

ALIGNING CLUB TEAMS & HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS



Presented By: Neil W. Turner
Director – Mat-Town USA Wrestling Club

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THE PYRAMID OF PARTICIPATION FOR USA



**World
Olympic**

**Open/National Club
18 and up**

**College or College Club
18 and up**

**Senior High or Club
Ages 14-18**

**Middle School/Junior High or Club
Ages 12-15**

**Organized Youth Programs
Ages 9-12**

**Introduction to Wrestling
"FUN AND FUNDAMENTALS"**



THE PYRAMID OF PARTICIPATION FOR WRESTLING

BUILDING A PROGRAM FROM THE BOTTOM UP



**Senior High
or Club
Ages 14-18**

**Middle School/Junior High
or Club
Ages 12-15**

**Organized Youth Programs
Ages 9-12**

**Introduction to Wrestling
"FUN and FUNDAMENTALS"**

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE PYRAMID

- Every wrestler in America started somewhere in this pyramid and worked their way up
- Unfortunately, we only hear about the ones that are very successful when they reach the top.
- We must be very careful not to put too much focus on too few athletes and too few programs.
- Obviously, because of various interests, talents, abilities, and priorities there will always be a lesser number moving up to the next level.
- But how can we keep more students entering the pyramid and moving up the ladder?
- We all have a role and more can be accomplished if none of us cares who gets the credit.



Please take these as observations coming from a person who cares a great deal about you and your program and the sport of wrestling. I have observed wrestling from the following points of view:

- As a high school student in Clearfield, Pennsylvania;
- Very briefly as a college student at Millersville, Pennsylvania;
- As a college student at Penn State University;
- As an assistant and then the head coach at Altoona High School, Pennsylvania. This is the first place that I put the Pyramid of Participation into action.
- Thaddeus Stevens School, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Competition was against freshmen teams, prep schools, and JV college teams.
- Clarion University of Pennsylvania as an assistant to Bob Bubb. This is where I became involved in summer wrestling training, although I had attended a one week session at Lehigh University while a student in high school.
- Athletes in Action;
- Clearfield High School, Pennsylvania;
- Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania. Here we trained an extremely large number of students of all ages during the summer.
- Messiah College, Pennsylvania. Here we continued to train students of all ages.
- Mat-Town USA Wrestling Club. This club is intended to enhance wrestling in the whole area, kindergarten through Lock Haven University.

CLUB NUMBERS

*Number of clubs registered with
USA Wrestling*

September 1, 2004 to July 31, 2005

- 3,084 clubs with 131,973 registered athletes & 18,961 registered coaches
- Examples: PA 77, NJ 66, NY 117, OH 106
- USA Wrestling had 1,706 sanctioned events
- Non-school programs exist for a variety of reasons:
 - Profit: these can also contribute to the development of the individual
 - Desire to achieve both individually and collectively
 - Value of the experience
 - No confidence in the school-related program

SCHOOL NUMBERS

*From the National Federation of
State High School Associations*

2004 to 2005

- 9,562 high school programs for boys
- 941 school programs for girls
(This simply means there are 1 or more girls on that particular team.)
- 243,009 boys participating
- 4,334 girls participating
(Only 2 states have separate girls' programs, Texas and Hawaii.
A number of states are discussing having a separate championship.)



OBSERVATIONS

- More than half of the athletes in school programs would appear to also be in club programs.
- I do not have the number of students participating in college. This would be included in the USA Wrestling numbers as would the Open Division.

- Most wrestlers start wrestling in non-school related programs. Here, I mean the program is not sponsored by the school although there may be cooperation. These groups of students may come from a variety of school districts, depending on the situation.
 - Every state association would have policies regarding school and non-school related programs. You would be encouraged to know what the policies are in your state both in and out of the school competitive and training calendar.
- For a wrestler to stay in the sport there needs to be very good coaching appropriate to the individual wrestler's age, grade, level of experience and personality. Athletes will not all progress at the same rate and cannot be exposed to the same competitive situations at the same rate.
 - Someone must assess the student's development both technically and emotionally and make a decision that is in the best interest of that individual student in regards to level of competition and training.





KEY PERSONS IN A WRESTLER'S LIFE & DEVELOPMENT

- Parents or Guardians – There is a tremendous need for parental education as it relates to the role of family in the life of the student-athlete.
- Coaches – Students will have a variety of coaches during their careers, both school and non-school persons.
- Training partners – When a student has good coaching, the person that they work with becomes the next most important individual in their development.
 - Since clubs many times draw wrestlers from a variety of school districts they may be able to enhance bringing sparring partners who can help each other. At Mat-Town USA I have adopted the slogan “As iron sharpens iron, one wrestler sharpens another.” This is an area where clubs and school-related programs will need to cooperate in the best interest of the student-athlete. This is affected by what time of year it is too.
 - Where there are a number of smaller clubs I would strongly encourage them to communicate with one another and come together perhaps once a week in order to give the athletes the opportunity to have a better sparring partner situation. A unified effort can greatly benefit the individual athletes.



EVERYONE IS A 1 TO 10 BUT NOT EVERYONE'S 10 IS THE SAME

Extra coaching and competition can accelerate a student to his or her 10 but it will not change his or her ultimate potential. Parents especially need to understand this principal. However, wrestling does enable a student to many times beat a person with more potential because they know how to use what they have.

- It is very possible that the best recruits are outstanding multi-sport athletes who when they concentrate on wrestling improve greatly. As to when specialization may begin to occur is dependent on a great number of factors.

SCHOOL COACH/CLUB COACH COMMUNICATION

There needs to be communication between the student's club coach and the student's school coach

- School leaders and club leaders need to be on the same page. This takes dialogue and this will take compromise and understanding. I have already used the example of getting the best sparring partners possible.
- Remember it is never WHO is right but WHAT is right. Here you would be trying to discern what is right for the individual and, depending on the time of year, what is right for the team.
- They each must have respect for and appreciation of one another's contributions and responsibilities.
- The student-athlete's development is the focus.



THE “CEO” OF WRESTLING

I believe the single most important “CEO” of wrestling in the USA is the high school wrestling coach. The box on the left shows what Mike Moyer, executive director of the National Wrestling Coaches Association, thinks you need to bring to the table and the box on the right shows what a CEO* thinks that you need to bring to the table.

- Public speaking abilities
- Entrepreneurship (camps, clinics, speaker bureau, etc.)
- Marketing/promotions
- Fundraising
- Human resource management
- Conflict resolution
- Leadership
- Public relations
- Use of volunteers
- Basic computer skills

- **S**ee the future: The ability to establish and articulate a vision.
- **E**ngage and develop others: Recruit talented people and invest in their personal and professional development.
- **R**einvent continuously: Continuously improve . . . Yourself and the organization (the systems, processes, capabilities and structures.)
- **V**alue results and relationships: Winning, the right way!
- **E**mbody the values . . .walking the talk and leading by example (personal integrity).

**Based on Ken Blanchard's “SERVE” model of leadership*

All of us need to continue throughout our careers to develop these skills and abilities to enhance the future of wrestling in the USA. The actual coaching of wrestling is only one aspect of being a wrestling “CEO”.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEER COACHES

The greatest number of coaches in wrestling would probably be the volunteers at the lower level of the Pyramid of Participation.

- This means all of us need to be involved in trying to help this group of people to do the best job possible. They will lay the foundation for the student's wrestling future.
- Never forget the students who are in first grade today will graduate in 2017 or 12 years from now. If you are a 30-year old coach, you will only be 42 and a long way from retirement, so you better be very concerned about the wrestlers of the future. If you are a 30-year old college coach, you'll be recruiting those students before you retire, to say nothing of the ones who are in kindergarten.
- There needs to be education and training for coaches at every level in the Pyramid. This education needs to cover more than just the mechanics of wrestling, but just as important is "why wrestle?" The value of the wrestling experience needs to be both modeled and explained to the wrestler's family.
- As you move up the Pyramid coaches and leaders will need "CEO" skills in order to keep everyone on the same page.

Too much assessment as to a young person's future in wrestling is being based on competitive results alone. This is being done by family and coaches. Winning is very important but the process is even more important. The process must be educationally defensible for every level.

“GROWING” WRESTLING

Together club and school leaders can grow wrestling in the United States.

- By “growing” wrestling I mean the number of people who try the sport, stay in the sport for a longer period of time and always leave having had a positive experience that impacts their lives for the future. I will be quick to say this only occurs when they strive to reach their greatest potential, whatever that may be. Those of us in charge must orchestrate this process. Coaching is not just putting students in a position where they can display their talent. It is taking the responsibility to help students develop whatever talent they have.
- The biggest hurdle to this idealistic approach will always be the need for credit both individually and corporately.
- Quality can be achieved for a short period of time while the Pyramid is being ignored, but eventually there is a price to pay for this. Someone will have to rebuild the Pyramid.
- To be the best in the world at the top of the Pyramid we need to work hard to get more athletes to try wrestling and to stay in wrestling, especially students who have a high level of the specific athletic ability necessary for success in wrestling. You can have the greatest process in the world, but if you do not have athletes whose 10s are equal to or better than Iran-Turkey-Etc. the USA is not going to win. The same applies at the local level or the state level.



I would like to ask the people at the top of wrestling in the USA (example: USA Wrestling, NCAA Wrestling, high school wrestling) two questions:

1. What do you want to see in a student when they get to your level both technically and personally?

2. How can we as wrestling leaders work to develop these skills and personality traits in this and the next generation of wrestlers?

- For example, for any wrestler to reach his or her fullest potential there needs to be a very disciplined approach to training and competition from the very beginning.
- Wrestling is a sport of position and movement with an opponent. Movement education and muscle memory starts the first day the student steps on the mat. This will lay the foundation for the future and support the ultimate potential of that individual.
- All 3 styles of wrestling must be considered when developing movement patterns.

I DO NOT HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS. I DO NOT EVEN KNOW ALL THE QUESTIONS. I JUST KNOW WE NEED TO WORK TO BE ON THE SAME PAGE FOR THE FUTURE OF WRESTLING IN THE USA.

- ✓ Must start at the local level
- ✓ Then the regional and state level
- ✓ Then the national level
- ✓ Then the international level as it relates to our competing with other nations



MY REASONS FOR STAYING IN WRESTLING

- My faith in Christ – examples Athletes in Action, Fellowship of Christian Athletes. *“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” - Jim Elliot*
- The feedback that I have received from many wrestlers as to the value of their character development and education as a result of being involved in wrestling.
- The need that I see for all of us to work at “growing” wrestling. Celebrating the achievements of the past may provide motivation for the future but there needs to be day to day planning and hard work to grow the Pyramid of Wrestling larger and larger in America.