

**Board of Directors  
Merrimack Youth Association Wrestling Program**

**P.O. Box 153  
Merrimack, New Hampshire 03054-0153**

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**Parent Handbook**  
2007/2008 Season



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Dear Parent/Guardian:

Welcome to our third season of the Merrimack Youth Association Wrestling Program. Thank you for enrolling your wrestler. We enjoyed a very successful season last year and are excited about the season ahead. We are expecting an enrollment of over 50 wrestlers this season. Many of our wrestlers will experience wrestling for the first time and some have returned to build on the skills they learned last year.

In my opinion, wrestling is the purest form of competition of all sports. There are no balls, bats, or racquets; no teammates to rely on; no weather to contend with during the match. It's just the wrestler matched against another wrestler of the same size. It's the longest three minutes your wrestler will spend doing anything. During a match all your wrestler will hear is his lungs sucking in air and the coach yelling instructions from the corner. Your wrestler will strain trying to gain the advantage. And in the end, before your wrestler leaves the mat – whatever the outcome – he or she will shake the hand of the opponent and walk to the corner where our coaches will applaud the effort.

While winning is one of the goals of our program, it is not the most important goal. Our program also focuses on the rewards of hard work, personal fitness, sportsmanship, and working as a team in addition to learning to wrestle. Together with your support and participation, we hope that the 2007/2008 season will be fun and rewarding for the wrestlers, the parents, the coaches, and the program overall.

This handbook was developed to provide you with a glimpse into our approach and methodology of teaching wrestling to your young athlete. We have also included information you will find useful (such as contact numbers, website address, and a primer of basic wrestling).

If you have any questions or suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Rich Heidbreder  
Director, MYA Wrestling Program

## **Board of Directors**

### **Director**

Rich Heidbreder 429-0498 rheidbreder@hotmail.com

### **Assistant Director**

Kendra Myers 429-9460 ckmyers@verizon.net

### **Secretary/Registrar**

Michele Vance 423-1083 nh teach1@verizon.net

### **Treasurer**

Karla Lyon 391-7500 kamore4326@yahoo.com

### **Scheduling**

Seth Beeten 424-2984 seth.beeten@arbella.com

### **Fundraising Coordinator**

Cheryl Paulson 424-7749 cecapaulson@verizon.net

### **Equipment Manager**

Bruce Lawson 424-0772 lawson54@comcast.net

### **Advisor**

Sean Cullinane 886-8871 sean.cullinane@fmr.com

## **Board Meetings**

The Board of Directors meets at the MYA building on the third Thursday of every month at 7:00 p.m. unless otherwise posted. Meetings are open to all parents and guardians. We encourage you to attend and offer your suggestions and input as we strive to improve our program. Board elections are held at the April meeting. Anyone interested in serving on the Board should notify the Assistant Director at least one month prior to elections.

## **Head Coach**

Jeremy Bachand 582-2567 jaydog275@yahoo.com

Adam Damon 913-3123 adamdamon2004@yahoo.com

## Description of the program

Our program is designed to provide a basic wrestling knowledge base to our young athletes. We depend on volunteer assistance in the form of board members, coaches, and team parents. Many parents have volunteered to help the team in various ways – we appreciate your assistance and we will contact you when a need arrives.

Some parents have volunteered as parent coaches. They will assist the head coaches in conducting practices and meets. We have also enlisted the help of some Merrimack High School wrestlers that will serve as mentors and also assist the head coaches.

Our program is open to boys and girls in K – 6 grades. Each wrestler will compete according to his/her weight and age. At times we will also take a wrestler's ability into account. We do not have weight categories and wrestlers do not have to "make weight".

We will compete in meets as a team and optionally in tournaments on an individual basis. Meets will be scheduled with teams from neighboring communities. Every wrestler present for a meet will wrestle at least once in that meet. We are not part of a league and we do not keep team scores at the meets. Tournaments will be announced and each wrestler will decide to enter or not. There will be entrance fees associated with tournaments that must be paid by the wrestler.

Our focus will be multifaceted (order does not represent priority after #1):

- 1) First, of course, is the safety and welfare of each wrestler. Rest assured that your wrestler is supervised at all times by staff trained in first aid. Today we will discuss our "No One-on-one" contact policy.
- 2) Provide the best wrestling instruction possible in an environment conducive to learning wrestling. Working on a basic understanding of wrestling, building strength and endurance while making the instruction fun.
- 3) Highlight the importance of nutrition and exercise in wrestling as well as in general health.
- 4) Endeavor to enhance the self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-discipline in each wrestler.

Our team will be divided into two or more practice squads (Squad #1: K-3 and Squad #2: 4-6). This will allow the older wrestlers to advance at a faster rate

than the younger (and in most cases the less experienced) wrestlers. Squads will meet individually two times a week and come together for meets to wrestle as one team. Practice times and places will be posted.

We are developing an award program that will reward wrestlers for completing defined levels of instruction.

Wrestlers are expected to help prepare for and cleanup after practices.

Of the many sports your child can participate in, wrestling is perhaps the most misrepresented, misunderstood, and underrated. The ratio of participation to public awareness is remarkably lopsided. Each year hundreds of thousands of kids participate in this sport, yet the average person knows as much about wrestling as they might know about rugby or polo -- which combined, involve far fewer athletes. 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.\*

## **Wrestling FAQ's\***

**Question:** *Doesn't wrestling involve or eventually lead to the kinds of things professional wrestlers do on television?*

If you've been exposed to high school or college wrestling, you may already realize that so-called "professional wrestling" (i.e. WWF) as depicted on television, is entirely different from the actual sport of wrestling. So different, in fact, that there is little, if anything in common:

### **The Actual Sport of Wrestling**

- Based on self-discipline, hard work, skill and determination.
- Conducted on a mat with regulation 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.

### **"Professional Wrestling"**

- Based on theatrics, entertainment value and shock factor.
- Conducted in a ring with boots and outrageous costumes.

- Violent in nature with contestants depicting punching, kicking, body slams, etc.
- Showcase events typically involve participants with no amateur (real) wrestling experience.

**Question:** *If wrestling is nothing like WWE on TV, then what is it all about, and what should parents and kids know about the sport when considering their options?*

Wrestling is perhaps the purest form of athletic competition to exist in the realm of organized sports. There are no bats or balls, or pucks or sticks. No pads or helmets or jerseys. There's no time to rethink strategy, regroup, or even to catch your breath. There's only you, and your opponent of equal weight and size. Experience, preparation and the will to succeed will determine the victor. There's no doubt about it, wrestling tops the list of intense, highly-competitive sports.

Wrestling involves a unique balance of practically every aspect of physical and psychological conditioning. Strength is as important as stamina. Speed as technique, strategy as intensity, and power as is coordination. However, it's not always the natural athlete that ultimately succeeds in the sport - it's the natural competitor.

Wrestling is a sport in which one contestant competes with another using various holds and techniques in an attempt to force the shoulders of the opponent against a mat, thus scoring a fall (pin) and winning the match. If a wrestler cannot score a fall within the time limit, a winner is determined based on a point-scoring system. All wrestling matches are supervised by officials (referee), who impartially enforce the rules of the sport.

The differences between Freestyle, Collegiate (also commonly referred to as Folkstyle) and Greco-Roman are subtle to the novice observer, but rather significant to the wrestler. There are differences in rules, scoring and strategy. Freestyle and Greco-Roman focus more on wrestling from the feet. They are identical except that Greco-Roman is limited to upper-body holds. Collegiate, on the other hand, places greater emphasis on establishing and maintaining control and involves more mat wrestling. World and Olympic championships in Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling are conducted by FILA, the international governing body responsible for the administration and rule development of the sport. USA Wrestling conducts annual regional and national tournaments in all three styles for male and female wrestlers of all ages.

Wrestlers advancing beyond the college level can compete in Freestyle and/or Greco-Roman World and Olympic competition, however there is no avenue to advance beyond that to a professional level. It's unrealistic for

wrestlers to fantasize about aspiring to the level of notoriety and fame associated with other more popular sports, or to imagine themselves, one day earning a living as a professional wrestler. Dan Gable, for example, is as much of a legend in wrestling as Michael Jordan is with basketball, but Dan is virtually unknown outside the wrestling community. It's not likely that wrestling champions will ever come to be known for their achievements in the sport.

## **Wrestling Styles**

### **Collegiate (Folkstyle) basics**

#### **Objective**

The primary objective in Collegiate 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 14 points. Otherwise, the wrestler that can accumulate the most points by the end of the third period (or after overtime in the case of a tie) wins the match.

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 on 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. If the action must be stopped before the end of a period, the referee restarts the wrestlers in the starting position that best reflects the position the wrestlers were in when the action was stopped.

#### **Scoring**

The scoring system is rather simple:

**Takedowns** (2 points) are scored when one wrestler brings the opponent down to the mat from a standing position with control of the opponent. Common takedowns include single leg, double leg, high crotch, headlock, bodylock, and fireman's carry.

**Escapes** (1 point) are scored when a wrestler, controlled by the opponent on the mat, frees himself or herself and moves to a standing position, facing the opponent. Common escapes include the standup and the sitout.

**Reversals** (2 points) are scored when a wrestler, controlled by the opponent on the mat, executes a move that allows the wrestler to assume a controlling position on top of the opponent, thus reversing the situation. Common reversals include switches, rolls, and hip heists.

**Near Fall** (various points) occurs 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 opponent's back is exposed. Common "pinning combinations" include the half-nelson, bar arm, cradle, and tilt leg ride.

**Penalty** points can be awarded when the opposing wrestler performs illegal moves or is penalized for excessive stalling.

Competition is conducted in a manner as to promote and require good sportsmanship. Competitors are expected to show respect to opponents, officials and coaches regardless of the outcome of their match. Both wrestlers are required to shake hands before and after the match. It is also common practice for each wrestler to shake the hand of their opponent's coach after the match.

### **Officials**

Officiating is more objective than subjective in that it does not require judging, as with sports such as gymnastics or figure skating. However, situations can and do occur that are subject to interpretation. Those situations most often involve out of bounds calls, determination of when/if control is sufficient to award points, and determination of when/if stalling or penalties apply.

### **Equipment**

Basic wrestling equipment includes a headgear, wrestling shoes, and a singlet. Wrestling shoes offer more ankle support than the traditional shoe and are designed lightweight and tight to the foot to promote freedom of movement. Headgear can prevent outer ear injuries and bruises during practice and competition. The standard wrestling uniform, known as a singlet, is designed to fit snug to the body so that it does not restrict the movement of either wrestler. Kneepads are sometimes worn by choice.

### **Season**

Begins in November and runs until March.

## **Freestyle & Greco-roman basics**

### **Objective**

The primary objective in Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling is much the same as with Collegiate, except that other factors are taken into account such as the skill with which moves are executed, and the type of holds that is used.

### **Match Basics**

Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling matches are condensed into one or two periods, depending on the age group. Younger groups typically, wrestle two ninety-second periods. Older groups wrestle one continuous five-minute period. Periods always begin with both wrestlers in the neutral position.

As with Collegiate wrestling, the match can be stopped short of the time limit if either wrestler scores a pin or achieves technical superiority, which in Collegiate and Greco-Roman wrestling is a lead of ten or more points.

After a takedown situation in which both wrestlers continue to wrestle down on the mat, known as the "par terre" position, the bottom wrestler is not obligated to work for an escape or reverse as with Collegiate wrestling. Instead, it is the responsibility of the top wrestler to work diligently to execute a hold that will expose their opponent's back. If the top wrestler is not immediately (officials allow about fifteen seconds) successful in doing this, the official will stop the

match and re-start the wrestlers on their feet in a neutral position.

### **Scoring**

Control of one's opponent is less of a concern in Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling. Back points are awarded more freely in that it is only necessary to turn your opponent's back within 90 degrees of the mat. Takedowns, escapes and reversals are awarded one point, unless there is exposure of the back, in which additional points are awarded.

Unlike Collegiate wrestling, it is not necessary to have control in order to score back points. A wrestler in a defensive situation can be awarded back points if their opponent's back makes contact with the mat in executing an offensive move.

Other variations from Collegiate scoring include the additional points that can be awarded for takedowns that result in back exposure. "Grand Amplitude" holds, in which an opponent is lifted from the mat and brought from a standing position directly to his or her back are good for five points.

### **Sportsmanship**

As with Collegiate wrestling, both Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling mandates sportsman-like conduct. In international competition, wrestlers are required to shake hands with their opponent and with the referee before and after the bout.

### **Officials**

Officiating in Freestyle and Greco-Roman is performed in teams of one, two or three officials. When possible, three officials are used. The referee who stands on the mat and controls the action with his/her whistle is assisted by a judge and a mat chairperson seated on opposite sides of the mat. All scoring must be agreed upon by two of the three officials.

### **Equipment**

FILA permits, but does not require, the use of headgear in international Freestyle and Greco-Roman competition. In addition, wrestlers are required to wear either a red or blue singlet, depending on their match pairing. Other than that, the equipment is identical to that used with Collegiate wrestling.

### **Season**

Begins in March and runs through July.

**Question:** *How does wrestling compare with team sports such as soccer, baseball and basketball?*

Wrestling is considered an individual sport, but includes many of the benefits of team sports. Wrestling differs from most team sports in that during competition, athletes must rely entirely on their own individual abilities for success. Those that dedicate the time and effort will eventually achieve at a level directly proportionate to the investment they have made - even if their teammates prepare and perform at a different level.

Similarities exist in that teammates still depend on each other in team competition. Team victories in meets and tournaments are determined by the number of individual victories, and the extent to which each match was won or lost. Wrestlers also develop an appreciation and respect for teammates that have been through the same challenges, and a strong sense of belonging and camaraderie with teammates and other wrestlers.

Other team sports may be better for developing interactive player-to-player skills such as passing and blocking, but wrestling can offer benefits that other team sports lack. The individual nature of the sport provides an outstanding opportunity for young athletes to develop a sense of responsibility and self esteem while learning the relationship between effort and achievement.

**Question:** *What physical effects can the sport of wrestling have on children?*

Sports offer opportunities for children to improve their strength, flexibility and coordination, while having fun. Most sports activities rely more on some muscle groups and less on others. For example, most sports focus primarily on pushing motions (leg/arm extension) such as throwing, hitting, kicking, jumping and running.

Experts believe that unilateral (equal emphasis on all muscle groups) physical development is especially important in young athletes. Isolated development at an early age, over a long period, increases the risk of injury and limits long-term foundational growth. Swimming, gymnastics and wrestling are among the few sports that engage both pulling and pushing muscle groups.

Of all the sports choices a parent and child can make, wrestling is perhaps the best sport for overall physical development because it involves all muscle groups, and requires the greatest balance of athletic skill. In other words, wrestling does more to improve basic things such as strength,

balance, speed, agility and intensity, and is not as specialized as most other common sports.

**Question:** *Does wrestling teach or promote aggressive or violent behavior?*

Aggressiveness? Yes. Violence? No. Wrestling is often referred to as the toughest sport, and in many ways it is, but it is certainly not violent, nor does it lead to unruly or destructive behavior.

One of the factors that make wrestling so different from most other sports is that wrestling involves head-to-head competition. Each wrestler's efforts work in direct opposite from each other as in a tug-of-war contest.

Success in wrestling requires the ability to attack, as well as the ability to stop your opponent's attack. The same factors apply with boxing and martial arts, but an attack in wrestling is nonviolent. Wrestling does not permit opponents to strike one another, and imposes strict penalties or disqualification for violent behavior. In essence, wrestling is unique in the fact that it can be very aggressive without being violent. The objective is not to destroy or harm one's opponent, but to out-manuever them and to gain control.

The intensity with which wrestlers compete increases with age and experience. Kids wrestling, especially the younger age groups, is not nearly as intense as high school or college wrestling. It's common for new wrestlers to feel somewhat intimidated at first, not knowing how they compare with other wrestlers, but that is soon overcome. Wrestling, perhaps more than any other sport, is a great for building confidence while retaining a healthy dose of humility. The long-term result is that it develops the champion from within, and leads to greater success both on and off the mat, and does not turn kids into bullies or thugs.

**Question:** *At what age should kids get involved?*

Some parents feel that wrestling is too intense for young kids, and that it is better suited for post-pubescent teenage years. Denying a child the opportunity to participate in wrestling until high school greatly reduces their chance of success. Wrestling is a sport involving very complex technique that can take many years to master. A great high school athlete with little or no wrestling experience has little or no chance against an 8 or 10 year veteran. Some kids can close this gap by their last year of high school, but like most sports these days, starting younger seems to be the norm.

There are two entry points prior to high school - kid's clubs and middle school wrestling. Both are very accommodating for new wrestlers. Age

and maturity level is not a factor by the time kids are in middle school, but at the club level, kids can enter wrestling as young as 4 or 5 years of age.

There is no easy way to know when a child is mature enough to be participating in a new sport. Some might be ready at three, while others might not develop an interest for wrestling until their early teens. The best approach is to introduce kids to the sport at a time and pace that is consistent with their interest level, backing off when necessary and allowing more participation as their interest grows. In any case, it is important NOT to involve very young kids in a highly competitive program. Parents with young wrestlers should check that their club can properly accommodate young wrestlers with a separate, less competitive regimen involving more fun, "tumbling" types of activities, with virtually no emphasis on any of the serious, more competitive aspects of the sport.

**Question:** *Is wrestling a "dangerous" sport?*

There is a common misperception among the non-wrestling public that wrestling is a very dangerous sport. Perhaps it's the aggressive nature of the sport, association with "Pro Wrestling", or perhaps fear of the unknown. Several studies have been conducted in recent years that show wrestling to be safer than many more common sports including football, ice hockey and gymnastics. Most notable in these reports, is wrestling's low percentage of serious, permanent and life-threatening injury in relation to other sports. A quote from USA Wrestling Club Organizing Guide has the following to say about Risk of Injury:

"Wrestling is a contact sport and injuries will occur. As would be expected, wrestling has more injuries than tennis and swimming, but most wrestling injuries are minor, consisting of sprains and strains. Wrestling has fewer serious injuries than football, basketball or ice hockey. There is a lesser chance of getting seriously hurt when wrestling than when riding in a car, skateboarding or riding a dirt bike."

Safety factors in some ways unique to wrestling include:

- Rules, regulations, and state certified officials.
- The high ratio of officials to athletes (one for every two).
- Greater strength and flexibility as a result of more emphasis on practice and preparation.
- Competitors are matched by age and weight.
- Perhaps the most notable difference, with respect to the risk of injury, is the lack of high-impact collision that occurs in most other common sports. Wrestlers do collide, but never at great momentum or speeds as can happen with sports that involve running such as football, baseball, soccer, hockey and

basketball. Also, overuse injuries from highly repetitive motions such as pitching are virtually non-existent in youth wrestling because of the variety of movement, and there is no risk of injury from hard objects such as bats, sticks, balls or pucks. On the other hand, wrestlers are more susceptible to some communicable skin infections such as ringworm, but these incidents are quite rare, and can be prevented with the proper precautions, such as washing the mat and showering after practice.

Wrestling injuries can and do occur, but are more of a factor at the collegiate and international levels where match intensity is much higher. Most injuries occur during periods of horseplay or unsupervised activities such as before or after practice or competition. Parents and coaches can reduce this risk through proper planning and preparation.

**Question:** *Can wrestling have an effect on character development?*

Success factors in sports, or anything for that matter, are part God-given (i.e. height and size) and part acquired (i.e. endurance). Success in wrestling depends most on acquired factors, and unlike most other sports, wrestling does not favor athletes of any particular height, size, weight, muscle type, race or social class, and does not rely on superior vision or hearing.

Wrestlers learn, by the nature of the sport, that long-term success has much more to do with the investment made than the "natural" gifts one is given. Wrestlers learn the value of preparation and hard work, and the role it plays in achieving one's goals. Wrestling provides real-life experiences that build and strengthen the following character traits:

- Self Reliance
- Mental Toughness
- Work Ethic
- Competitive Spirit
- Responsibility
- Self Discipline
- Goal Orientation
- Confidence

In order to keep this in perspective, one must realize that character development is a slow process, driven by a variety of positive and negative influences with varying degrees of impact. Sports can play a significant role in character development, but other influences may have an even greater impact. Wrestling, in itself, is not a character development solution, but years of participation can provide positive influences. A

person's overall character includes many other dimensions, such as integrity and compassion, which may have little if anything to do with sports.

Muscle types are categorized as fast-twitch and slow-twitch. Fast-twitch muscle fibers deliver power, and are favored in explosive sports such as football. Slow-twitch fibers are superior in endurance activities such as long-distance running. Training can compensate for some of this difference, however, it's a known fact that the ratio of slow-twitch to fast-twitch fibers varies from person to person, providing some with a "natural" advantage over others in particular sports.

**Question:** *Would my child be required or expected to lose weight?*

No! There's no weight cutting in youth wrestling programs. It's true that weight cutting does exist at the high school and collegiate levels, but there are quite a few public misconceptions.

Some parents automatically associate wrestling with excessive, out-of-control weight loss, akin to anorexia and bulimia. In reality, the opposite is true - wrestlers gain control of their body weight and body composition, and are able to set and achieve reasonable goals with respect to muscle mass, fat percentage and body weight.

This form of weight control is more of a factor in later years, when competing at high school or collegiate levels, but coaches and wrestlers at that level are well aware of health and safety factors, and not likely to engage in unhealthy or risky forms of weight loss. Furthermore, state and national governing bodies, such as USA Wrestling, now prohibit any form of rapid or unsafe weight loss.

To some, the practice of any sort of weight control for the purpose of competing in a sport may still seem extreme and unnecessary, however, at the appropriate age, with proper education, planning and discipline, weight control can be a good thing that carries into other sports and can be an asset in maintaining one's health later in life. Proper weight control results in optimum body composition, allowing athletes to compete in peak physical condition, with the greatest ratio of strength, energy and power to body weight. These are factors in virtually every sport at the Olympic level.

With young wrestlers, it is only appropriate to discuss concepts. It can be a good time to explain how healthy eating can have an impact on performance, or to discuss the difference between healthy foods and "junk foods". Virtually all kids can learn and benefit from this information, even at a young age.

**Question:** *Can wrestling be an aid in self-defense?*

Who would win in a fight between a world-class boxer and a black belt kung-fu expert? How about an NFL linebacker versus a world-renowned jiu-jitsu champion? Opinions vary widely, but the truth of the matter is that each sport, or self-defense discipline, offers its own unique advantages that become more or less important depending on the situation. For example, boxing skills are quite valuable in a fistfight, but are practically useless if attacked from behind.

Most fight situations begin as a fistfight, but end up on the ground in a grappling contest with the better wrestler being the victor. Grappling, or wrestling skills, are actually more important in most self-defense situations, than the ability to punch or kick. The highly controversial sport of Ultimate Fighting proves this point.

Ultimate fighting, much like organized street fighting, began in 1993 with contestants of virtually every discipline. More than thirty forms of martial arts have been represented including everything from aikido to wing chun kung fu. Win/loss statistics compiled since inception list wrestling as the most effective discipline. Always able to take their opponent to the ground and remain in control, wrestlers with no other martial arts training fared extremely well against world renowned experts in Karate, Jiu-jitsu and other similar martial arts disciplines. Although wrestlers are relatively rare in the sport, past champions have included several excellent wrestlers such as Dan Severn and Mark Shultz, whom easily won matches against much bigger and stronger, internationally acclaimed martial arts champions.

Involvement in wrestling is a great way to build confidence and the ability to defend one's self, without resorting to the violent tactics inherent in most other forms of self-defense. Wrestling skills are an enormous asset in a schoolyard brawl or even a street fight, however, wrestling's non-violent nature does not prepare one for other aspects of self-defense such as disabling or disarming an assailant.

**Question:** *Is wrestling only for boys?*

In the 1970's and early 1980's, with the exception of a few isolated incidents, wrestling was a male-only sport. Over the last ten years female participation has increased to the point that it is not uncommon to find girls participating in youth and high school programs. Women's divisions have been created in U.S. and international Freestyle competition, and some tournaments are exclusively for women. Unlike Japan, where female participation sometimes exceeds male participation, in the United States, there are still far fewer girls than boys, however, female involvement is growing rapidly at all levels.

Girls can benefit from wrestling just as boys can; however, the social, mental and physical challenges can be much greater. In addition to the normal challenges of the sport, a female wrestler may feel singled out if she is the only girl on the team. Girls also face greater physical challenges. Differences in strength can be minimal at young ages, but as children reach puberty, boys typically gain a significant strength, advantage. Overcoming these challenges requires great determination and mental toughness; however, some girls have proven they can be successful competing against boys despite these obstacles.

Parents with daughters willing to accept these challenges should take the time to interview coaches and be sure they are satisfied with the coaching staff's acceptance and effectiveness in integrating girls into the program. If possible, it's best to select a team with other girls, or to join with a girlfriend.

**Question:** *What forms of wrestling exist, and what avenues exist beyond the high school and college levels?*

Wrestling, like soccer, is an international sport, prevalent in virtually every major country. It's also the oldest organized sport, and dates back well over 5,000 years. Over time, many variations, such as sumo wrestling, have developed in different parts of the world.

Wrestling in the United States is practiced in three styles: Collegiate, Freestyle and Greco-Roman. Collegiate, the predominant form of scholastic wrestling in the United States, is found in our high schools, colleges and clubs. This style is unique to the U.S. Rules are established by the National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA] and the National Federation of State High School Associations.

The other two styles, Freestyle and Greco-Roman, are practiced internationally, and are gaining popularity in the U.S. as we continue to advance as a world wrestling power.

## **History and fame\***

Wrestling has a fascinating history with deep roots in virtually every major culture on the planet. Evidence found throughout the world indicates that wrestling is without question the oldest sport ever practiced. Cave drawings and carvings located in France dating back fifteen thousand years show evidence of an early form of competitive wrestling.

Wrestling was later popular in Greek and Egyptian culture, and is prevalent in the architecture of many temples and tombs. Match results are recorded in Japan

dating back to the year 22 BC. Wrestling was also a common element of Native American culture prior to the arrival of European settlers.

Although even the most accomplished wrestlers receive little if any public notoriety, quite a few famous people began their lifetime of achievement on the wrestling mat. A stroll through the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in Stillwater, Oklahoma offers the surprising discovery that, many historical and current day prominent people were once wrestlers. A partial list includes:

- President George Washington
- President Theodore Roosevelt
- President Abraham Lincoln
- President Andrew Jackson
- President Ulysses S. Grant
- General Norman Schwarzkoph
- Benjamin Franklin
- Tom Cruise
- Tony Danza
- Kirk Douglas
- Robin Williams

### **The coach's role\***

An effective coaching staff is essential in helping kids derive the greatest benefit from their involvement in the sport. Coaches need to be effective in planning, organizing and running practice sessions, and coaching mat-side during competition. They are also called upon in a host of other related activities, but most importantly, coaches should strive to create and maintain an environment in which the champion in every child can blossom.

It is the coach's responsibility to provide opportunities for growth, achievement and excellence that can lead to success on and off the mat. A good wrestling coach is effective in preparing his wrestlers for the challenges of competition and is able to instill positive values such as goal setting and self-discipline, while maintaining a high degree of enjoyment and fulfillment for the wrestlers.

In addition, coaches must be perceptive, flexible and creative enough to address individual needs. In summary, the coach should be a person wrestlers trust, look up to, learn from, and rely on for support. This is certainly a tall order given personal limitations and other commitments most coaches face. It is more practical however, for these virtues to be present collectively within a coaching staff.

## **The wrestler's role**

In addition to practicing hard, each wrestler is expected to comply with the following rules:

- Show respect and courtesy to other wrestlers, coaches, officials, and spectators at every meet, tournament, and practice.
- Refrain from swearing or derogatory language toward others.
- Cooperate with their coaches.

## **The parent's role\***

Wrestling can be relatively demanding, not only for the wrestler, but also for the parent. Wrestling clubs typically hold practice sessions two, and sometimes three times per week, in the evening, after the high school practice is over. Many open tournaments during the school wrestling season are held on Sundays, which may conflict with other family plans, but at a minimum require a good deal of preparation, driving and patience.

Some tournaments are a good distance from home, and usually require an early start. There are other responsibilities as well, ranging from fund raising activities to helping with tournaments or participating in other team activities. The parent's role, however, extends beyond such tasks. Matches and practice sessions offer new and unique learning opportunities for young athletes. Involved parents spot these opportunities and make the most of them.

Most importantly, kids need support and encouragement. They need to be able to stake claim to something positive about themselves that they can build from in developing self-confidence. Parents can facilitate this process by identifying and reinforcing strengths while helping their child to see past their weaknesses. Your positive reinforcement as a perceptive and caring parent can be the single most significant influence in your child's athletic development and personal growth. A famous Lao-tsu quote sums it up like this..."To see things in the seed, that is Genius."

Here are some additional do's and don'ts:

- Don't impose your ambitions or expectations on your child. Remember that wrestling is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes and don't push them based on what you think they should be doing.
- 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 efforts and only serve to confuse and demotivate your child. If you feel you have the experience and ability to contribute to the team as a coach, volunteer your services through the proper channels.
- 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 events as possible.
- Acknowledge your child's fears. Their opponents appear to be much more intimidating through their eyes than through the eyes of a grown-up. Consider their perspective and don't expect them to compete with the confidence and mental toughness of a seasoned expert.
- Do not criticize the officials. Unless you have been there, you have no idea how challenging officiating can be. Expect 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 to 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.

## **A few things to know**

1. Uniform are supplied by the wrestling program.
2. Wrestlers must wear headgear at all times while wrestling (including practice). Headgear is not supplied by the program and it is the responsibility of each wrestler to procure headgear.
3. Male wrestlers should wear athletic supporters (without a cup) – also not supplied by the wrestling program.
4. Mouth guards are optional and not supplied by the wrestling program.
5. No one allowed on the mats without wrestling shoes or socks. While a wrestler can practice in socks temporarily – wrestling shoes will be required for meets and tournaments.
6. Wrestling shoes should be carried and not worn to practices and meets. Wrestling shoes should not be used as street (everyday) shoes. They are to be kept free of stones and dirt that can damage the wrestling mats.

7. Please arrive at practice 15 minutes early so your wrestler can get shoes changed and help prepare for practice.
8. Fingernails will be checked prior to each practice. The length of a wrestler's fingernails is checked for safety reasons only – this is not a hygiene inspection.
9. Parents of wrestlers K–4 must be present at practices, meets, and tournaments – they cannot drop their wrestler off and leave.
10. We have a “No One-on-one Contact” policy to ensure that no adult is alone with a wrestler at any time. This policy letter is reprinted in this handout on page 27.
11. Personnel trained in first aid on-hand at all times.

## **Team Website**

[www.myawrestling.com](http://www.myawrestling.com)

Our website will be an important tool for you as a parent. It has our most up-to-date schedule, all of the forms we use, contact information, a copy of this handout, and much more. We will also make announcements on the website concerning practices or other important information. We are currently working to make the website a more useful resource and you will see many enhancements in the near future.

## **Equipment Swap**

Your wrestlers feet grow quickly and chances are your wrestler will outgrow his/her current wrestling shoes by next season. We will take in your useable outgrown wrestling shoes and sell them to another wrestler at your desired price. Additionally, if you are in the market for wrestling shoes, be sure to check our inventory for good shoes at a good price.

If we do not have a pair of shoes in the size you want – be sure to check out The Sports Warehouse in Nashua.

## **Fundraising**

The income for our program is derived from registration fees, town funding, and fundraising. Funds are used to cover the cost of insurance, equipment, uniforms, etc. We make every effort to keep fundraising that involves the participating

families to a minimum but the efforts and assistance of all parents and guardians will be greatly appreciated.

## **Schedule**

We will provide an initial schedule at the Parent's meeting. This schedule will change frequently as we are able to coordinate with other teams. Please check the schedule on the website often for the most up-to-date schedule information. Practices have been scheduled to occur at the same time every week but we might try to schedule meets during practice times.

Tournaments are usually scheduled for Saturdays and Sundays. We will still have practice for those wrestlers not attending tournaments.

**Typical Practice** (subject to change – provided as an example of what to expect from our practices)

<b>Warm up</b>	3 minutes
- jogging	
<b>Agility</b>	5 minutes
- skipping	
- shuffle	
- stance	
- ladder drill	
<b>Tumbling</b>	10 minutes
- forward rolls 3 times	
- backward rolls 3 times	
- cartwheels 3 times	
- roundoffs 3 times	
<b>Stretching</b>	15 minutes
Legs	
- seated stretch (left, middle, right)	
- butterflies	
- push up position	
- one leg hold	
Arms	
- arm across (left, right)	
- arm behind (left, right)	
Neck	
- bridge (front, back)	
<b>Strength</b>	5 minutes
- pushups	
- situps	
- leg raises	
<b>Water break</b>	5 minutes
<b>Clinic</b> (semi-circle)	5 minutes
- review past moves	
- introduce new move	
<b>Drills</b>	10 minutes
- based on new move	
<b>Wrestling</b>	15 minutes
<b>Game</b>	15 minutes
<b>Wrapup</b> (with parents)	2 minutes
- review of practice	
- next practice	
- next meet	
<b>Total</b>	90 minute

## Tournaments

Wrestlers of all ages can optionally compete in the season tournaments. Tournament competition is organized by weight and age. Typical age brackets, for example, are: 8 and under, 9 & 10, 11 & 12, and 13 & 14. Weight classes are either predetermined, or usually blocked into groups of 4 or 8 after all wrestlers have weighed in.

Most tournaments are held on Saturdays or Sundays. Wrestling tournaments can last for 4 to 6+ hours, and can involve as many as 200 to 400 or more participants. Depending on the team schedule, there can be as many as ten or more tournaments throughout the season, some of which can be as far as several hours away.

Registration is usually taken in advance, however, wrestlers can sometimes register at the door when capacity has not been met. 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-in, wrestlers' weights, ages and experience levels are recorded on slips of paper that are used to form brackets. Some tournaments have pre-determined weight classifications, and brackets are formed within those classifications.

A completed bracket sheet will show specific pairings for each match. After each round, bracket sheets are updated to show pairings for the following round. Winners continue to advance, while those that lose are typically eligible for "wrestle backs" in competition for third or fifth.

Four-man brackets are common with 8 and under age groups, and eight-man brackets are most common for older age groups. There is usually a 30 to 60 minute period before the tournament begins, when wrestlers can warm up and locate their bracket. Wrestlers typically wrestle two to four matches in any one tournament; however, it's possible in some situations to wrestle more.

Tournaments are organized in rounds, allowing wrestlers sufficient time to rest between matches. Before each round, pairings are determined, using result of the previous round, and wrestlers are called to a staging area or "bull pen".

Wrestlers are then escorted to the mat by bracket, as mat space becomes available. Some tournaments call wrestlers to the mat by name instead of using the "bull pen" staging method.

Tournament regulations usually limit the number of coaches allowed to coach from the edge of the mat. A referee starts and stops the match, awarding points when appropriate. When the match is over, wrestlers shake hands and return to their coaches. In some cases, winners must sign the score card at the scoring table. Trophies or medals and sometimes ribbons are typically awarded for 1st,

2nd, 3rd and 4th, and sometimes 5th and 6th, after all matches in their bracket have been completed. Awards are sometimes presented at the scoring table immediately after the match, or as announced from the head table. Wrestlers are free to leave after awards are presented, unless there are team activities for which they need to be present.

# No One-on-one Contact Policy Letter

## Board of Directors Merrimack Youth Association Wrestling Program

P.O. Box 153  
Merrimack, New Hampshire 03054-0153

Date: October 19, 2006

To: All parents, coaches, and mentors

Subject: No One-on-one Contact Policy.

For obvious reasons, the MYA Wrestling Program Board of Directors has adopted the following “No One-on-one Contact” policy. This policy applies to all board members, coaches, mentors, and those working on behalf of the program. This is a “zero tolerance” policy.

Policy: **1. No wrestler (from our team or another team) is ever allowed to be alone with an adult that is not his/her parent or guardian. At least one other adult or wrestler should be present at all times.**

Example: A wrestler has a bloody nose and needs to go to the bathroom to wash it. If any adult accompanies the wrestler there must be either another adult or another wrestler present.

**2. No wrestler will ever be left alone.**

Example: A wrestler’s parent is late picking him/her up after practice. An adult and either another wrestler or another adult will stay with the wrestler until the parent arrives.

Wrestlers are not allowed to leave the practice area unaccompanied.

Board members, coaches, and mentors are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy.

All violations of this policy should be reported immediately to a board member (or member of the coaching staff who will immediately inform the board). The MYA Wrestling Program Board of Directors will vigorously enforce this policy.

Rich Heidbreder, Director

## **Illness/Medical Condition**

If your wrestler has a medical condition, you should provide the coaching staff with the pertinent information regarding the condition. If your wrestler will need an inhaler and/or medication during practice or a wrestling event, you need to be present with the inhaler and/or medication and assist your wrestler with the administration of such. While some of our coaches are trained in first aid they are not authorized (and not trained) to administer medication.

\* Excerpted from Bill Campbell, *Young Champions*, Wauconda, Ill.