

Freeland Youth Wrestling Club

Handbook



This handbook was developed as an informational resource for our wrestlers and their parents. It hopefully will answer many of the questions often asked about club wrestling, and will help make your wrestling experience more rewarding, meaningful and less confusing. While we make every effort to update the handbook, some dates and numbers may be changed post-printing.

This handbook also emphasizes the club's expectations for our wrestlers and their parents.

The Freeland Youth Wrestling Club should not be considered a baby-sitting or recreational activity. Its purpose is to introduce elementary and middle school-aged youngsters to the sport of wrestling in a competitive but fun environment, and to foster a young wrestler's potential through serious commitment.

Parents should be aware that when they sign up a youngster in the club, they are welcome to become involved in the operation of the club, and are encouraged to attend any club board meetings. All parents are expected to help with our annual wrestling tournament and participate in any special projects the club needs to undertake in order to provide the best possible opportunities for the wrestlers.

OUR PHILOSOPHY . . .

The Freeland Youth Wrestling Club has adopted as its primary philosophy, "Kids come first - winning comes second."

The Freeland Youth Wrestling Club is primarily geared to provide Freeland's elementary and middle school-aged youngsters an opportunity to participate in and learn the fundamentals of collegiate-style (folkstyle) wrestling in a positive and fun environment.

The program strives to provide opportunities for youngsters to learn sportsmanship, set goals, build confidence and self-esteem, develop physically and emotionally, work and cooperate with others, and test their skills in organized competition.

The club also strives to offer Freeland's youth an alternative to the more traditional sports offered in our community, especially for those youngsters seeking or geared more towards individual rather than team competition.

The club's ultimate goal is to help raise the awareness of and participation in the sport of wrestling in Freeland. This is accomplished by developing and promoting a basic understanding and appreciation of wrestling on the part of both parents and youngsters, thereby preparing both for the next levels of wrestling in Freeland's middle and high school programs.

ABOUT OUR CLUB . . .

The Freeland Youth Wrestling Club is a non-profit organization run by volunteer coaches under the direction of a board of directors composed of parents, coaches, and other interested individuals in the community. All coaches are subject to a background check. The club receives no public funding. The club is funded by a portion of each member's registration fee, proceeds generated from hosting our annual wrestling tournament, sponsors and other various fundraising activities as may be deemed necessary by its members. Donations are always welcome.

Freeland Youth Wrestling Club is one of many such clubs in Michigan. We are active primarily in the Northeastern Michigan Wrestling Association (NEMWA), and to a lesser extent in the Michigan Youth Wrestling Association (MYWA) and in the Mid-Michigan Wrestling Association (MMWA).

PRACTICES

Practices are held at the Freeland Elementary School gym and Freeland High School wrestling room beginning in December and running until approximately late February or early March or until all wrestlers are done competing in the league. Times and days will be announced two weeks prior to the start of practice. The club has practices oriented toward novice wrestlers 1-2 times per week and toward advanced wrestlers 2-3 times per week. Each practice typically lasts 1½-2 hours.

Parents are encouraged to watch practices and help out with teaching the moves as directed by the coaching staff. There are many kids trying to learn, therefore horseplay will not be allowed. Our coaches are very good and we appreciate the time they donate to teaching our youth.

Practice attire should be shorts or sweats, a T-shirt, and wrestling shoes. If you choose to purchase a wrestling singlet for practices, that is okay, but tournament (club-issued) singlets are not allowed for practices. All clothing worn on the mat must be clean and free of rivets, buckles, and any sharp objects that may damage the wrestling mat. Watches and jewelry must be removed. Absolutely no street shoes are allowed in the wrestling room, and no drinks other than water are allowed.

Skin checks are performed regularly. This is to insure that your child does not get or have ring worm. Ringworm is not uncommon in wrestling, and is easily treatable. If your child has it, he or she will not be able to practice until it is cleared up or there is a written statement from the doctor approving your child for athletic contact.

TOURNAMENTS

Sanctioned tournaments are scheduled throughout Michigan most weekends during the season. Competing in these tournaments is optional. Parents and wrestlers decide which and how many tournaments they wish to compete in. Parents and wrestlers may also compete on their own in other tournaments in Michigan as well as in other states, however, there may be additional fees in order to compete. Each family will receive a Wrestling Tournament schedule at the start of the season. The schedule is also posted on the Freeland Youth Wrestling website on the Internet.

Tournament fees vary by league, and except as set forth below are the responsibility of the parent or guardian. Our club pays the membership to the league, but NOT the tournament entry fees except for NEMWA tournaments which are covered by the club provided that the wrestler satisfies club requirements (such as fundraising) to qualify for this benefit. The cost will be announced two weeks prior to the tournament and posted on the sign-up list. Each wrestler must sign-up for the tournaments they wish to wrestle, because as a club in some cases we have to call in the number of wrestlers in advance. We are allowed a small tolerance on the number but are responsible for the entry fees for the wrestlers who have signed up for the tournament. If we have more than we called in, we have a tolerance also, but this may mean that your child will not be able to wrestle if they were not signed up.

Tournaments start with a weigh-in. Sometimes there is an option to weigh in the evening before the tournament. There sometimes are separate weigh-ins for boys and girls and sometimes they are in the open gym with all wrestlers together, and all information will be on tournament fliers. They will typically write on your child's hand the age group and weight class he or she is wrestling for that day. Typical age and weight classes are listed below.

(5-6 yr. olds)

37, 40, 43, 46, 52, 55, 58, 61, 64, 67, and HWT. (Max wt 107 lbs.)

(7-8 yr. olds)

40, 43, 46, 49, 52, 55, 58, 61, 64, 67, 72, 77, 82, HWT (max wt 142 lbs.)

(9-10 yr. olds)

51, 55, 59, 63, 67, 71, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100, 110, HWT (max wt 190 lbs.)

(11-12 yr. olds)

60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100, 105, 112, 119, 126, 133, HWT (max wt 233 lbs.)

(13-14 yr. olds)

75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100, 105, 110, 115, 120, 125, 130, 138, 145, 155, 170, HWT (max wt 275 lbs.)

Age and weight classes may vary by league. Coaches will advise wrestlers which age group they are in. At this age, we do NOT recommend "cutting weight," however most wrestlers do not eat the morning of a tournament until after they have weighed in. At this age a healthy diet (avoiding candy, pop, sweets, and other unnecessary carbohydrates) is what is best for the kids.

More information on tournaments can be found later in the handbook.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to any youngster age 5 through 14 (except those attending high school). Even though the club utilizes the facilities of Freeland High School, membership is not limited to those attending Freeland Public Schools. The club's annual membership fee covers a wrestler's secondary medical insurance coverage, and a portion of the club's operating expenses. By joining the club, parents commit themselves to help with our annual 1-day wrestling tournament.

Wrestlers will compete for the Freeland Wrestling Club at all tournaments that are attended by the club, and show support for the Freeland team.

DISCIPLINE

Wrestlers not following general rules in this Handbook, not showing good sportsmanship, or misbehaving in any way may result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension from the club. As appropriate, the coaches or Board will determine disciplinary action.

CLUB SINGLETS

Prior to each wrestler's first tournament, the wrestler is issued a club singlet for use in tournament competition only - not at practices. A club singlet is issued on a loan basis and must be returned to the club when a wrestler is done wrestling for the season. A club singlet remains the property of the club and must be returned in good condition or the member will be billed for \$60.00 -- the replacement cost. Wrestlers will not be permitted to keep their singlet until the next season. A club issued singlet must be worn at tournaments at which the wrestler is representing Freeland Youth Wrestling Club.

HEADGEAR

Headgear is recommended to be worn at practices and at tournaments. It is the responsibility of each wrestler to provide their own headgear.

FOOTWEAR

One of the conditions for using FHS's wrestling room is that we limit access to the mat and restrict street shoes. Wrestling shoes are recommended for wrestlers and coaches, but most clean non-street soft-soled shoes (or stocking feet) that won't leave marks or otherwise damage the mats may be acceptable. We may have shoes for loan available from kids who have outgrown them and donated them or traded for another pair. Everyone must take off their street shoes before entering the wrestling room. Wrestling shoes are available at most large sporting goods stores in Michigan.

MARK ALL PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Be sure to mark your personal belongings and wrestling equipment with your name and/or phone number. It is common for people to accidentally pick up someone else's personal property by mistake at the end of practice.

SPECTATORS

Spectators are always welcome at our practices. As acoustics are poor in the wrestling room, spectators and wrestlers are asked to keep their voices down. You are also welcome to help with the practice, but must follow the lead of the coach in charge.

LOST AND FOUND

The club has a lost and found at practices. If you forget something in the wrestling room, check the lost and found at the next practice.

FIRST AID AND BLOOD SPILLS

A first aid kit, roll of paper towels, and disinfectant will be in the wrestling room at all practices. Wrestlers are expected to inform coaches of any bleeding injuries immediately and proper clean up of any blood on the mat will be taken.

It is recommended that wrestlers shower as soon as possible after practices and tournaments.

WHAT WRESTLING'S ALL ABOUT . . .

Wrestling is a fun sport to watch. Two athletes square off in the middle of a mat and "have at it." If no one gets pinned during the match, the winner is determined by whoever scored the most points during the match. Points are scored by doing moves that get their opponent closer to a pin. An athlete wins by a pin when he or she holds both of his or her opponent's shoulders to the mat for two seconds. A pin ends a match. A "technical fall" also ends the bout. It occurs when a wrestler gets a 15-point advantage over his or her opponent. To make the score easy to see, the athletes are designated as either green or red and the scoreboard shows both red and green numbers, corresponding to the contestants' ankle band color.

Points are scored as follows:

Takedown - 2 points

This occurs when a wrestler takes his or her opponent from a neutral position (both standing up) to the mat and gains control by getting behind and on top of him or her.

Reversal - 2 points

A reversal occurs when an athlete who is down goes from the bottom to the top position.

Escape - 1 point

If an athlete is in the bottom position and gets away from his or her opponent's control, he or she escapes.

Near Fall - 2 or 3 points

Sometimes an athlete will put his or her opponent on his or her back and almost pin him or her. That is called a near fall and is worth 2 or 3 points. It is a 2-point near fall when he or she holds his or her opponent's back greater than 45 degrees to the mat for 2 to 4 seconds. It is worth 3 points when he or she holds him or her for 5 or more seconds. You can see the official counting the seconds with his or her arm.

Stalling - 1 or 2 points

Stalling is not allowed. It is defined as avoiding wrestling by not attempting to score. The first offense is a warning. Second and third offense, 1 point (added to the opponent's score). Fourth offense, 2 points. Fifth offense, disqualification.

Illegal Holds - 1 or 2 points

An athlete can score points if his opponent does something illegal. Some holds are barred completely, but anything that is "potentially dangerous" is stopped by the official. Illegal holds are penalized just like stalling, except there is no warning.

Miscellaneous

A match is broken into three periods of one-and-a-half minutes. In the first period, both athletes start standing. In the second period, the wrestler who wins a coin flip may choose to start in the top, bottom, or standing position, or may defer the decision to his opponent. In the final period, the other wrestler may choose the top, bottom, or standing position.

When the athletes go out-of-bounds, the official blows the whistle and stops the action. He or she starts them again in the center. No scoring can occur out of bounds.

WRESTLING TOURNAMENTS

Wrestlers and their families may choose which and how many tournaments they wish to participate in. Competition in these tournaments is optional. Wrestlers may also compete on their own at other tournaments scheduled in Michigan and elsewhere in the United States.

Tournaments are usually held on Saturdays. They can last 4 to 12 hours, and can involve as many as 200 to 600 participants. Depending on the state schedule, which can change from year to year, the club may compete in as many as eight or more tournaments a season, some of which can be as far as several hours away.

Wrestlers compete only against wrestlers of their own age and weight. The age breakdowns are as follows: (5-6), (7-8), (9-10), (11-12), (13-14).

Each parent is responsible for getting their wrestler to and from tournaments. Tournament entry fees vary from \$8-\$10. A car-pooling rotation arrangement between parents is often set up. Food and snacks are the responsibility of each wrestler. Most tournaments feature a concession stand and some offer breakfasts at the tournament site. Many wrestlers will have breakfast at the tournament site after weigh-ins but before the team warms up.

We require that wrestlers wear their club singlet at tournaments as this helps the coaches pick them out easier from the hundreds of other wrestlers.

Registration and weigh-ins for most tournaments are from 7-9 a.m., with wrestling starting at 9:30 a.m. Sometimes, there is an option to weigh-in on Friday evening. Most tournaments run until mid or late afternoon.

Most tournaments are double elimination. Some are 4-man brackets, while others may be 8-man, or even open to an unlimited number of competitors.

There is usually a 30-60 minute period after weigh-ins and before the tournament begins, when wrestlers can warm up and locate their bracket sheet if the tournament posts them before each round.

Wrestlers typically wrestle two to four matches in any one tournament; however, it is possible in some situations to wrestle more. Tournaments are organized in rounds, allowing wrestlers sufficient time to rest between matches.

A current copy of each bracket sheet is usually posted for each round in a prominent location showing results and pairings for each age and weight group. After each round, bracket sheets are updated to show pairings for the following rounds. Winners continue to advance, while those who lose are typically eligible for "wrestle backs" in competition for second, third or fourth place. Many tournaments are "double elimination" which means a wrestler is eliminated from competition if he or she loses two matches.

BYES

Occasionally wrestlers may find themselves in a bracket with an odd number of wrestlers. In each round, at least one wrestler will not have a match, but will receive a "bye" instead. The dictionary defines a bye as: "The position of one who draws no opponent for a round in a tournament and so advances to the next round". Wrestlers shouldn't become alarmed if they receive a bye. A wrestler who gets a bye in a round will almost always wrestle in the next round.

TOURNAMENT MISCELLANEOUS. . .

Some tournaments will start with the youngest age group. Wrestlers should listen for their age group to be called to the staging area. At the staging area, wrestlers will be paired-up with their competitors, given their bout sheet, and be assigned a mat to wrestle on. Wrestlers should locate the staging area before the tournament starts. The NEMWA tournaments use mat-side pairing and don't have a staging area. In mat-side pairing a wrestler is assigned to a particular mat for the whole tournament and must report to the mat for the bout numbers shown on the bracket sheet.

Tournament regulations limit the number of coaches and/or parents allowed to view the match from the edge of the mat to 2. It is mandatory to have a coach in the corner, but the other person may be a parent.

A referee starts and stops the match, awarding points when appropriate. When the match is over, wrestlers shake hands. As a courtesy, Freeland wrestlers **will** shake the hand of his opponent's coach after a match before returning to his or her coach. Failure to do this will result in disciplinary action by the club due to bad sportsmanship. In most tournaments, the winner of a match is required to sign the bout sheet before leaving the mat area. Many tournaments require the winner to drop the bout sheet of the just completed match in a bout sheet box.

Both boys and girls wrestle. It is possible that your child may have to wrestle against a person of the opposite sex. This match should be viewed as against "any other opponent." If your child does NOT want to wrestle their opponent, they can forfeit (not recommended) and take a loss.

AWARDS

Trophies or medals are usually awarded for 1st, 2nd, 3rd and sometimes 4th place finishers after all the matches on their bracket sheet have been wrestled. Awards are often announced from the head table. Wrestlers are free to leave after awards are presented; or if they have been eliminated from the tournament; unless there are team activities for which they need to be present. Wrestlers must check in with the parent that is keeping statistics for the tournament before they leave. **Our wrestlers are encouraged to stay and show support for their fellow team wrestlers.**

A designated parent keeps tournament records for wins, losses, pins, and place taken for each tournament. Byes in matches do NOT count as a win. This is used for tracking "Club Awards" and for the final banquet. A wrestler's wins, losses and medals are tracked for your child's entire career with the club.

IF YOU'RE THE ONLY WRESTLER IN YOUR AGE/WEIGHT GROUP

Every once in a while wrestlers may enter a tournament only to find themselves one of only two people in their bracket -- or worse yet, the only wrestler in their bracket. This is especially common when a wrestler is either unusually small or large for his or her age. This dilemma is rather rare for wrestlers who are average-sized for their age.

Even though wrestlers in this situation automatically qualify for a medal without even having to wrestle, winning in this manner doesn't provide opportunities to improve their wrestling skills in actual competition.

Wrestlers finding themselves alone in their bracket usually have several options open to them. First, with a parent's or coach's approval, wrestlers may be bumped up to the next weight group in their age division. Second, most tournaments will allow wrestlers in this predicament to withdraw from the tournament and get their registration fee refunded. Third, wrestlers can keep their medal but can ask their coach or parent to arrange "exhibition" matches with wrestlers from other clubs who are similar in weight and/or skill level. The first arrangement is the preferred option, as it gives a wrestler the opportunity to actually compete -- and this is the main reason wrestlers go to tournaments in the first place.

IF YOU ARRIVE LATE AT A TOURNAMENT

In the event a wrestler arrives at a tournament after registrations and weigh-ins have closed, exhibition matches may still be arranged but are not guaranteed. Late wrestlers will not be eligible to place or earn medals, but at least can have opportunities to wrestle and gain valuable experience.

YOUR ROLE AS A PARENT . . .

Wrestling can be relatively demanding, not only for the wrestler but for the parent as well. Wrestling clubs hold practice sessions several times per week, often after the high school team has finished practice. Most tournaments are scheduled on Saturdays or Sundays, which may conflict with other family plans, but at a minimum, require a good deal of preparation, driving and patience. Tournaments are often a good distance from home, and usually require an early start. Some state and regional tournaments that more advanced wrestlers may choose to compete in could be 2-day events that run all weekend.

There are other responsibilities as well, ranging from fundraising activities to helping with tournaments or participating in other team activities.

The parent's role however extends beyond such tasks. 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 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.

Here are some recommended 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 tournaments 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 de-motivate your child. If you feel you have the experience and ability to contribute to the club 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 tournaments 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 official. 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 scorekeeper. 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 official regardless of how we feel about the situation.

Important things to remember:

Homework from school should be done before practice. (Kids will be tired after practice.)

Kids must pay attention during practice. Goofing off may result in the whole team doing pushups.

No gum, jewelry, drinks or street shoes allowed on the mats.

Kids must stay on the wrestling mat unless excused by a coach, for instance, to go to the bathroom or get a drink of water.

All wrestlers should wear warm clothing when leaving practice. (Kids will be hot and sweaty when walking out into the cold weather.)

Note from the coaches:

Being physically and mentally strong will help kids be successful in all sports, but it is essential in wrestling. To build physical skills kids should do pushups at home on days that there is no practice, e.g., ten pushups between T.V. commercials. To build mental as well as physical skills kids should do 15 minutes of shadow drilling every day they can. Self-confidence is directly proportional to how hard you train! This is true in wrestling as well as everything else in life. Thanks for your support and do not hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns.

Note from the Board:

We are all here to see the wrestling program advance for all levels through varsity. That is the time when it really matters. Please respect our coaches, officials at tournaments, and other schools that we attend for practice. What we do represents Freeland as a community. If there is a problem at a tournament, please contact a coach or board member to help resolve the problem. Also, please be on time for practice and tournaments as showing up late causes distractions to others. Help out where you can, be involved, and support ALL the kids in the club. Most importantly make sure all of our kids HAVE FUN, LEARN, and ARE SAFE!