging or de-rigging of equipment should wear suitable shoes (and ensure they are clean enough to walk on and over carpeted areas).
- When rigging or de-rigging equipment, coaches should follow the specific health and safety guidelines and avoid activities for which they have not received training.
- Distractions such as mobile phones are not allowed in the gym – if a coach needs to make or receive a phone call this should be done whilst stationary either outside of or at the side of the gym.
- Coaches should report any sharp edges or protrusions that fall outside of the normal structure of equipment or apparatus.
- Coaches should report any objects or set-ups which they feel represent unnecessary risk to either participants, other coaches or themselves so that these can be re-examined.
- To avoid potential risk to non-members and the general public, no non-members are allowed in the gymnasium during gymnastics training or set up of gymnastics equipment.

5) Risk: Risk of injury resulting from faulty equipment.

- This is considered minimal at Alton Gymnastics Club, but measures are still taken to further avoid the risk.

Prevention/Minimisation:

- The equipment is rigged and de-rigged every session, so equipment is checked regularly for wear and damage each session, the equipment is checked to ensure it is correctly and safely erected.
- Although the Staff at the sports Centre bring the equipment out of the cupboard and place it in the hall, it is the job and responsibility of the Club Coaches to erect and make safe the various items of equipment before it is used.
- Coaches know and understand the correct set up of equipment and are aware of the inherent dangers of faulty equipment or set ups.
- All of the equipment used by Alton Gymnastics Club is of a high standard and is regularly checked, thus minimising risk in this area.
- All members of the team are trained to report any defects they notice in equipment to a more senior member of the team. Equipment that is damaged

or that is deemed to represent unacceptable risk is taken out of use immediately.

Summary of the risk assessment

The main identified risks are:

- General risk of injury including bruises, muscle strains, bad sprains, ligament damage and minor or major fractures whilst coach is spotting, supporting or in close proximity to the gymnast.
- Overuse Injuries.
- Risks of Injury resulting from the in the Gymnastics Environment such as injury from tripping, falling or unintended contact with apparatus.
- Risk of injury resulting from faulty equipment.

Accidents cannot themselves be completely avoided, though the risk of accidents occurring can be minimised through certain measures. The risk of injury occurring due to an accident can also be minimised through certain measures.

Injuries that occur as a result of an element performance 'going wrong' are difficult to anticipate. The gymnast losing special orientation or scaring (bailing) out of a move can often cause an element performance to go wrong and the coach may employ sudden remedial action to protect the gymnast, which may represent risk of injury to the coach.

In summary, these are the measures in place to ensure the minimisation of the risk of accidents and injury at Alton Gymnastics Club:

- Coaches should follow the guidelines in the Risk Assessment for participation in gymnastics in order to minimise the risk of injury to both gymnasts and themselves.
- All coaches and helpers should be made aware of the risks involved by making the risk assessment readily available to them.
- Ensuring that coaches are taught safe handling techniques and do not undertake any lifting or handling for which they have not received training.
- Ensuring that gymnasts are taken through the correct progressions and can perform the pre-requisite skills prior to performing the skill being learned.
- Ensuring coaches are sufficiently qualified for the skills they are teaching
- Ensuring coaches only work within their level of qualification unless supervised by a more senior coach who is qualified to the level of the skill being taught.
- Coaches and helpers should seek assistance when they need it.
- Coaches and helpers should not attempt to undertake any task that they are not comfortable with.
- Coaches and helpers should take all reasonable steps to ensure their own safety and the safety of those around them when moving equipment around the gym or in and out of the store cupboard. This includes the wearing of shoes during rigging and de-rigging the gymnastics set up.
- Coaches and helpers should report any defects or problems with equipment and ensure that damaged or faulty equipment is not used by either gymnasts coaches or helpers.

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- Expecting and demanding a high level of discipline during training and classes.
- Expecting and demanding appropriate dress and compliance with the no-tolerance policy on jewellery.

Alton Gymnastics Club do not consider the level of sport at their facility is life threatening except where there may be a medical reason that the coach is not aware of. Coaches and helpers have a legal obligation to ensure the Club know of any such problem that they are aware of. If there is a medical problem that is aggravated by involvement in the sport, the coach or helper must advise Alton Gymnastics Club and enter a process to decide whether or not to continue.

Alton Gymnastics Club do not accept responsibility for injuries that occur as a result of a coach or helper acting contrary to instruction, whether direct or implied. This includes incidents when a coach or helper has performed or attempted to perform a duty before instruction has been given or against the instructions of a senior member of staff. Coaches and helpers are all made aware of the gym rules and are expected to follow and enforce them. Coaches or helpers who are found to be breaking club rules may risk disciplinary action.

This document has not been prepared in order to alarm coaches or helpers but is a requirement of Health and Safety rules and regulations.

The risk assessment and its summary are regularly checked to ensure it is correct and complete. It is also checked by other members of the Alton Gymnastics Club Team.

Any input into this document is checked and agreed by the undersigned.

Joanna Foley (Director of Gymnastics and Coaching)