

Weight Management in High School Wrestling

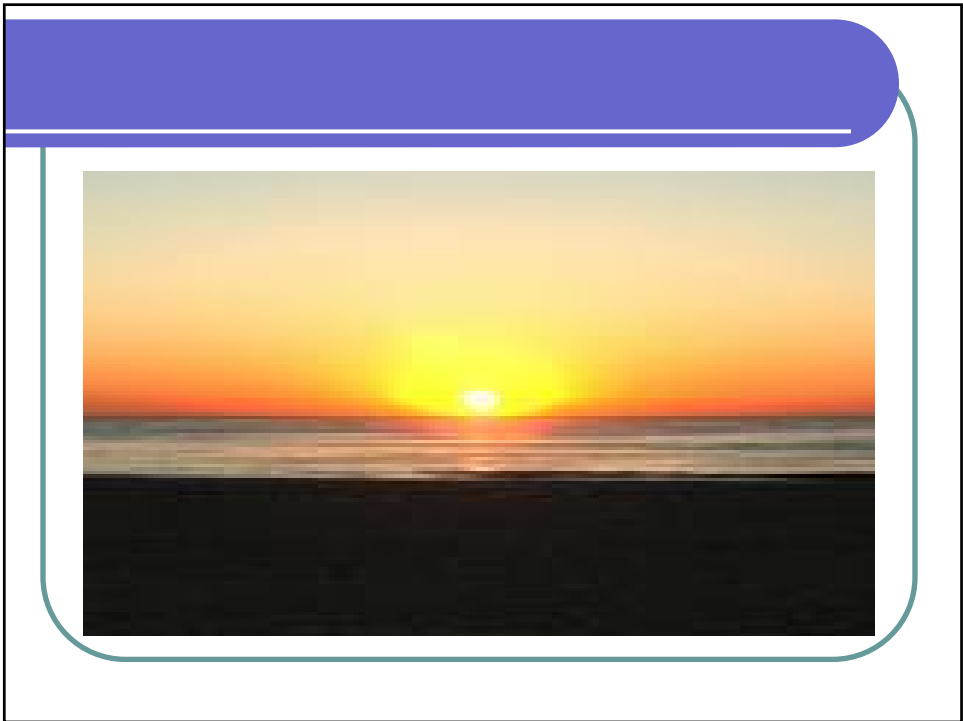
The Athletic Trainer's Role

Weight Management in
High School Wrestling

**Mid Atlantic Athletic
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The Ultimate Goal

Manage the 7% *LBM*
minimum weight
safely

What's Our Job?

- To work with wrestling coaches to find a system of successful weight management that allows for safe optimal performance throughout the season!
- To help our athletes get to 7% LBM in a safe and effective manner
- To be an advocate for our wrestlers in the process of weight management

Who's in charge?



Our Job is:

- To discourage unsafe methods of weight control for our athletes (high school athletes hate to hear the word “NO”)
- To let wrestler's know when they are using unsafe techniques for weight loss
- To keep a dialogue going about weight management throughout the season

Questions to be Asked!

- Are High School wrestlers ready to control and manage their weight throughout the season on their own?
- If the answer is no, who is available to help ?

What do we (ATC's) want?

Athletic trainers versus...

- Coaches
- Parents
- Athletes



OR...

ATC's Working With...

- Coaches
- Parents
- Athletes



What's best for our athletes?

Emotional vs. Intellectual
decision making



What's best for our athletes?

What's best for the team?

OR

What's best for the athlete?

Are these concepts mutually exclusive?

Weight Loss Standards:

- National Federation of High School Sports (7% minimum BF, *hydrated* 2006)
- National Wrestling Coaches Association (data collection and management)

Weight Loss Standards:

- Following the NCAA lead (5% minimum BF, hydrated 1998) NFHS establishes their own standards

Weight Loss Standards:

- Individual leagues or state associations establish protocols
- Individual schools use their own guidelines in accordance with league policies

What's involved in the process

- Pre-season or early season certification (max weight loss 1.5%/week encourages wrestlers to reach lowest possible certified weight class in a gradual fashion)

What's involved in the process

- We must educate wrestlers and coaches to determine appropriate weight classes
- We must educate wrestlers to live within a few pounds of the weight class in which they compete

What's involved in the process

- **Weekly follow up**
(maximum 1.5% loss of bodyweight/week)
- **Will the Federation choose to follow this policy this year?**

What's involved in the process

- **Daily weigh in and weigh out of practice**
- **ATC's charting the weight loss and gain patterns of each wrestler**
- **Be aware of a wrestlers weight after a Saturday match, and the weight they return at on Monday**

Our Role

- We must educate coaches, parents and athletes regarding healthy weight management

Our Role

- We should educate people outside the wrestling community about healthy weight management!
(Debunking myths!)

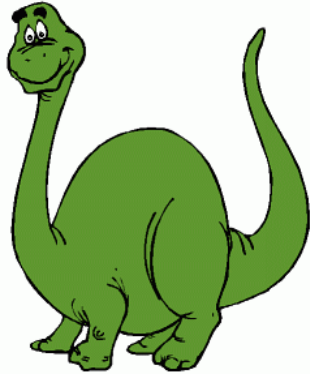
Our Role

- We need to communicate with athletes regarding daily eating habits

Weight Certification Process

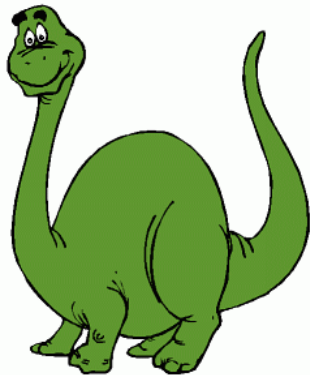
ATC's must provide an objective approach to determining the lowest possible allowable weight class in a safe manner!

Weight Certification Process



- There are still some dinosaur coaches that will perform the “*eyeball test*” or the “*grab and pinch test*” to determine the best weight for a wrestler

Weight Certification Process



- How many times have we heard a coach tell an athlete that “the spot in the lineup is at a *certain weight* and therefore that is the weight to make”!

Mike Moyer, the Executive Director of the NWCA sent me this letter and asked me to share it with you. The letter is from a parent of a wrestler who passed away as a result of poor weight management

Dear Mr. Moyer

I just wanted to thank you for all your help in getting the weight management regulations for wrestling at the high school level changed. Contrary to what some coaches might like you to think, I have long believed that there is a problem at the high school level.

I have witnessed on several occasions both before and after Jeff's death the affects of drastic weight loss on high school wrestlers. Namely fainting, extreme fatigue and acute mood changes. I realize there are many coaches who do not want change, but I feel change is the only way to change our sport.

Making wrestling safer will undoubtedly allow more kids to participate. We must assure parents that wrestling is a safe sport. I personally know of two mothers who will not let their boys wrestle because of weight loss problems. I have heard coaches say that cutting weight makes you "tough" but I believe that it only makes you weak.

I can't tell you how many times since the NCAA has changed its rules that a college wrestler has told me how nice it is to practice technique for 1 or 2 days and cutting weight for the rest of the week. How do you become a better wrestler by jumping rope, riding a stationary bike or sitting in a sauna with a rubber suit on?

The one thing that has really bothered me since Jeff died is that he was trying to get to 150lbs. and his opponent at Michigan State was doing the very same thing, only he didn't die. If Jeff would have lived, he would have wrestled the exact same opponent, but they both would have weighed 165lbs. What was the object of getting down to 150 if you wrestle at 165 the very next day?

What advantage did either one of them get by sucking weight for four days? And, do you think Jeff was “tough” when he crawled on his hands and knees to the scales as his liver, his kidneys and his heart shut down? Not hardly.

I don't see how anyone could oppose making our sport safer. It's definitely a win-win situation. By adopting NFHS recommendations, it will put everyone on the same playing field.

Now that the NCAA has changed their weight classes and weight loss procedures, there is no logical reason for high school wrestlers to continue to subject themselves to antiquated and extreme weigh loss measures.

Unfortunately, the new NCAA regulations came a year to late to save Billy Jack Saylor, Joe LaRosa and my son Jeff Reese. Let's not let the High School regulations come to late for some high school wrestler.

I wonder what a high school coach would tell the mother of a young wrestler who died sucking weight. He can't say "we didn't know", that excuse was used 7-1/2 years ago, when my wife and I buried our youngest son.

Intelligent men make intelligent decisions based on factual information. We have the facts. We have the information. Now let's make the intelligent decisions.

Thank you for helping spread the word and thank you for letting me input my feelings. Jeff's spirit is what pushes me to speak on his behalf. I know he is looking down on us with pride knowing that he, Billy Jack and Joe did not die in vain.

Sincerely,

Ed Reese

Maryland

- **MPSSAA:**
- Each county establishes guidelines for that county
- Baltimore County one site, bio- impedance, manual refractometer 50% hydration failure rate. If failed, they had to wrestle 1 weight class up (reported by coaches)
- PG County School based testing by ATC's
- Howard County School based by ATC's
- Frederick County One site by outside organization over 2 days
- **Privates:**
- WCAC School based testing by ATC's at school
- IAC One site for whole league

MIAA Weight Certification Process

- 10 Years of MIAA weight certification by ATC's of the MIAA
- One site, one scale for all wrestlers

MIAA Weight Certification Process

- 7% minimum body fat standard used
- Average of 375 wrestlers measured per year

MIAA Weight Certification Process

- Lange skinfold calipers used
- Nine measurements per athlete are taken



MIAA Weight Certification Process

- Wisconsin formula used



MIAA Weight Certification Process

- All wrestlers are weighed on the same scale
- Testing is done over three day period



MIAA Weight Certification Process

- Day Three is the make up day for those failing the hydration testing of the previous two days

MIAA Weight Certification Process

- Average of only two wrestlers per year with body fat percentage below 7% (5 in 2004 was the most in one year)

MIAA Weight Certification Process

- First 8 years, only those wrestlers with body fat below 7% were tested for hydration (digital refractometer with NCAA standard of 1.020 used)

MIAA Weight Certification Process

- Abuses of the system were identified.
- Hydration testing for all wrestlers for past two years. (NFHS now requires it as well!)

MIAA Weight Certification Process

- One team in the league, *without the coaches knowledge* (overheard conversation) had their athletes restrict solid food intake for days and consume only fluids to pass hydration test

MIAA Weight Certification Process

- Last 2 years, digital refractometer used to test hydration for all wrestlers (1.025 USG)



MIAA Weight Certification Process

- Year 1 of hydration testing for all wrestlers in the league had a 40 % failure rate



MIAA Weight Certification Process

- Year 2:
- Hydration testing for all wrestlers 15% failure rate at 1.025 USG

MIAA Weight Certification Process

- Wrestlers are beginning to learn how to properly hydrate for the test



Cecil County Public Schools

- Wrestling Weight Certification
- Hydration Tip Sheet
- **WRESTLERS:** The following information includes tips that will help you report to the weight certification properly hydrated.

Tip Sheet

- ***THREE-FOUR DAYS before the weight certification:***
 - Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day (water has no calories). Athletes should be drinking at least 8-10 glass of water each day.
 - Increase intake of foods high in fiber (such as salad, cereal, vegetables, and fruits). This will help with removal of excess waste from body.

Tip Sheet

- Eat smaller, more frequent meals.
- AVOID foods high in fat (such as fried foods, meat, french fries, pizza, nuts, salad dressings).
- AVOID salty foods (such as potato chips, pretzels, pizza, tuna, crackers, soft drinks, sports drinks).
- Be sure that you eat and drink, do not dehydrate!!!

Tip Sheet

- ***ONE DAY before the weight certification:***
 - Continue drinking fluids, you should be urinating on a frequent basis. Urine should be colorless if you are fully hydrated.
 - Eat smaller, but more frequent meals. Continue to eat fibrous food, to eliminate excess waste from body.
 - STAY AWAY from fatty foods and snacks that will remain in your body for a longer period of time.

Tip sheet

- ***DAY of weight certification:***
 - Eat small portions and eat a very light lunch (if afternoon testing).
 - Eat light foods (such as fruit and grains).
 - Continue to drink water.

Tip sheet

- Do not drink salty drinks (such as sodas, Gatorade, or PowerAde). This may cause you to retain fluid.
- Urinate as frequently as possible through the day until one to two hours prior to your weight certification time.
- Please be ready to urinate for the hydration test.

We learned:

- We need to teach wrestlers to remain properly hydrated throughout the season

MIAA Process

- We encountered constant complaints from coaches that the standard(1.025) was too tough!
- NCAA standard is 1.020 (much tougher)

What we have learned:

- Hard work in the wrestling room is the best way to lose weight, not sweats, saunas or steam rooms!

What we have learned:

- Once a wrestler's metabolic rate speeds up from the intensity of the workouts, it is easier to control weight changes

What we have learned

- Fluid intake during practice allows for better practices and thus better weight management



What we have learned:

- Parents need to “buy in” to the system of working with their coaches and children regarding weight management



What we have learned:

- Parents need to be educated regarding good food choices and poor food choices at home!



What we have learned:

- Wrestlers should be eating 3 meals a day while managing their weight

What we have learned:

- Watching what they eat is a priority. Not eating is an unacceptable behavior!

What we have learned

- Practicing in shorts and tee-shirts, instead of sweats encourages the concept of hard work, instead of sweating the weight off!

What we have learned:

- When ATC's are actively engaged in the daily process of tracking weight loss, and a maximum allowable amount of weight gain from day to day is encouraged, wrestlers will have less swing from one day to the next.

What we have learned:

- We must change attitudes and behaviors, not just habits!

What we have learned:

- We, as ATC's have a vested interest in the well-being of the athlete instead of wins and losses!

