

John R. Pipp

Wrestling is considered the world's oldest sport, and by many who participate, the world's best. Man to man, hand to hand combat; two guys going at it in the most basic and fundamental way possible to see who is the superior. There are no professionals, the people who wrestle pour their sweat and blood for the love of the sport, not for money. Wrestling is pure and simple, it is widely considered one of the few uncorrupted sports remaining. Given all of this, a lot can still be done to improve the sport and to share and grow it.

The first major issue with wrestling is cutting weight. It is unhealthy, done improperly, and develops a hatred of the sport. The negatives of cutting weight far outweigh the positives, especially for younger kids. However, this is a hard issue to solve because wrestlers must be the same weight for fair competition, so some will always lose weight to gain an advantage. Until puberty is completed, cutting weight is dangerous and should be avoided at all costs. To solve this problem all wrestlers k-12 should be required to step on a scale (singlet, shoes and headgear on) as they check in for their match. Weighing just seconds before competition will force the wrestlers losing weight to still be hydrated and will greatly reduce weight cutting. It is the safest and most logical method, and will help to take the stress out of the lives of so many junior high and high school kids. Without weight cutting, at the k-12 level wrestling would be more popular, safer, and more enjoyable.

The next major issue with wrestling is skin issues. Skin diseases are dangerous and can spread rapidly. Wrestling coaches and institutions need to raise awareness about good hygiene and educate wrestlers on the importance of avoiding contamination. This is overlooked, especially at the k-12 level. High School wrestlers should shower immediately after practice, but this is only a guideline.

Furthermore, the rules of wrestling are great, but could be slightly modified. For example, funk roll positions are ambiguous. Wrestlers often scramble to their back and stay there for 30 seconds without the other wrestler scoring back points because no takedown is awarded. This rule should become more concrete. For example, the stalling out of bounds rule implemented in college is highly effective and great for the sport, more rules like that should be added. Another rule that could be added is defined out of bounds rules at the highschool level, because currently they are often judgment calls made by referees and ambiguous. Judgement calls should be avoided, wrestling rules should be black and white.

The most glaring issue with wrestling is not enough exposure. In order to grow a fanbase, more people must be familiar with wrestling. That means youth wrestling in America should be pushed into all states. As this trickles up, more college programs will erect and more fans will appear. This can be achieved through no weight cutting, skin issues, and better rules.

Wrestling is the world's greatest sport, hopefully many can see that. After attending the state tournament I heard one coach say: "It's like a hundred funerals and a hundred weddings". NO sport captures the emotions of life like wrestling. It teaches the important lessons of life, and is truly entertaining. With a few improvements, wrestling could grow to unimaginable popularity.