CHEER SPORTS.

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CHEER SPORTS MANAGER

Over 70 talented and passionate students across years 7 to 12, most of them with gymnastics, dance or circus arts backgrounds, have joined forces to create highly competitive cheer, stunting and pom squads under the umbrella of our cheer sports program.

Some people still associate cheerleading with the stereotypical image of spirited teenagers holding pom poms or megaphones, however this is far from the reality. Over the last decade, cheer has evolved into a fast-paced, dynamic sport that combines an explosive mix of high-flying stunts, powerful tumbling, tosses, pyramids and synchronised dance to yield winning scores in a growing network of competitions. It requires athleticism, dedication and a strong work ethic from its male and female athletes. Cheer is one of the fastest growing sports in Australia with many colleges and universities now participating, and the St Leonard's SAINTS squads, all with ‘heavenly’ names, are now well known ‘cheerlebrities’ on both the state and national competition circuit.

The Australian All Star Cheer Leading Federation (AASCF) competitions are the focus of our athletes’ training, and where they get to test their hard work and skills against other teams. The AASCF is part of the International Cheer Union. Our cheerleaders are competing at a very high level using international rules, standards and judges. These competitions are incredibly exciting events where sport combines with theatre, perhaps more so than in any other sport. Squads are judged not solely on individual performances, but on the overall entertainment value, technical athleticism and the creativity of their presentation.

Recently, over 40 of our students were very excited to represent both Victoria and St Leonard’s College in Sydney at the National Scholastic Finals, where we brought home a number of titles. Our Level 2 Squad earned the coveted title of Grand Champion at the AASCF Winterfest Competition and our Level 1 Squad are Victorian Champions. Our Level 1 Stunt Group, Bella’s Angels, are both Scholastic and Allstar National Champions, and our Level 2 Stunt Group, Evie’s Angels, are also Allstar National Champions. Recently, our Pom Squad placed first at the Melbourne Spring Carnival.

In the words of year 10 student Sophie Bakker, “I’ve learned so much from cheer. It has taught me the real meaning of teamwork, self-esteem and leadership skills. It’s all about building a strong confident individual within a large team”. Bella Osbourne, year 8, says “Hitting a hard stunt or flipping through the air and then hearing the crowd roar is the best feeling ever.” Evie Carman, year 8, who won first place at Scholastic Nationals for her fouette (pirouette in seconde) says “I’m a flyer which requires a lot of flexibility and confidence in the air. You have to have a lot of body control and awareness, and trust in your team mates.”

For our students participation in cheer sports has taught them more than just new moves and tricks. “I’ve learnt the importance of working as a team and supporting and looking after myself and each other.” – Ellie Godden, year 10.

“For me, it’s the ability to get up when I fall down, and to push through mental and physical barriers.” – Chloe Hoover, year 7.

We have had an incredibly successful year, but cheer sports is so much more than the gold medals, trophies and national titles. It has been a privilege to work with such an incredible group of students who epitomise these important life values in all that they do. They turn up to training early in the mornings with big smiles on their faces, eager to train and give their best for themselves and their squad.

Don’t confuse these cheerleaders with those seen on the sidelines of American Football games or in Hollywood teen movies. That is sports team cheerleading where the cheerleaders are only part of a show. In modern competitive cheerleading the cheerleaders are the show.
This year was certainly the year of ‘dance and fitness’ in the Junior School. We had a large increase in students wanting to join our aerobics and hip hop teams. Boys and girls from years 1 to 4 demonstrated a commitment to being a part of a team and learning a routine that required concentration and coordination. Being involved in aerobics and hip hop is also an avenue to improve their fitness, confidence, health and self esteem through participation in a healthy and fun competition.

What really impresses me with this renewed interest in aerobics and hip hop is children ‘having a go’. Whether it is before school, at lunchtimes or after school, the children are certainly encouraged to try something different. With this encouragement, we often see children showing real commitment to improving a particular skill. I often think that this encouragement and commitment demonstrates to the children the power of trying, especially when they see themselves or their team experiencing success. This was so evident when our year 2 boys and year 3 girls competed at the Aerobics Championships in Geelong for the first time. I was particularly proud of our year 2 boys team who had the courage to give aerobics a try, even though they knew that most of the teams competing were girls. By all accounts they were the stars of the competition and received the loudest applause.

Results:
Schoolaerobics Dancestar Victorian State Finals
Year 1 girls hip hop ‘The Mini Mights’ - State Finalist, 4th State Titles
Year 1 and 2 girls and boys hip hop ‘Mini Stylers’ - gold medal, invitation to the Nationals in the Gold Coast
Year 3 and 4 girls and boys hip hop ‘We’re Kidz’ - bronze medal

Schoolaerobics Aerobics Victorian State Finals
Year 2 boys aerobics ‘Jovi Boys’
Year 3 girls aerobics ‘Team McMillan’ - silver medal

Schoolaerobics Dancestar Victorian Spring Challenge
Year 1 and 2 girls hip hop ‘The Mini Mights’ - gold medal
Year 1 girls and boys hip hop ‘Mini Stylers’ - fourth place
Year 3 and 4 girls and boys hip hop ‘We’re Kidz’ - seventh place
Sophia Miki-Flavell (year 3) - fifth place, dance solo

Schoolaerobics Aerobics Victorian Spring Challenge
Year 3 girls aerobics ‘Team McMillan’ - fifth place
Sophia Miki-Favell (year 3) - gold medal, audition section