

Massaging and Stretching of Athletes Policy

Application of Policy

This Policy applies to all Members of GymSports New Zealand (GSNZ), including Coaches, Managers, Judges, Officials, and any other person or organisation who is not a Member of GSNZ who agrees to the application of this Policy to them in writing.

Massage Therapy

GSNZ recognizes that there are potential therapeutic benefits associated with massage therapy. These benefits may be both physiological and/or psychological in nature.

Accredited Massage Practitioners

- (a) GSNZ recognizes that true massage therapy requires specific education and training and that various institutions and organisations through out New Zealand and the World, assume responsibility for the accreditation of specific massage therapy practitioners.
- (b) These accredited practitioners are governed by Codes of Ethics and Rules of Practice developed and implemented by their particular affiliation.
- (c) It is recommended that an athlete who can potentially benefit from an ongoing regiment, of massage therapy, should utilize the services of an accredited practitioner.

Informal Massage

It is acknowledged that it is common practice for gymnastic coaches around the world to assist athlete's recovery by using gentle massage techniques. GSNZ, in acknowledging that practice, has concerns due to the potential for a coach to abuse this privilege or for their actions to be misconstrued, however well intentioned. Should a coach intend to use gentle massage techniques the following are specific requirements that must be adhered to.

Requirements

- (a) Under no circumstances should a coach massage an athlete outside of public view or without at least one other GSNZ Coach, Manager, Judge, or Official present or in close proximity.
- (b) A coach should have expressed and informed consent from the athlete prior to commencing massage therapy. It is also acknowledged that for the most part gymnastic athletes are minors and there must also be informed consent from the athlete's guardian. Further more; the guardian has the right to be present during the therapy. The coach should always respect the athlete with regards to their feelings of comfort, or discomfort, with the massaging taking place.
- (c) Athletes should always wear clothes, during the massage. The coach must respect the wishes of the athlete in terms of the clothing they wish to wear.
- (d) Coaches should not under any circumstances massage the chest, buttocks and upper thigh or groin area of an athlete.
- (e) If a coach suspects that an athlete they are massaging has an injury of a serious nature, they should always refer them to the appropriate specialist.
- (f) A coach must not massage a muscle that is actively being stretched.

Stretching of Athletes

GSNZ recognizes that there are benefits in terms of enhancing flexibility by using recognised partner assisted stretching methods. In particular, proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation (PNF) is widely regarded as one of the most effective ways to enhance flexibility when applied by responsible personnel, utilizing correct methodology.

Partner Assisted Stretching

It is acknowledged that it is common practice for gymnastic coaches around the world to assist athletes in improving their flexibility levels by using partner assisted stretching methods. GSNZ in acknowledging that these practices occur has concerns due to the potential for a coach to abuse this privilege or for their actions to be misconstrued, however well intentioned. Should a coach intend to use partner assisted stretching techniques the following are specific requirements that must be adhered to.

Requirements for Partner Assisted Stretching

- (a) Under no circumstances should a coach stretch an athlete outside of public view or without at least one other GSNZ Coach, Manager, Judge, or Official present or in close proximity.
- (b) Athletes should always wear clothes during the stretching. The coach must respect the wishes of the athlete in terms of the clothing they wish to wear.
- (c) A coach should refrain from stretching an athlete in such a position that the athlete would feel vulnerable or embarrassed. An example of this could be if the athlete was lying on their back and the coach was standing over top of them pushing their legs downwards towards the side split position.
- (d) A coach must not utilize a technique for which there is no scientific evidence of efficacy.
- (e) A coach must not cause undue discomfort or pain to the athlete while stretching them.

Sanctions for Massaging and/or Stretching Misconduct or Inappropriate Behaviour

Enforcement and disciplinary sanctions will be applied in accordance with the GSNZ Constitution and Regulations.

GymSports New Zealand
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