

# Parents' Guide to Youth Wrestling: 101

Of the many sports your child can participate in, wrestling is perhaps the most misrepresented, misunderstood, and underrated. The purpose of this guide is to generate new interest and awareness among parents whose children want to participate in this exciting and rewarding sport. Hopefully, this guide will help expose the myths and uncover the benefits wrestling has to offer, and most importantly, help parents understand how this unique sport best compliments other sports choices their child makes.

## THE SPORT OF WRESTLING

- Based on self-discipline, hard work, skill and determination
- Conducted on a mat with wrestling shoes, kneepads, and headgear
- Physically demanding, but relatively safe and non-violent. Does not involve or even tolerate actions intended to cause injury
- World class wrestlers utilize skills, strength and endurance developed over a lifetime of practice and hard work Is middle school/ high school wrestling like anything wrestling on TV? Absolutely not.

## OBJECTIVE

The primary objective in folk style (middle/ high school) wrestling is to gain control of your opponent and to ultimately pin your opponent by holding your opponent with their back (both shoulder blades simultaneously) on the mat for a period of at least two seconds.

## MATCH BASICS

- Wrestling matches consist of three periods
- Periods can vary in length from one minute in duration for younger age groups, to as long as three minutes for college wrestling
- Either wrestler can win the match at any time if they are able to pin their opponent or develop a lead of more than 15 points
- There are only two positions from which referees start or continue a match. The first is neutral position, with both wrestlers standing and facing each other. The other is the referee's position, where one wrestler starts in his hands and knees down on the mat, and the other starts on top, behind and in control.
- The first period always begins in the neutral position.
- Each wrestler has their choice in one of the remaining periods to choose to start from top or bottom referee's position, or in the neutral position

## SCORING

- Takedowns (when from a neutral position one wrestler is able to bring the other to the mat and gain control) are worth two points
  - Escapes (when the bottom wrestler can break free from the top wrestler and revert back to a neutral position) are worth one point
  - Reversals, (when a wrestler on the bottom is able to reverse the control so that the opponent is on the bottom) are worth two points
  - Back points (also called near fall) are awarded when one wrestler comes close to pinning the other (i.e. exposing the other wrestler's back) and are worth two or three points depending on the length of time that the opponents' back is exposed
  - Penalty Points can be awarded when the opposing wrestler performs illegal moves or is penalized for excessive stalling
- EQUIPMENT Basic wrestling equipment includes a headgear, wrestling shoes, and a singlet. Kneepads can be worn and is up to the wrestler.

## TOURNAMENTS

- Tournament competition is organized by weight and age
- Weight classes are either predetermined, or blocked into groups of 4 or 8 after all wrestlers have weighed in
- Most tournaments during the school season are held on Sunday
- Wrestling tournaments can last for 4 to 6 hours or longer, and can involve as many as 200 to 600 wrestlers. Example: the Illinois Kids Open has drawn over 1,600 participants.
- Mandatory weigh-ins are most often held the morning of the tournament approximately 1 to 2 hours before the first round of competition. At weigh-ins, wrestlers' weights, ages and experience levels are recorded on slips of paper that are used to form brackets
- A completed bracket sheet will show specific pairings for each match.
- Tournaments are organized in rounds, allowing wrestlers sufficient time to rest between matches
- Tournament regulations usually limit the number of coaches allowed to coach from the edge of the mat. NO PARENTS
- When the match is over, wrestlers shake hands and return to their coaches
- Trophies or medals are awarded to the top 4 or 6 wrestlers in a weight class
- Tournaments can be long days, so here are some ideas of things to bring
  - Coolers with water and food
  - Something soft to sit on
  - Book
  - Games or cards

## **WRESTLING PROVIDES REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT BUILD AND STRENGTHEN THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS**

- Self-reliance
- Mental toughness
- Work ethic
- Competitive spirit
- Responsibility
- Self-discipline
- Goal orientation
- Confidence
- Positive self esteem

## **ADDITIONAL DO'S AND DON'TS**

- Don't impose your ambitions or expectations on your child. Remember that wrestling is your child's activity.
- Be supportive no matter what. There is only one question to ask your child, "Did you have fun?" If meets and practices are not fun you should not force them to participate.
- Do not coach your child. Your job is to support, love and hug your child no matter what. Conflicting advice and criticism work against the coach's effort and only serve to confuse and demotivate your child.
- Get involved. Your club needs your help and support. Attend parent and club meetings to find out how you can help. And most importantly, show your child that you care by attending as many meets and tournaments as possible.
- Do not criticize the officials. Unless you have been there, you have no idea how challenging officiating can be. Except that in some matches your child could lose as a result of an error on the part of an official or score keeper. That's life. Help your child understand that the official does their best to score the match fairly, and that it is important that we respect the ruling of the officials regardless of how we feel about the situation
- **BE POSITIVE ROLE MODELS**