



# Bulkley Valley Wrestling Club (BVWC)

## Parent's Guide to Wrestling:

Wrestling is perhaps the purest form of athletic competition to exist in the realm of organized sports. There are no bats or balls, or pucks or sticks. No pads or helmets or jerseys. There's no time to rethink strategy, regroup, or even to catch your breath. There's only you, and your opponent of equal weight and size. Experience, preparation and the will to succeed will determine the victor. There's no doubt about it, wrestling tops the list of intense, highly competitive sports. Wrestling involves a unique balance of practically every aspect of physical and psychological conditioning. Strength is as important as stamina. Speed as technique, strategy as intensity, and power as is coordination. However, it's not always the natural athlete that ultimately succeeds in the sport - it's the natural competitor.

Kids that are strong for their weight, well coordinated and naturally aggressive are usually more successful early on in the sport. However, it's the highly competitive kids that really enjoy the sport that eventually achieve the highest levels of success. True competitors come in all shapes and sizes, and in varying degrees of natural talent. Many of the best wrestlers the world has ever seen, such as John Smith, Dan Gable and Dave Schultz were not star athletes. They were ordinary people with an extraordinary competitive drive. Gifted athletes, especially those that are strong and well coordinated, typically do well and take an early liking to the sport. Some kids that thrive on competition with only average or below average natural ability, often surprise parents and coaches by eventually surpassing the more gifted kids through their hard work and preparation. Although it is wise for parents and coaches to de-emphasize winning, victories can be extremely gratifying because of the strong sense of personal accomplishment that comes with them. The effort put forth in practice and preparation is apparent in competition. This aspect of wrestling can be a great motivator and teacher and can develop a person's work ethic, self-confidence, and ability to achieve in all areas of life. Wrestling is great for bringing out and exposing the competitor and "champion" within almost any kid.

**How does wrestling compare with team sports?** Wrestling is considered an individual sport, but includes many of the benefits of team sports. Wrestling differs from most team sports in that during competition, athletes must rely entirely on their own individual abilities for success. Those that dedicate the time and effort will eventually achieve at a level directly proportionate to the



investment they have made - even if their teammates prepare and perform at a different level. Similarities with team sports exist in that teammates still depend on each other during team competitions. Team victories in meets and tournaments are determined by the number of individual victories, and the extent to which each match was won or lost. Wrestlers also develop an appreciation and respect for teammates that have been through the same challenges, and a strong sense of belonging and camaraderie with teammates and other wrestlers. Other team sports may be better for developing interactive player-to-player skills such as passing and blocking, but wrestling can offer benefits that other team sports lack. The individual nature of the sport provides an outstanding opportunity for young athletes to develop a sense of responsibility and self esteem while learning the relationship between effort and achievement.

**What physical effects can the sport of wrestling have on children?** Sports offer opportunities for children to improve their strength, flexibility and coordination, while having fun. Most sports activities rely more on some muscle groups and less on others. For example, most sports focus primarily on pushing motions (leg/arm extension) such as throwing, hitting, kicking, jumping and running.

Experts believe that unilateral physical development, (equal emphasis on all muscle groups), is especially important in young athletes. Isolated development at an early age, over a long period, increases the risk of injury and limits long-term foundational growth. Swimming, gymnastics and wrestling are among the few sports that engage both pulling and pushing muscle groups.

Of all the sports choices a parent and child can make, wrestling is perhaps the best sport for overall physical development because it involves all muscle groups, and requires the greatest balance of athletic skill. In other words, wrestling does more to improve the basics such as strength, balance, speed, agility and intensity and is not as specialized as most other common sports.

**Does wrestling teach or promote aggressive or violent behavior?** Aggressiveness? Yes. Violence? No. Wrestling is often referred to as the toughest sport out there and in many ways it is, but it is certainly not violent, nor does it lead to unruly or destructive behavior. One of the factors that make wrestling so different from most other sports is that wrestling involves head-to-head competition. Each wrestler's efforts work in direct opposition from their competitor as in a tug-of-war contest. Success in wrestling requires the



ability to attack, as well as the ability to stop your opponent's attack. The same factors apply with boxing and martial arts, but an attack in wrestling is nonviolent. Wrestling does not permit opponents to strike one another, and imposes strict penalties or disqualification for violent behavior. In essence, wrestling is unique in the fact that it can be very aggressive without being violent. The objective is not to destroy, or harm one's opponent, but to out-manuever them and to gain control.

The intensity with which wrestlers compete increases with age and experience. Kid's wrestling, especially the younger age groups, are not nearly as intense as high school or college wrestling. It's common for new wrestlers to feel somewhat intimidated at first, not knowing how they compare with other wrestlers, but that is soon overcome. Wrestling, perhaps more than any other sport, is great for building confidence while retaining a healthy dose of humility. The long-term result is that it develops the champion from within, and leads to greater success both on and off the mat, and does not turn kids into bullies or thugs.

**Is wrestling a "dangerous" sport?** There is a common misperception among the non-wrestling public that wrestling is a very dangerous sport. Perhaps it's the aggressive nature of the sport, association with "Pro Wrestling", or perhaps fear of the unknown. Several studies have been conducted in recent years that show wrestling to be safer than many more common sports including football, ice hockey and gymnastics. Most notable in these reports, is wrestling's low percentage of serious, permanent and life-threatening injury in relation to other sports. A quote from USA Wrestling Club Organizing Guide has the following to say about Risk of Injury:

"Wrestling is a contact sport and injuries will occur. As would be expected, wrestling has more injuries than tennis and swimming, but most wrestling injuries are minor, consisting of sprains and strains. Wrestling has fewer serious injuries than football, basketball or ice hockey. There is a lesser chance of getting seriously hurt when wrestling than when riding in a car, skateboarding or riding a dirt bike. Safety factors that are a part of and unique to wrestling include:

- o Strict Rules & Regulations
- o Provincial and Nationally Certified Officials
- o The high ratio of officials to athletes (one for every two)
- o Greater strength and flexibility as a result of more emphasis on practice and preparation



- o Competitors are matched by age and weight

Perhaps the most notable difference with respect to the risk of injury is the lack of high-impact collision that occurs in most other common sports. Wrestlers do collide, but never at great momentum or speeds as can happen with sports that involve running such as football, baseball, soccer, hockey and basketball. Also, overuse injuries from highly repetitive motions such as pitching are virtually non-existent in youth wrestling because of the variety of movement and there is no risk of injury from hard objects such as bats, sticks, balls or pucks. On the other hand, wrestlers are more susceptible to some communicable skin infections such as ringworm, but these incidents are not frequent and can be prevented with the proper precautions, such as washing the mat and showering after practice.

Wrestling injuries can and do occur, but are more of a factor at the collegiate and international levels where match intensity is much higher. Most injuries occur during periods of horseplay or unsupervised activities such as before or after practice or competition. Parents and coaches can reduce this risk through proper planning and preparation.

**Can wrestling have an effect on character development?** Success factors in sports, or anything for that matter, are part God-given (i.e. height and size) and part acquired (i.e. endurance and skill development through hard work). Success in wrestling depends most on acquired factors and unlike most other sports, wrestling does not favor athletes of any particular height, size, weight, muscle type, race or social class, and does not rely on superior vision or hearing.

Wrestlers learn, by the nature of the sport, that long-term success has much more to do with the investment made than the "natural" gifts one is given. Wrestlers learn the value of preparation and hard work, and the role it plays in achieving one's goals. Wrestling provides real-life experiences that build and strengthen the following character traits:

- o Self Reliance
- o Mental Toughness
- o Work Ethic
- o Competitive Spirit
- o Responsibility
- o Self Discipline
- o Goal Orientation
- o Confidence



In order to keep this in perspective, one must realize that character development is a slow process driven by a variety of positive and negative influences with varying degrees of impact. Sports can play a significant role in character development and wrestling will help to develop character. It requires commitment and hard work, self mastery, mental toughness and at one time or another every athlete loses in front of their friends and family resulting in humility and empathy.

**Is wrestling an effective form of self-defense?** Who would win in a fight between a world-class boxer and a black belt kung-fu expert? How about an NFL linebacker versus a world-renowned jiu-jitsu champion? Opinions vary widely, but the truth of the matter is that each sport, or self-defense discipline, offers its own unique advantages that become more or less important depending on the situation. For example, boxing skills are quite valuable in a fistfight, but are practically useless if attacked from behind. Most fight situations begin as a fistfight, but end up on the ground in a grappling contest with the better wrestler being the victor.

Grappling, or wrestling skills, are actually more important in most self-defense situations, than the ability to punch or kick. Over the last 25 years, the sport of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) has proven the validity and importance of wrestling over and over again. It is a common understanding that those MMA athletes with a solid wrestling base are the toughest, most well prepared and successful MMA fighters in the world and the majority of champions will have wrestling as their base martial art. As Joe Rogan has said 1000 times "Wrestling is absolutely the best base for mixed martial arts".

Wrestling is a great way to build confidence and the ability to defend oneself without resorting to the violent tactics inherent in most other forms of self-defense. Wrestling skills are an enormous asset in a schoolyard brawl or even a street fight.

**Please feel free to contact us with any further questions you may have in helping to understand the amazing sport of wrestling.**