

WIN Article

**Parents can help their kids win in wrestling and in life.**

By Steve Fraser

March 23, 2010

Here are six issues that parents should be careful of and understand when trying to help their children succeed in the sport of wrestling.

**1. Caring about winning - more than skill development and their child truly enjoying the sport.**

Parents need to realize that kids develop in different stages when growing up. A young boy's or girl's coordination develops as they grow. A lot of kids under the age of ten have not yet acquired the motor skills necessary to execute many of the complicated maneuvers in wrestling. Kids continue to develop their motor skills throughout their young teens and thus they develop their ability to execute the various moves required to be successful in the sport.

Parents that focus too much on 'winning' may create an atmosphere that puts extreme pressure on the young wrestler which in turn may make the sport less fun for the individual. Having fun with wrestling will promote young wrestlers to enjoy the act of wrestling which in turn will motivate them to keep learning how to become better. Having fun, regardless if they win every match or not, will keep the young wrestler interested in the sport. This will promote them to wrestle for a longer period of time.

Teaching young wrestlers to enjoy the sport, learn the skills and condition the body is the key to long term success.

**2. Dads (some mothers) try to be too much coach and not enough father (or parent).**

It is very important that fathers be fathers with their kids when it comes to wrestling. The 'one on one' individual aspect of the sport of wrestling is tough enough to deal with as a youngster. Most all young wrestlers need to know - beyond doubt - that their parents love them and support them no matter how they do on the mat. Too much push from parents can lead to the child walking away from the sport.

**3. Some parents may complain about officiating and behavior of their child's opponent instead of teaching their children profound responsibility for their own actions.**

There will always be 'close calls' and/or 'grey area calls' made by officials and referees on the mat. And yes, there will even be 'bad calls' made. This is life in wrestling (and in life - for that matter).

At the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, we try and teach our wrestlers to overcome all of the 'calls' that do not go their way. We teach that you must take the referee out of the equation if you don't want close calls going the other way. In other words, wrestlers must take their matches into their own hands.

Parents and coaches have to be careful that they don't create an excuse and/or reason why their wrestler did not win. It becomes an easy crutch to say, "I got screwed by the referee and that's why I didn't win."

And as for the opponent... If the wrestler is taught great mental toughness skills, they will have the attitude that no matter what their opponent does it will not break their concentration and focus on what needs to be done to succeed. Bite me, scratch me, punch me, poke me in the eye, it doesn't matter - I will still attack you like I am a machine!

**4. It is a powerful lesson when kids learn the value of not winning every match. In other words, kids learn some of the greatest life lessons from their biggest obstacles/adversities.**

If we look at the big picture in life, wrestling is just one of many activities and struggles our children will face throughout their life. Learning how to deal with winning AND losing is what makes for strong individuals and people of great character. Yes, we all want our children to have success. However, the true lessons learned are the lessons of what it takes to give your best each and every day.

Fighting through the many struggles along the way is what builds great people. Not all of our sons and daughters will win the state, national or world championships. But they all can win in life if they learn how to overcome the adversities and difficult problems that wrestling and life present.

- 5. This applies more to coaches: Far too much emphasis on cutting weight and dropping to a lower weight class defeats the larger goal of physical, emotional and mental skill development.**

Cutting too much weight is no fun! We are in the toughest sport on the planet and to add to the grueling daily work outs - NO FOOD (or limited food) - makes for an ugly experience. Why? Why cut weight? Why not learn the techniques, strategies and tactics while conditioning the body and mind to execute these skills?

I am here to say that because one of my very smart high school coaches, Masaaki Hatta (world silver medalist), convinced me to avoid cutting weight I was able to enjoy the sport and wrestle for as long as I did. Without this great philosophy and wisdom taught to me by Masaaki, I would never have won an Olympic Gold medal!

- 6. It is of paramount importance that kids have fun and "enjoy the battle!"**

Teaching young wrestlers how to enjoy the battle, in my humble opinion, is the key to motivating them to be all they can be in this great sport of ours! When they have the attitude that they love the sport and love the fight is when they will push themselves to the top of the podium. Loving what we do is the key to success not only in wrestling but in life itself.