
Weight Management

From "2005 Second Edition Parent's Guide to Youth Wrestling", USA Wrestling

A stereotype exists of wrestling coaches so hell-bent on winning that they force their varsity wrestlers to cut excessive weight. The stereotypical coach is so competitive and egocentric that their only focus is team victory and they are willing to sacrifice the health and well-being of a few wrestlers to achieve victory. Public perception created this stereotype -- it is not based on reality.

The vast majority of wrestling coaches are coaching not for their own egotistical glory, but because they know the great positive impact, wrestling can have on each of their wrestlers' lives. The most competitive coaches are generally well informed and know the negative effects of excessive weight cutting and how it can seriously influence performance. There is an ideal weight for every athlete and it is not the lowest possible weight. The competitive coach helps educate their wrestlers about the healthy ways to achieve optimal body weight. Ultimately, the choice to lose or gain weight is the wrestler's - not the coach's. Weight control is a part of wrestling, but it is virtually non-existent at the youth level and only occurs within state standards at the high school and collegiate levels. Wrestlers that choose to cut weight learn how to effectively manage their weight and learn the life lesson that their weight is a matter of self-discipline rather than a condition bestowed upon them over which they have no control. Managing one's weight while enduring the rigors of practice and competition is arguably the most difficult of all sports endeavors requiring an incredible amount of self-discipline and resilience. Such challenges build character and mental toughness that last a lifetime. Wrestling is not without the exception of the few that find ways around the system and take weight loss to unhealthy levels. The occurrence of steroid use among Major League Baseball players is a more widespread problem, but it does not deter parents from signing their children up for little league.

Parents concerned about weight loss should know that state associations (Wisconsin Wrestling Federation) require that wrestlers are checked for proper hydration and minimum body fat standards prior to the start of the season. This event is known as "skin fold night". Wrestlers not meeting safe standards - are disqualified for the entire season and those that pass the initial screening are restricted from competing at weights that would violate hydration and body fat safety restrictions. State approved athletic trainers using scientifically proven specific gravity, skin fold tests conduct testing, and there is an extensive amount of research supporting the decisions state associations make regarding weight loss guidelines.

From the WIAA Wrestling Regulations

Schools are required to follow the provisions of the weight certification program established by the Association for all wrestlers in Grades 9-12. The establishment of a minimum wrestling weight based on 7% body fat for males and 12% for females will be mandatory for all senior high school wrestlers. The WIAA does not advocate that a wrestler's established minimum weight is the athlete's best weight, but simply the minimum weight at which the athlete will be allowed to compete. Weight Loss per Week: (a) A weight loss limit of one-half pound per day has been set. The projected earliest date to wrestle at the predicted minimum will be broken down into days. This date will appear on the printout received from the WIAA minimum weight program. (b) A wrestler will not be allowed to wrestle at any time in a weight class that would require them to lose more than one-half pound per day from the original date of measurement or from one weigh-in (for competition) to another when they are changing weight classes. Coaches must be able to provide documentation of appropriate weight loss anytime a wrestler drops to a lower weight class (minimum of last two weigh-in sheets).