

Welcome

Welcome to the Spartan Wrestling Club. Your child has made an important commitment! Our club was founded as a developmental feeder program for the FHC high-school wrestling program. Our goal is to offer area youth who will be attending Francis Howell Central High School opportunities to learn and compete in the sport of wrestling. Our club holds charters with Missouri USA Wrestling and AAU Wrestling. Membership privileges are reserved for those applicants who will attend Francis Howell Central High School and/or have meet the requirements set by the director of the club. It is an honor to welcome you to our program.

Contacts

Steve Cross, Head Coach 636.851.4684 Steven.cross@fhdschools.org

LeAnn Cross, Club Administrator
Leanncross99@gmail.com

Please make sure I have your current contact information throughout the season so you do not miss a single one of my ultra-informative e-mails! 😊

Club e-mail (LeAnn or Julie Graham will likely respond to these)
spartanwrestlingclubmo@gmail.com

Program Purpose

The main goal or purpose of the Spartan Wrestling Club is to promote the development of student-athletes through the sport of wrestling. We hope our organized efforts will help in promoting your wrestlers' individual success on the mat, in the classroom, and in the communities in which they live. We will concentrate our efforts on offering as safe an environment as possible while challenging your child. Success in wrestling requires both physical and mental preparation and growth.

Rules and Expectations For Wrestlers

Commitment.

Attendance and participation are vital to your development as a wrestler. Be on time. Your workout partners and coaches depend on you to be at practice.

Be attentive.

No talking is permitted when a coach is speaking! Pay attention to what is being taught at all times.

No horseplay allowed. This will not be tolerated at any time! Most injuries occur when wrestlers are doing things they shouldn't be.

Be respectful.

- Our coaches are volunteers. Back talk or disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated.
- The other wrestlers in the room are your TEAMMATES. Please be respectful of each other.

Be good guests in our schools and practice facilities.

- **DO NOT RUN THE HALLS OF THE SCHOOL.**
- Be neat in our restrooms.
- Periodic breaks will be given during practice; at no other time should you be anywhere but your assigned practice area.

Do your part to set up and tear down.

Don't leave practice until teardown is complete. **This applies to all parents and athletes in our club.**

Be responsible.

- Make sure your parents are in the know.
- Keep belongings together and the wrestling rooms clean and neat.

Be clean. Practice good hygiene as listed in the handbook. If you are ill, please do not come to practice to avoid spreading illnesses.

Expectations For Parents and Guardians

For Parents of Mini-Spartans

We ask that parents of young children stay around the building during practice or designate another go-to adult for your child if you must run an errand. A young child who gets hurt during practice can become very upset if no parent is present. Other kids simply have not matured enough yet to stay focused for a full practice and could use a little parental correction now and then. This is expected with a group of K-2 kids, but we do appreciate your support in managing it when it occurs. **All parents who are taking home children should be there 15 minutes before the end of practice.** If there is low attendance or the kids are particularly tired, practice may be shortened slightly without prior notice.

For Parents of Junior Spartans

We **do not** require parents of Junior Spartans to stay and watch practice; in fact, **we prefer if you do the opposite and leave the room during practice.** It is often very distracting for all of the wrestlers (not just your own), especially when the child is constantly looking for approval or reaction from the parent during practice, or when the parent is trying to coach their child against a practice partner or provide judgment on their performance. It is normal for kids to make mistakes or occasionally misbehave during practice, just as they would at school. Kids have great practices and less-than-great practices, and it is generally better that they work their issues out on their own. When necessary, we will correct them and let you know if we need your reinforcement.

Commitment.

- Attendance and participation are vital to your child's development.
- Help them be on time.
- Give them the opportunity to wrestle in tournaments at the level that best suits them and the needs of your family. Stay informed.

Stay informed. Use all of the methods below to keep up to date

•**E-mail:** We do our absolute best to be sure we provide you with all of the information you need in a thorough and easy-to-follow format. Please read our updates thoroughly, and you will likely find everything you need to know. If you get a new e-mail address during the season or want to add another recipient, just subscribe on our web site at **swczone.com**.

•**Remind:** This is an app used to send quick reminders and notices of any scheduling changes directly to your phone. To join, **text @leanncr to 81010** or join the class from your app.

•**Web Site:** Our site is kept current with news, schedules, content from club e-mails, photos, and other great resources. **Check it out at <http://swczone.com>.**

•**Facebook:** We also post updates, photos, and other items on Facebook. **Look for Spartan Wrestling Club** and follow our page for updates.

•**Twitter:** Jeff Laird has also been tweeting Spartan news! **Follow @swczone.**

•**Instagram:** spartanwrestlingclubmo. Nothing on there yet, but if we get a social media volunteer, that can change!

•Respect our procedures and deadlines.

We have designated days and times for tournament registrations and questions. Please adhere to these to reduce the burden on our volunteers, who have day jobs and limited time to spend on club administration. If you miss a registration deadline, you may follow the directions on the tournament flier to register on your own, but please note that some tournaments do not allow individual registrations.

Help us control noise in our workout rooms (AKA Use your inside voices).
It is difficult to maintain kids' attention even under ideal circumstances.

Please do not be a distraction in or near our workout rooms. If you are in the room because you have a Mini-Spartan, or you are hanging in the hallways near our rooms during workout sessions, please keep your conversations quiet or take them into another area where they will not make it difficult for our coaches and wrestlers to hear each other. It gets loud fast!

Do not wear shoes on our wrestling mats. This applies to everyone. If you need to enter our rooms or walk onto a mat, please make sure to remove your shoes first. This reduces dirt and microorganisms that are tracked in and also prevents mat damage from shoes. Please make sure that any other family members who will be present are also aware of this rule. Chairs, walking canes and crutches can also damage the mats, so we ask that these items be kept outside the perimeter of the mats.

Be good guests in our schools and practice facilities.

•**Do not allow children to run the halls of the school.**

•Make sure we are all neat in our restrooms.

•Ensure that no trash is left behind.

Assist with setup and teardown as needed, and allow your child to stay and do so.

Please do not be “that parent” who consistently grabs his or her child and bolts after practice while everyone else does the work. We *all* want to get home quickly after practice, including our coaches, who sometimes have been in the building since 6:30 or 7 a.m.

Make sure that wrestlers practice good hygiene as listed in the handbook. If they are ill, please keep them at home.

Be positive with your wrestler.

Wrestling can be a challenging and emotional experience, and positivity is important to help your wrestler bounce back quickly from losses. Advice: Talk about something else in the car on the way home. It may take a little time for your wrestler to be ready to objectively discuss what just happened at the tournament.

Hygiene

Wrestling is the ultimate in close one-on-one contact competition. This constant skin-on-skin contact makes it imperative that all our wrestlers follow good hygiene procedures to eliminate or reduce the possibility of contacting or spreading a contagious bacterial, viral or fungal skin condition.

Wear clean clothes to practice. Do not wear the same clothes you've worn all day, and *never* wear the same clothes to practice twice without washing them.

Do not wear street shoes on the mats. This applies to wrestlers and spectators.

Do not wear your wrestling shoes outside of the wrestling room. Wear another pair of shoes or slides to practice and change right before you step into the room.

Regularly clean the bottoms of your wrestling shoes with cleansing wipes.

It may be time to introduce your child to deodorant. It's a contact sport, and kids on the verge of puberty may not realize their sweat has taken on a new aromatic quality. Their workout partners will appreciate the favor.

Wash and dry knee pads after every wearing, and clean bags and other gear as well.

Wipe down headgear after each use with cleansing wipes.

Shower and wash your hair immediately following practice or tournaments. Consider using an antifungal dandruff shampoo once a week as a preventive measure.

If you have a bacterial, viral or fungal skin disease, you may not practice or compete until you are cleared and the condition is no longer communicable.

Some recommended practices:

- A simple scratch, cut, abrasion or bug bite is a potential site for bacterial or fungal infection. Closely monitor any spots for signs of infection and treat accordingly. An over-the-counter antibiotic cream is a good idea as a preemptive measure to prevent staph or other bacterial infections (although it will not help ringworm).
- Keep an over-the-counter antifungal cream like Lamisil or Lotramin (or a prescription antifungal if your child has seen a doctor for ringworm in the past) on hand and treat ringworm spots early. They can be more difficult to clear up if you don't catch them early. Scalp ringworm will require special medication and a doctor visit.
- Use lotion to keep dry skin from cracking and providing an entrance for microbes.
- Buy a skin protection product to apply before practice, like Defense foam or another such product (many are tea-tree-oil-based; avoid older products that contain triclosan).

Volunteer Opportunities

Our club is run by volunteers, and it requires help from all participating families to run efficiently. Tasks not taken on by parent volunteers usually fall on our coaches, who often arrive at school at 6:30 a.m. and do not leave until the last mat is put away and the last child has been picked up.

Ways you may be able to help

- Assisting parents with tournament registration at a weekly practice
- Handing periodic weigh-ins and weight checks
- Sorting and distributing clothing orders
- Photography
- Social media administration
- Statistics collection for seeding meetings
- Seeding meeting representation
- Dual tournament coordination
- Banquet coordination and setup
- Overseeing room setup and teardown before and after practice, including picking up trash, disinfecting and mopping the wrestling mats before and after every practice.

And especially....

- Working at our tournament. We will be sponsoring a youth wrestling tournament this year. The FHC tournament will be held December 2. **We will need many volunteers for this tournament.**

- **Volunteer coaches for practices and tournaments.** We are always in need of volunteer coaches. We are looking for individuals who are committed, available to help all wrestlers, and willing to be a positive role model for our wrestlers. If you have experience in wrestling, or a desire to learn and be involved, let us know and we will discuss the expectations of this position. Coaches must apply for AAU and/or USA coaching cards and pass required background checks.

Spartan Wrestling Club Wrestling Opportunities

Our program offers continuous opportunity to wrestle, with the AAU folkstyle season beginning in November and running through February, followed by the USA tournament series in March. Our Mini Spartans have AAU competition cards only and will register only for AAU events; All Junior Spartans may register for either AAU or USA events.

USA Wrestling

The state of Missouri is unique in that it has two active wrestling organizations at the youth level. The strongest and most strongly supported in the state is USA Wrestling. There are more than 5,000 wrestlers in the state registered with Missouri USA Wrestling. Missouri USA wrestling offers a “true state tournament experience” for youth wrestlers in Missouri. Wrestlers are required to compete in district and regional tournaments to qualify for the opportunity to compete in the state tournament. This is the same format that Missouri high school wrestling adheres to. Missouri USA wrestling also offers our wrestlers the opportunity to compete in national events as a team. They fund and coordinate these programs for wrestlers of all ages. Missouri USA Wrestling also requires all youth coaches to attend training and certification classes yearly. This training helps ensure that qualified individuals are coaching your child.

Our Junior Spartans are welcome to compete in any USA-sanctioned events they wish. Our coaching staff can recommend opportunities suitable to their experience levels.

AAU Wrestling

AAU Wrestling is just one of many sporting events associated with AAU. The St. Louis area is the only area in the state of Missouri that actively participates in AAU wrestling. AAU does not support any of our in-state national teams or our teams competing for our country; however, we continue to sanction our wrestlers through AAU so that our wrestlers can compete in the AAU-sanctioned tournaments held in our area each year. *All Mini-Spartans and Junior Spartans will have AAU cards and are eligible to compete in any AAU wrestling events they choose.*

Our team will register as a group in tournaments listed on the club calendar. (This is s subject to change.) Tournaments are designated as AAU- or USA-affiliated. Mini Spartans will participate in AAU tournaments; Junior Spartans may compete in either. The following AAU tournaments are *Triple Crown* events. Each has two divisions, one for first-year wrestlers (Gold) and one for experienced wrestlers (Blue). Earning first place in the Blue divisions of all three in the same year earns the wrestler a special honor called the Triple Crown.

Triple Crown Events

Missouri Challenge Ozark
District Tournament
AAU State Tournament

Wrestling Records & Stats

Before certain major tournaments, we are asked to submit the records of our registered wrestlers for seeding purposes. We ask for this information from parents, but it can be difficult to provide if you have not been keeping accurate records all season. Therefore, it is a good idea to track your wrestler's results from each tournament. We suggest logging the following data:

- Tournament name, date, and weight wrestled
- Competitor name and club
- Score of match
- Place taken

Post-Season Opportunities

After the USA state tournament concludes in March, we then gear up for the international styles of wrestling, freestyle and Greco-Roman. During our freestyle and Greco-Roman season, we bring our high-school and youth wrestlers together to train during the spring and summer. USA wrestling holds its state tournament for all wrestlers at the end of April. The hard work put in during our summer season culminates with the opportunity for our middle- and high-school age wrestlers to earn All-American status in the USA National Tournament held annually in Fargo, North Dakota at the end of July. Along the way, they have the opportunity to earn a position on the Missouri National Team that will compete in various prestigious events during the season. Our youth wrestlers also have the opportunity to earn a spot on several Missouri national teams during the summer and compete as Team Missouri across the country. Their season culminates in the opportunity to also earn All-American status at USA Nationals. Youth and high-school wrestlers both have to earn the privilege to compete in the national tournaments for freestyle and Greco-Roman by qualifying at regional events. Our summer wrestling programs are made possible through Missouri USA Wrestling.

Post-Season Recognition

After the conclusion of the USA competitions, the club will hold an end-of-year awards banquet, where we will celebrate our individual and team successes. Although this banquet will be held some time after the AAU season ends, we still encourage our young and beginner wrestlers to attend. Recognition is given to wrestlers at all levels, and information is given regarding off-season wrestling opportunities.

Tournament Sign-up Procedures

Check your e-mail regularly for up-to-date information.

Tournament fliers will be e-mailed and posted on our web site as they become available. We will include a date that we need **you** to sign your wrestlers up for that tournament if they plan to participate.

To register for a tournament in which we will participate as a team:

- Fill out a tournament registration form. We will e-mail this to you to have on hand throughout the season. It will ask for your wrestler's name, tournament name, weight or weight class, payment method and a parent signature. If it is a grouped weight tournament, leave the weight blank and our parent volunteer will fill in the weight at weight check the week of the tournament.
- Attach payment for the tournament, cash or personal check. You will need exact change. Checks can be made out to Spartan Wrestling. If payment is not attached, the wrestler will not be registered.
- At practice, drop your registration form into the correct folder for that tournament.
- You may sign up for multiple tournaments at one time.
- If you miss our registration date but still want to go to the tournament, you can sign up on your own with the appropriate tournament director if time permits. Look for directions on the flier. You will need your child's AAU or USA card number to do this. Ask us for that if you need it. We will submit all our club's entries together and send one check to the appropriate tournament director. Once you have signed up and the registration has been sent, **no refunds** can be given. ***Team singlets are issued to all wrestlers for use during competitions. These are to be turned in at the conclusion of the season. Any singlet lost, stolen, damaged due to neglect, or not returned will result in forfeit of your \$50 deposit.***

AAU & USA Age Divisions & Weight Classes

AAU Wrestling will use these 2018-19 Ozark AAU Age Groups & Weight Classes: Note: Weight classes are used for Triple Crown and other major events. Regular local AAU tournaments simply bracket wrestlers of similar weights and experience levels in small groups.

Tot (Born 2013 and After)

35, 40, 45, 50, 55, HWT

Bantam (Born 2011-2012)

40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, HWT

Midget (Born 2009-2010)

50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 92, 100, 112, 125, HWT

Novice (Born 2007-2008)

55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100, 108, 119, 132, 148, HWT

Schoolboy (Born July 1, 2005-December 31, 2006)

65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100, 105, 112, 119, 125, 130, 135, 140, 145, 152, 160, 171, 189, HWT

Cadet (Born January 1, 2003-June 30, 2005)

88, 95, 103, 112, 119, 125, 130, 135, 140, 145, 152, 160, 171, 189, HWT

USA Wrestling will use the following age classifications and ratings for 2018-19:

Your age as of January 1, 2019*

6U - 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 75+ (15 lbs. maximum difference)

8U - 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 87, 95, 103, 112, 120, 120+ (20 lbs. max diff.)

10U - 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100, 105, 112, 120, 130, 140, 140+ (25lbs max diff.)

12U - 70, 77, 84, 91, 98, 105, 112, 120, 128, 136, 144, 152, 160, 175, 190, 210, 265

14U - 88, 94, 100, 106, 113, 120, 126, 132, 138, 145, 152, 160, 170, 182, 195, 220, 285

**A wrestler can compete in the age group above them if desired.*

**Ratings Definitions 1. State placer 2. State qualifier (USA) 3. Experienced
4. Novice, first year only**

What to Expect at a Tournament

Parents and wrestlers, our first tournament is rapidly approaching! If you have never had the opportunity to attend a Little League tournament, you may be overwhelmed when you show up, so please pay attention to the following directions, and be assured that things will start to make sense to you when you get there!

Wear your team singlet and team shorts and T-shirt to tournaments when you are participating with or representing our club. If you want to wear that fancy new tie-dye/sparkly/ college/zombie/hot pink, etc. singlet, the time to do so would be when you are attending a tournament on your own and not as part of the club. The reasons for this are: 1) we like you and want to claim you as one of us 2) it makes it much easier for our coaches and spectators to easily find and identify you.

Make sure you **check the time** you need to be there (doors are usually open an hour in advance of the start time, which may be morning or afternoon). Give yourself time to get warmed up and mentally ready to wrestle.

When you arrive, **find the brackets for your wrestler's division** (tot, bantam, midget, novice, schoolboy, cadet). Most tournaments will group wrestlers according to weight and rating. **Find your wrestler's name on one of the brackets** that will be posted. They usually are separated by divisions, so know what division you are in and then look at the weights. On the bracket sheet you will find a **mat number**. This will be the mat you wrestle on for the tournament. It is a good idea to **take a picture of the bracket** with your phone for reference. **If you do not find your name on a bracket**, find Coach Cross or one of the other coaches and we will figure it out.

They also may have a **bracket number** posted (usually in the top right corner). This is what you need to look for at your assigned mat so you will know when your bracket is going to wrestle. **Pay attention: if you miss your bracket they will not go back and let you wrestle. Any match you do not show up for will be considered a loss.**

Some tournaments (not the local AAU ones) will use what they call the bullpen system. They will have a designated area (bullpen) that they will call wrestlers to

by division. Once in the bullpen, they will pair the wrestlers up by bracket and bring them out to an OPEN MAT. You will be wrestling on a different mat every time, so parents, you have to watch for your wrestler to come out of the bullpen.

Proceed to your mat and find a coach and another wrestler to warm up with. Young wrestlers should stay very close to their mat until their bracket has finished competing.

Do not start wrestling without a coach! With as many as 80 wrestlers participating at times, our coaches may be very busy at tournaments. Please be patient; we don't want to slight any wrestler. If a wrestler knows he will be up in a few matches, find a coach and let them know what mat and that you will be up soon so they can watch for you to come up. The official at the mat will not let you wrestle without a coach. Remember, many of our coaches have children of their own who wrestle in the club and may have to find someone to complete your child's match so they can watch their own child wrestle. Please don't be offended!

Remember that weight brackets will be grouped weights. If you feel there is too large a difference for your wrestler, find a coach, who will see what we can do about it. **Remember that, at any time, you, as a parent, may stop a match from happening if you do not feel the matchup is appropriate and safe for your child.**

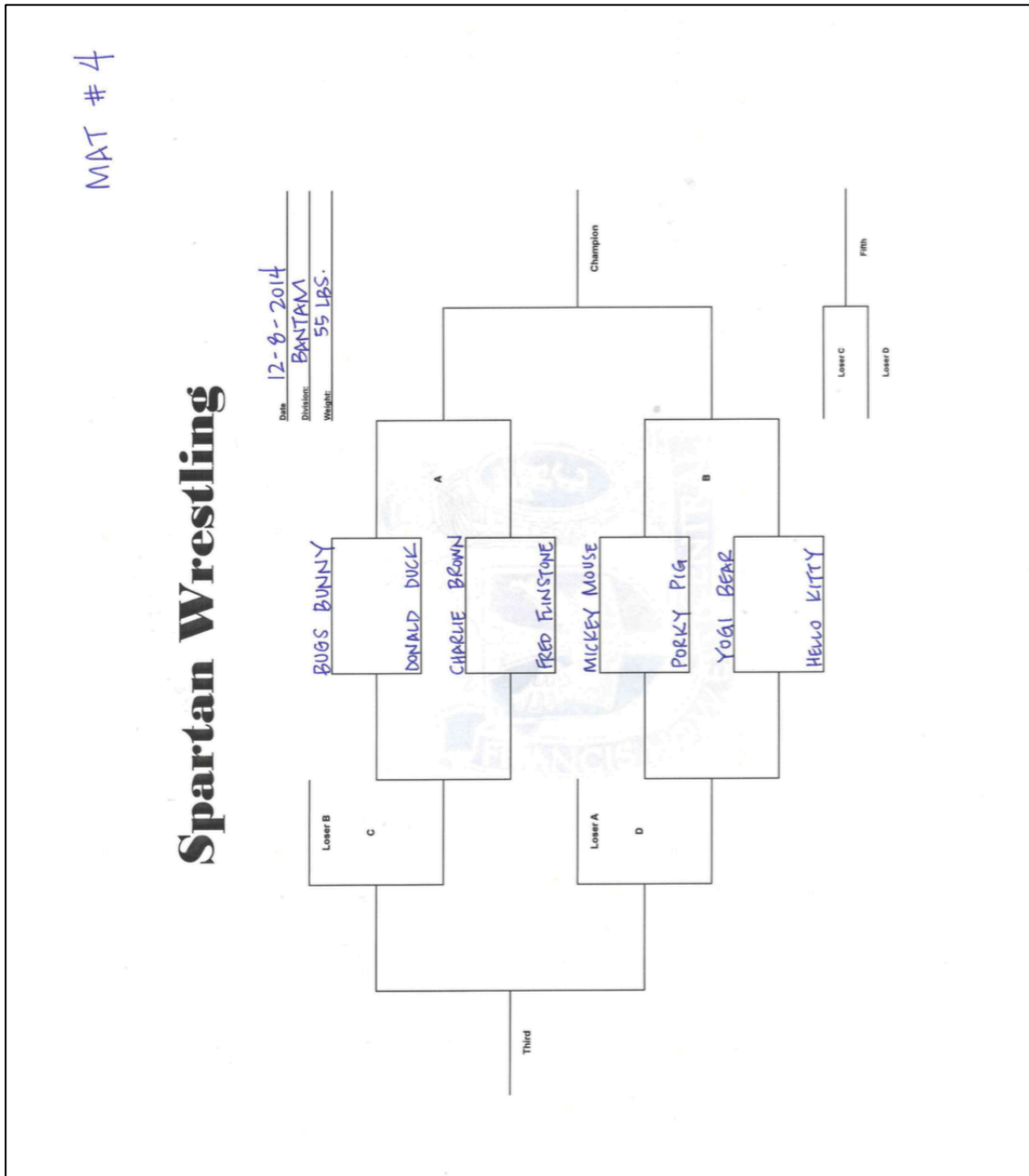
Etiquette: No standing matside on the floor. Be aware that there will be many, many parents trying to watch their kids wrestle and they will NOT be happy with you if you are standing on the floor in their line of view. If you are standing and you hear the words, "Down in front!" or "Take a knee," then YES, that means YOU, and it is recommended that you drop fast or risk facing the wrath of a mom with a video camera. **This applies to coaches and kids, as well!**

Despite what is intuitive, you can usually find the best view of your child's match by sitting in the bleachers ACROSS the gym from his or her mat. (There are fewer obstructions in your way.)

Medals are usually awarded to the top three wrestlers in a bracket and may be handed out directly at the mat after completion of a bracket. In larger tournaments, there will be a separate awards area and you will have to go there when your bracket is called to collect your medal.

Tell your wrestler to **have fun**. Remember that this is a developmental program. Win with grace, lose with grace. Failure is fine and happens to everyone. What is important is that you learn from it and get back up and try again! Always walk on and off the mat with your head held high. If wrestling were easy, everybody would do it! Thank you, Steve Cross Head Coach 636.851.4684
Steven.cross@fhdschools.org

Sample Bracket



FAQs

Should my child compete right away during his or her first season? I'm afraid he or she is not ready.

The answer, in a nutshell, is YES! There is nothing like a wrestling tournament to give context to what they are learning at practice and help them understand how they will apply their new knowledge in a competitive situation.

Wrestlers who compete at the first tournaments of the season will be wrestling other wrestlers who are also competing for the first time, making it a very level playing field and an ideal first competitive experience. The first tournament of the year is also on home turf, which makes most first-timers more comfortable.

What do wrestlers wear to practice?

Shorts, T-shirts, socks and wrestling shoes. Headgear is optional.

Should my child wear headgear?

Although optional, headgear is highly recommended. It is easier if your child gets used to wearing it from the start. In fact, many kids equate it with wearing a seatbelt in a car; it just feels weird wrestling without it. Although ear injuries are rare in young children, as kids get bigger and stronger and wrestle with more force, cauliflower ear (caused by injury to the cartilage in the ear, resulting in fluid buildup and scar tissue) becomes more of a risk. Headgear is highly effective at preventing it. **Note: Headgear is mandatory at USA Wrestling events.**

What do kids wear under their singlets?

Boys generally wear compression-style underwear or boxer briefs. No athletic cup is necessary. Tights may be worn if desired. Girls may also wear a sports bra, along with a T-shirt if desired.

Where do I buy wrestling shoes and headgear?

For economical used equipment, go to Play it Again Sports. For new, visit: Dick's Sporting Goods, Academy Sports or Johnny Mac's. Online stores: Bluechipwrestling.com, Suplay.com, WWSport.com, Eastbay.com, Amazon.com, Wrestlingmart.com, etc.

What to Expect as a First Time Wrestling Parent

Reprinted courtesy of USA Wrestling

BY **MATT KRUMRIE** | **OCT. 12, 2017**, 6:27 A.M. (ET) Christina Young is the Membership Director for Oklahoma USA Wrestling, and the mother of 15-year-old Carter Young, a 2017 USA Wrestling Cadet freestyle runner-up and Cadet Greco-Roman national champion at 94 pounds.

She's watched a lot of wrestling over the past decade as her son has traveled the country competing in local and national USA Wrestling tournaments. Carter, now a freshman at Sand Springs High School (Sand Springs, OK), is also a three-time USA Wrestling Novice and Schoolboy champion.

Christina vividly remembers those early years, when Carter just started wrestling, at the age of four.

"I sat back and watched everyone yelling and screaming," Young said. "I swore I would never act in such a way."

But...

"Then my son went to wrestle his first match ever," she continued. "I couldn't control the emotion of it all. It poured out of me. I was yelling and screaming at my son, 'take him down, put your half in, and get behind him.' I could hear myself yelling and screaming, but couldn't control this new feeling of watching my son wrestle. I did the very thing I swore I wouldn't."

The reality is, especially for parents new to the sport, that wrestling is emotional. Wrestling is a series of highs and lows, and that can be in one match, let alone that first season. Everything is new—and that's a challenge. New coaches, new practice schedules and routines, traveling, long weekend days at tournaments, learning the rules, understanding how scoring works, and trying to fit in and be a part of the team, is all challenging.

"There is nothing like being a novice wrestling parent," Young said.

If you're a parent new to the sport of wrestling, consider this advice for first-time wrestling parents from other wrestling parents and coaches:

Attend pre-season team meetings: Introduce yourself to the coach and parents. Ask if there is a team handbook to help explain team rules and guidelines in greater detail. Be attentive and ask questions as they come up, in a group, or privately (one-on-one with a club leader, coach or parent).

Get to know other parents/fans: Parents and fans are truly passionate about the sport, says Chad Beatty, head wrestling coach at Forest Grove High School in Forest Grove, Oregon, and a

former University of Iowa wrestler. Get to know those parents. “The best way to learn something new is from someone that is passionate about the topic,” Beatty said. “Other, more knowledgeable parents can show you the ropes, explain rules, and answer questions that might not be addressed by the coaches at pre-season meetings.”

Get to know the coaches and athletes: “Watching athletics is always more fun when you have a personal connection to someone that is participating,” Beatty said. “Learn their names and cheer them on. This will do two things—create team unity and make tournaments go much faster!”

Ask coaches and parents for assistance: Do you have the right gear, or all the gear needed? Is there team apparel for sale? What should one expect that first practice, tournament, or match? How can a parent prepare in advance, and help the child prepare on and off the mat?

It’s about the kids: Steve Thorpe, head coach at Sweet Home High School in Sweet Home, Oregon, tells parents the same thing every year. “It’s about the kids, not me,” he said. “I will never wrestle another match, but they have years in front of them if it’s done right.”

So, focus on learning what one can do as a parent to best support and encourage their child, regardless of knowledge of the sport. And remember, it’s about the kids.

Start out slow: The first priority is to ensure that your son or daughter likes the sport of wrestling, says Justin DeCoteau, Kids Director for North Dakota USA Wrestling. Make sure they listen and pay attention in practice. Ensure they are doing what the coaches ask, and discuss progress with the coach as needed. Sit down with the child and reiterate that wrestling is a tough sport, and nothing comes easy, and ask if they have any questions or need help with anything. Do this during an unemotional time, such as after a practice, but never after a loss, or series of losses (such as at a tournament).

“You can’t make a kid love wrestling in a single practice, but you can sure make them hate it,” adds Thorpe.

Thorpe only wrestled in four local tournaments—all within a one-hour drive—the first few years of wrestling. He recommends parents take things slow, and ease into the sport. Get a feel for what it’s like to prepare, compete, and recover from events and tournaments, and don’t overdo it.

Don’t compare your child to others: Wrestlers develop at different rates. Parents new to the sport should realize, some newbies may find immediate success. Others won’t. Thorpe, who wrestled at Oregon State University, remembers only winning “a handful of matches his first three years in the sport,” he said. His dad was his coach, and even though he wanted his son to win, Thorpe’s dad “never made me feel like I was losing,” he said.

Don't be *that* parent: Focus on being a supportive parent, versus a demanding parent. Young recalls those early years with Carter. "If I would have continued putting the pressure on, and taking the fun out of the sport in the beginning, I truly think he wouldn't have made it this far," she said. "Let it be fun. It's a long road and you don't want to take everything too seriously in the beginning. Every year he wrestled more and longer. We learned to not run, but jog, and then build to a sprint. Carter has been sprinting ever since. Take it slow and enjoy the ride."

Use technology to your advantage: Utilize the [educational resources available through USA Wrestling](#). Watch videos on the [USA Wrestling YouTube channel](#) with your child/wrestler or husband/wife, or through [Flo Wrestling](#) or [TrackWrestling](#). Listen to [wrestling podcasts](#) and if one is really adventurous, read the most [recent wrestling rules](#). Attend local high school or college matches, and follow those in your area, to help understand and grow knowledge and a love for the sport.

Do your research: In addition to competing for one's local youth or high school program, many newcomers want to find a wrestling club to supplement training. DeCoteau recommends visiting a number of different clubs that may be of interest, or a fit. "Sit down with the coach and ask him what to expect at practice and tournaments," DeCoteau said. "The coach should give you sound advice on what to expect."

Don't base success on wins and losses: Instead, focus on progress. There are countless stories of high school state champions, collegiate all-Americans, and national champions, who never won a match that first year. None. Zero. All losses.

"A wrestler new to the sport might not win a match the first few times out, or even the first year," DeCoteau said. "But if they progress and improve, that should be encouraging. Expect highs and lows."

If one isn't experiencing success on a local level, don't suddenly go to a large national tournament and expect results to change.

"Everyone develops differently," Thorpe said. "Don't take your child to West Regions or other huge tournaments and expect a trophy if they have not been having success locally."

It can be overwhelming for parents new to the sport of wrestling. But be patient, open-minded, and understand there are going to be highs and lows and ups and downs along the way. Let it all happen naturally. When it does, that's when being a wrestling parent suddenly becomes one of the greatest experiences of being involved in youth sports.

"It is addicting," Young said.