

The types of events that USC youth wrestlers attend are:

- Hosted Practice/Scrimmage
- Exhibition Matches
- Duals Matches
- Tournaments (Novice vs. Open)
- Request for parent assistance
- A little coaching philosophy

### **Hosted Practice/Scrimmage**

The most “low-pressure” type of event. It might be for both novice and experienced wrestlers or for novice wrestlers only. In this event, several schools will attend, and the boys will be matched up in groups with wrestlers from other schools. They'll drill some technique in a practice setting, then they'll wrestle "live" from each of the starting positions. Although we do some live wrestling in practice, this will be slightly more intense and will give the boys a feeling for wrestling an opponent they don't already know.

### **Exhibition Matches**

In this event, several schools will attend, and each wrestler will be matched up against opponents that are the same age, weight, and level of experience. The format is typically for both novice and experienced wrestlers, but might be limited to novice only. These are real matches in a wrestling circle with standard wrestling periods and they are officiated by referees. There is a scoring table and clock, and a winner of the match is declared. There is no advancement or team score. Each wrestler simply wrestles his or her match and the results are discarded. The purpose is solely for the wrestler to gain experience in a real wrestling match. The events are typically an entire Saturday or Sunday afternoon, and each wrestler will have two or three matches during that time. Match numbers and order are scheduled in advance so parents can determine exactly when their child will wrestle his or her matches. Typically, the host school will charge an entry fee, and will offer a full line of concessions.

### **Duals Matches**

In this type of team event, our team will wrestle another school team. A team is comprised of one wrestler at a roster weight, i.e., one wrestler at 50 lbs, one wrestler at 55 lbs, etc. A team score is accumulated based on the results of each match, and a team is declared a winner based on the total score of all matches. This type of event is primarily for experienced wrestlers, though sometimes novice wrestlers are rostered at the lightest weights if their opponents are also inexperienced or ‘older’ 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade wrestlers are rostered given their maturity. Wrestlers

will compete at each weight with regard to weight only, and age and experience are not taken into account. Coaches will determine the eligibility of each wrestler to participate on the team and will advise wrestlers and parents as to their participation. A younger or less experienced wrestler would not be asked to participate in this type of event solely to protect the wrestler since a match against an older and/or more experienced wrestler would result in a less-than-desirable outcome for the younger wrestler.

USC also hosts an annual tournament on Super Bowl Sunday. This invitational tournament is attended by some of the more competitive teams in the area and is an event that features teams wrestling brackets or pools to establish place winners.

## **Tournaments**

Throughout the year, different schools will host tournaments for individual wrestlers. These types of events are the most competitive available for individual wrestlers and are at the discretion of each parent and wrestler, though we encourage everyone to attend as tournaments offer invaluable opportunities to gain experience. The coaches will identify tournaments for which the team will “sponsor,” that is, tournaments for which we’ll provide coaching for anyone that chooses to register. A tournament consists of matches similar to the exhibition matches described above, however, each wrestler will register individually and will be bracketed according to his or her age and weight. For age, a wrestler will be placed into a bracket of wrestlers of the same age or within one year of themselves, i.e., 7 and 8 year olds in one bracket, 9 and 10 year olds in another separate bracket. For weight, a wrestler will be placed in a bracket of wrestlers that are close in weight, i.e., 51-55 pounds in one bracket, 56-60 pounds in another separate bracket. Taking both into account, and as examples, a wrestler will be placed in a bracket of 7-8 year olds at 55 pounds or a bracket of 7-8 year olds at 60 pounds and so on. There are typically many brackets in a single tournament.

Tournament officials will keep track of the results and advance wrestlers in brackets. Wrestlers will advance with wins and will be eliminated with losses. Each bracket will advance to establish the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> place contestants. Each tournament will provide awards (trophies, medals, etc.) for the place-winners. These tournaments require a separate and formal registration form and fee, and require declaration of the age and weight bracket in which the wrestler will compete. Wrestlers will be required to weigh-in on a scale to verify they are at or below their registered weight. Registration is typically a week or so before the event, and weigh-ins are typically offered both the night before and the morning of the event. Also similar to exhibition matches, these types of events will typically occupy an entire morning or afternoon, or both in the case of a large tournament.

It’s **IMPORTANT TO NOTE** as you read this to know that pretty much every tournament is double elimination. That is, a wrestler has to lose two matches before being eliminated.

Therefore, do not leave the tournament if your wrestler has lost only one match. The brackets work such that as long as a wrestler continues to win matches, he or she will advance all the way to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place match. If a wrestler loses, he or she is placed in a “consolation” bracket where they can continue to win matches all the way up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place match. If a wrestler loses two matches before advanced to either of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place matches, then he or she is eliminated from the tournament.

Novice tournaments are limited to lesser experienced wrestlers, but can take different forms. For example, a standard novice tournament will be open to wrestlers that are in their first or second year of experience, and will be bracketed according to even ages (6 and under, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12). In some cases, however, the tournament is limited to only wrestlers in their first year. In some cases, the tournament is an “odd age” tournament where wrestlers are bracketed according to odd ages (5 and under, 6-7, 8-9, 10-11).

Open tournaments are similar, with the only difference that participants are not restricted to be in their first or second year of experience.

### **Request for Parent Assistance**

A few notes on how parents can really help out:

- For scrimmages and exhibitions, our coaches will spend a lot of time with coaches from other teams creating matches that are as close to “even” as we can possibly create. This is a big time investment when you consider four or five schools with 40+ kids on each roster. Before attending scrimmages and exhibitions, I’ll send a request to ask if your wrestler will attend the event. It helps exponentially if you reply whether your wrestler will or will not attend. Here’s why it’s important: if we schedule matches for your wrestler and he ends up not attending, it cancels two or three matches for kids from other teams. In that case, we have to get back together in a coaches meeting and create new matches for those two or three kids. It takes a lot of time, and sometimes a kid ends up not getting another match so he spends an entire afternoon at the school and gets to wrestle only once or maybe not at all. This, of course, goes both ways and sometimes one of our kids only gets a match or none as a result of others not showing. You can imagine how this gets compounded if we have five kids that don’t show, and compounded again if other teams have multiple kids that don’t show. With that, it’s inevitable that you’ll say you’re coming to an event and your son comes up sick that day or the night before. This is completely understandable and do not hesitate to hold him out if he’s not feeling well. We always expect to have a wrestler or two that has to change their plans, and will accommodate it.

- Talk to the coaches. I have a little dissertation about winning and losing in the philosophy section below, but it's very difficult for any of the coaches to individually track any of the kids. We're bouncing around four or more mats on any given event. We do pay a lot of attention as to what's happening overall. Where our kids are struggling in certain situations, and what types of technique we're failing to use properly or what types of technique we need to teach them to defend against. This is a huge part of our practice planning, but we don't always see when an individual has lost his 6<sup>th</sup> match in a row over three weeks. You, as a parent, however, watch every one of your wrestler's matches. If he's struggling, please let us know. We can make adjustments in our match planning to help him achieve some more success. We can't control matches in tournaments, but we do have some ability to control exhibition matches. Conversely, if your little warrior is destroying all of his opponents, we'd also like to know that as it will be to his benefit for us to schedule a little tougher competition.
- We host a few events every year, the largest of which is our Super Bowl tournament. We need A LOT of help to put on events like these. We need people to help move wrestling mats and set up clocks and tables. We need people to work concessions stands. We need people to work tables to keep time and score matches (no experience necessary, we'll teach you, and it's kind of valuable to know how to score a match if your son will be around a few years). As these events approach, I'll ask for volunteers, but please know how much of a benefit your time provides and if everyone gives an hour or two, then nobody has to shoulder a big burden for any kind of event.

### **A Little Coaching Philosophy**

Of course, there are lots of coaching philosophies in wrestling, but I want to highlight one in particular that might or might not be a surprise: we actually don't want your kid to win every match he wrestles. In fact, if he ends up at about 0.500 with an equal number of wins and losses, then he has had the exact year we'd like for him.

Wins are important to build self-esteem and to successfully use and further develop the technique they've been taught. Losses, however, are probably more important than wins in a young wrestler's career. In the sport of wrestling, the kids actually learn more by losing than they do by winning. They gain an understanding of where they might have gone wrong applying certain technique or gain an appreciation for certain technique as it's applied on them. Maybe they come up against someone that's extremely talented and they see what they need to aspire to if they want to be very good at the sport. There are a lot of other "good" things that come from losses in wrestling.

Our ultimate goal is not to see your son thrash all his competition in youth wrestling. In fact, there's example after example of kids that were phenomenal youth wrestlers that faded out. Nobody, including college recruiters, ever walked up to a high school senior and asked him what his youth record was or how many tournaments he won as an 8-year-old.

Our ultimate goal is for your son to appreciate wrestling and choose to continue it into high school and, if he's talented enough, beyond that. Our other goals for your son include some of the benefits that wrestling provides: physical strength and conditioning; dexterity, balance, body awareness, and athletic positioning that benefits any other sport he participates in; and, the discipline, endurance, self-confidence, self-reliance, work ethic, and perseverance that the sport builds.

Wrestling is also an extraordinarily emotional sport. It is so for the competitors and it is so for most parents as you're watching your youngster compete. It's never fun to lose, and the coaches try very hard to work with kids after matches as necessary, as well as discuss the match and possibly what the wrestler could have done differently or to just try to console the athlete. And sometimes they just want to be left alone, which is also understandable.

We want them to do well and get their awards as they earn them and experience the thrill of the victory, but we also want them to develop, and we want to realize our ultimate goal to continue in the sport.