



ARKANSAS WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

HOW TO GET A WRESTLING PROGRAM STARTED AT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL...

Many people have asked what are the keys to getting a wrestling program started at your high school in Arkansas. To date we have over 40 high schools now that are participating in wrestling and after working with all the schools they all basically go through the same things in order to get the program started. They are:

1. You need a wrestling mat. The Arkansas Wrestling Association will try to help you find a way to raise the money in your community to purchase a wrestling mat for your program. The mat costs \$9,000 and is 42' x 42' and will have your schools logo put on it. The wrestling mat will have on one side a full sized circle for your wrestling matches and on the reverse side, nine practice circles that you can use during practice. Please go to www.arkwrestling.com and click on wrestling mats to see some examples of some of our participating schools mats.
2. You need a coach. Every school should have the head coach of the wrestling team be from the school. In most cases the wrestling coach is typically an assistant football coach or head football coach who wants to help his football team get better through wrestling. 67% of NFL lineman wrestled in either high school or college. There is no question that wrestling develops strength, agility, and balance needed on the football field. A double leg takedown in wrestling is the same as a tackle in football and any coach who understands wrestling knows that a wrestler has a much better grip and hold when tackling than a non wrestler. Many of our schools that added wrestling had coaches volunteer to coach the program who had never wrestled before. What we then do is we assign a volunteer from the community or several community volunteers to assist as coach with the wrestling team. Wrestling is a sport that having three or four coaches is of great help. You need coaches watching the individual wrestlers during practice and showing the specific moves. Wrestlers all have different moves that they enjoy and having multiple coaches' gives you access to more moves that the kids can see and use. In most cases it has been the volunteer that has approached the school to help get the wrestling program going because they were former wrestlers and know just how valuable the program is to the school and the kids. If you go to our wrestling site at www.arkwrestling.com and click on volunteer coaches you'll see a long list of people who have volunteered to coach at different schools. You will see that many of these volunteer coaches have been assigned to a school, but many still would like an assignment. They are waiting to help you.

3. Wrestling Uniforms. – To get your program going you'll need wrestling uniforms. You can get first class uniforms with your logos printed on them and they will last for years to come. Since there are 14 weight classes we generally recommend that each school order 28 wrestling singlets or two per weight class. To order uniforms and other wrestling gear at a discounted price call Pat Smith at 501-519-0850 at the Arkansas Wrestling Academy and he will help get you taken care of.
4. Headgear – Wrestlers should wear headgear in practice and in matches. Headgear can be purchased for approximately \$20 each. To order headgear and other wrestling gear at a discounted price call Pat Smith at 501-519-0850 at the Arkansas Wrestling Academy and he will help get you taken care of. Many schools let the students pay for the headgear, but order it as a team because they see headgear as a personal item.
5. Wrestling Shoes – each wrestler will need wrestling shoes. The best place to get wrestling shoes is from Sportstop in Little Rock, Arkansas. Click on wrestling gear and vendors you'll see SportStop is located at 10720 Rodney Parham in Trellis Square. They carry Nike wrestling shoes which are outstanding and run about \$35 a pair. You also can order wrestling shoes from Pat Smith by calling 501-519-0850.
6. Scheduling Matches – scheduling matches is extremely easy. You go to the website and click on www.arkwrestling.com and you go to the Matches/Tournament section, you will see all of the tournaments that are being held in Arkansas this year along with our State Tournament, which will be held on March 14th and 15th, 2008. The beauty about wrestling is teams can just show up at tournaments and get three and four matches per wrestler on a Saturday. In addition, you can schedule dual meets or triple duals, or quadruple duals with other teams who have a wrestling program. A triple dual is where three teams show up and wrestle each other and a quadruple dual is where you have four teams show up, two teams wrestle each other while the other two teams wrestle and then they switch two more times so that each team gets three matches. Having dual meets is great for the sport and it will let the students at your school see wrestling in their own home gym. Simply click on the Participating Schools icon at www.arkwrestling.com and take a look at our schools that are participating. We have each head coach's work number and cell phone number so that you can get in touch with them easily and schedule a match. You will find that all of these coaches and volunteer coaches have a true love for wrestling and will be more than accommodating as they are the ambassadors that have helped promote the sport in Arkansas.

7. Officials – How do you get officials for your wrestling matches? All you do is go to www.arkwrestling.com and click on Registered Officials. You will see that we have three Head Officials, Don Boss, Kel Denker, and Joseph Dik. Should you have any questions about officiating don't hesitate to give them a call and they will be very accommodating. We have over 40 registered officials in Arkansas that will call your dual meets for you or that you can hire to work at tournaments should you decide to sponsor one at your school. Officials typically get paid \$100 for a dual meet or \$200 for a Saturday tournament. The Arkansas Wrestling Association flew in Jim Ramirez, one of the top officials in the nation. Jim has officiated the last 14 NCAA finals in wrestling and came in two times to help train our officials. If you missed the training session and you would like to become an official now contact Don Boss at 501-247-5188 and he will tell you what to do to become a registered official.
8. Arkansas Activities Association – The Executive Director of the Arkansas Activities Association, Lance Taylor, has been absolutely wonderful to the Arkansas Wrestling Association. The AAA pays for catastrophic insurance coverage for wrestling just like they do other sports in Arkansas.
9. Youth Wrestling – Certainly one of the keys to any sport is to get it started at an early age. We continue to have more and more requests for youth wrestling. We currently have youth wrestling programs in Little Rock, Russellville, Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers, Bismarck, and Bentonville. To take a look at some of the youth clubs click on www.arkwrestling.com and go to Youth Wrestling. Most of the high schools that have started high school wrestling are already incorporating in junior high students and below to help develop the sport. There is no sport easier to coach little guys than in wrestling. After all, that's what they do every day for fun anyway. The easiest way to start a youth wrestling program in your area is to have youth practice at the high school after the high school practice ends. You will, of course, need to get the Athletic Directors approval on this.
10. Weight Classes – A lot of people are wondering what the weight classes for high school wrestling are. There are 14 high school weight classes and they are 103 pounds, 112 pounds, 119 pounds, 125 pounds, 130 pounds, 135 pounds, 140 pounds, 145 pounds, 152 pounds, 160 pounds, 171 pounds, 189 pounds, 215 pounds and 285 pounds. By having 14 different weight classes we give every kid regardless of their size a fair opportunity to compete. One of the other neat things about having wrestling weight classes that a 2A school can compete with a 7A school and they're not at any disadvantage. Wrestling really rewards the freshman who just hasn't reached his maturity yet who may start off wrestling at 103 pounds and may be a 171 pound wrestler by the time they graduate. Yours truly, was certainly one of those kids and wrestling gives a young athlete who is growing a chance to perform well.

11. Everybody Participates – in wrestling when you go to a tournament all of our Arkansas tournaments will let you enter unlimited entries in a weight class. In other words, if you have four 112 pounders you can enter them all in the tournament. This is one of the things that make wrestling so wonderful. When you have a basketball team and there are typically 15 players and only 5 get to play and the other 10 that have to sit the bench aren't generally very happy. In addition, there often disagreement on who should be starting and who shouldn't. The nice thing about wrestling is there's no politics. If you can beat the man at your position then you are the varsity wrestler. Also, you may run into a teammate in a tournament and beat them fair and square. These are all positive attributes of the sport.

12. Where do I practice? – A lot of schools just put their wrestling mats in an auxiliary gym or secondary gym and just roll them out when they practice and then roll them back up at the end of the day. Some schools use school cafeterias and roll the mats out there as well. When it's time for a match then they just move the wrestling mats into the main gym for their dual meets. Another idea is to use a classroom that may not be being utilized. If you had a classroom that was 42' x 42' the wrestling mat would fit perfectly in there. The 42' x 42' size mats are collegiate size; however, we can also order a 38' x 38' high school regulation size mat that might fit. Finally, we can actually order just about any size mat if we needed one that was customized to a specific classroom for practice.

13. Moving the mats – wrestling mats are typically cut into 3 pieces or 7 pieces. The advantage of the 3 piece mat is that when you have a meet you only have to tape it in two places. The advantage of the 7 piece mat is that it's easier to just use a few pieces and move around should you need to. Of the 20 schools that we have wrestling, 19 of them chose the 3 piece mat, which is what I would recommend. You can get a 38' x 38' high school regulation size wrestling mat or a 42' x 42' collegiate size wrestling mat. On one side of the mat will be your schools logo and one big circle for your varsity wrestling matches. On the other side are 9 practice circles that you can use when conducting wrestling practice each day.

14. Arkansas Wrestling Academy – The Arkansas Wrestling Academy is now open at Mighty Bluebird Field in Little Rock, Arkansas. Pat Smith, the first and one of only two 4-time NCAA Champions is the Coach at the Academy. Individuals can take one on one lessons with Pat, join the Academy for multiple weekly workouts, and teams can come and have Pat run a practice for them. Arkansas is so lucky to have Pat Smith one of the most famous wrestlers in the United States here to help our kids. Visit www.arkansaswrestlingacademy.com for more information.

15. How do I get started? What you really need to get your wrestling program up and going is somebody who can get the Athletic Director or Superintendents attention to add wrestling at your school. Many times these administrators just need to know that there is an interest as they would love to help more kids participate in sports. In the winter, the only sport that is offered at most schools is basketball and that only benefits 5-15 players on a team. - to get started today, call Greg Hatcher at 501-517-4734 or Don Schuler at 479-381-6603.

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