

How to Improve the Sport of Wrestling  
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The sport of wrestling is the oldest sport known to man. Not only has wrestling survived the test of time, but it is also an activity that has shaped the lives of successful people for thousands of years. Literary masterpieces such as the Iliad make reference to the wrestling, as well as cave paintings as old as 15,000 years. Wrestling has endured; it has thrived over the course of time. However, in the world in which we currently live, we are faced with the task of promoting and growing this remarkable sport. There are several ways in which we can grow the interest of our sport. Nurturing and retaining our youth wrestlers, promoting dual meets by limiting the amount of tournaments teams can attend, and adopting more wrestling-specific rules are ways in which we can grow the sport of wrestling.

First of all, in order to grow the sport of wrestling we must retain athletes at the youth level. Statistics show that the majority of wrestlers who leave the sport of wrestling do so after their first year of competition. The number one reason is lack of fun. Too many youth coaches promote intense competition at a young age, while most wrestlers are not mentally prepared to handle losing. Too many wrestlers quit wrestling before reaching middle school. At the youth level, your success is based on the number of wrestlers that come back out for wrestling the following year. This number can be increased by limiting the amount of competitions young wrestlers participate in, focus on body awareness and position, and making sure young athletes are enjoying themselves at practice. All student-athletes will go through puberty and grown mentally and physically once they reach the middle school grades. Who knows how many future champions we chase from our sport before they are old enough to develop.

In addition to retention at the youth level, there needs to be a focus on promoting dual meets. Individual schools can use home dual meets to promote their program, and spark interest in the sport. The problem with current wrestling schedules is that teams are wrestling very few dual meets, and in turn using their competition points to attend both individual and team tournaments. There are many schools that wrestle fewer than four home dual meets each year. I would be in favor of limiting the number of tournaments teams may attend, thus forcing programs to schedule more individual dual meets. Promoting student sections, inviting alumni, having theme nights, and a variety of other activities can be used to make each home meet a fun-filled event. If we are going to grow our sport, we must first begin promoting it at the local levels.

Finally, the sport of wrestling is in need rule changes that impact wrestling and make it more enjoyable for the average fan. Over the course of the past few years, it seems that time and effort are exerted towards rules that have very little to do with wrestling. Crossing headgear straps, the way in which shoelaces are taped, and working out prior to weigh ins are a few rules that impact our sport, however have little to do with the sport. Implementing an out of bounds rule similar to that of the NCAA would be a welcomed change. The college out of bounds rule allows for continued wrestling, and results in far fewer restarts. Many matches drag on and take longer than necessary due to constant stopping and starting. Mandating larger mat surfaces, and adopting this rule would make wrestling more enjoyable for the average fan. I also think that a pushout rule such as that used at the Olympic level would encourage more action in the center of the mat. If backing out of bounds to avoid wrestling resulted in a point for your