

So, you want to run a League tournament? Well, you can make some money on a Saturday, but the real reason you want to host this tournament is to do your part in giving your people a good, safe, organized experience.

Make sure you are doing this for the right reasons, but, keep in mind that no matter how well your tournament runs, you should be prepared for criticism along with pats on the back.

Northwest Junior Collegiate Wrestling Association tournaments are for League members only. A USA Tournament Sanction, specifying that this is an "Invitational tournament only", is necessary. This must be done months in advance through the THEMAT.COM (fee). USA cards are required to wrestle.

School involvement is fundamental. Secure your date WELL in advance. Notify and enlist your Wrestling Coach and High School team if necessary. Look for scheduling conflicts with other school activities like plays, sports, festivals, or near-by community or area events. Communication before your event makes for a more successful event.

League Tournaments are free and use a 3-card system: White-beginners, yellow-intermediate, blue-advanced. Wrestlers will weigh in at their own practices and come ready to wrestle. They will be grouped into three to six man brackets for optimal wrestling experience.

TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR

Usually, the tournament director is the president of the local club, but it doesn't matter. The TD must know the wrestling league and facility rules, and must be AT the tournament from beginning to end and be accessible for problems. A distinctive shirt, or one that reads "Tournament Director" might help.

FACILITY

If your tournament is the only game in the area, it must be large enough to hold 400+ kids, their parents, coaches, and siblings. You can get by with a smaller gym if there is an open tournament nearby. 8-10 mats are usually needed, either singles, or large mats divided into quarters.

You will need a separate room or area for a bracket room, a scale for challenges, and a staging area, preferably away from the wrestling gym. If you want to make some money, a concession stand is a must.

FIRST AID

You should notify the local fire department that you are hosting a tournament. Ice should be available with zip lock bags. After that, clubs are responsible for providing their own medical supplies. Some High Schools have Sports medicine classes and they may be able to send a couple volunteers to man the "owies".

BRACKET ROOM

Probably the most important part of a wrestling tournament, here is the place where you will need your parents as volunteers. You should have a minimum of 8 people in the bracket room at 8:50.

You will need about 50 4-man bracket sheets for each age group (15 for PeeWee), 20 3-man bracket sheets, and 5 5-man bracket sheets for each age group. It is helpful for sorting if your bracket sheets for each age are a different color. Orange-PeeWee, Pink-Bantam, Blue-Midget, White-Novice, Green-Schoolkid, Yellow-Cadet, and Lavender if you have Juniors. You may have your 5-man brackets a different color all together, but that is your choice. Please have on hand several dozen sharp pencils, paper clips or a couple staplers, and some rubber bands for the sorted cards at the end of the tournament.

You will need tables marked off with fairly good size signs "Peewee, Bantam, Intermediate, Novice, Schoolkid, and Cadet". Include the current two-year age range on the appropriate sign. These tables are for all the cards which should be turned in by the coaches 1 hour prior to start time. The cards should be arranged on the table by weight, and color, within each age group. CHECK YEAR OF BIRTH NOW. HAVE SOMEONE ELSE CHECK AGAIN. This eliminates a huge number of problems.

One hour before start time, bracket room help will sort the cards into 4-6man groups (depending on bracket size being used) by age, weight, and experience as criteria. Remember, no blue card may wrestle a white card, and the weight, top to bottom must be limited to 5 pounds. Exceptions may be made with the approval of all coaches involved. Sign the back of the wrestler's card indicating coach approval. If, for the sake of obtaining matches, a wrestler is MOVED UP a weight (NEVER down), remember to notify the parents and wrestler. This also eliminates a huge number of problems.

After you have grouped the cards by age, experience, and weight, paper-clip them together and write the weight range on the back. This makes it easy to find weight groups when problems or additions arise. After the cards are grouped they should be given to the writers. Write PeeWees and Bantams, AND 5 MAN brackets first, as they are the first groups to wrestle. Avoid 5-man brackets as much as possible (If you are using the 4 man brackets can you get 3 3-man brackets instead?) Hopefully, the writers have seen the bracket sheets before hand and are familiar with them. Instruct your writers to be sure the age group is correct and that the WEIGHT AND CARD COLOR(s) are written at the top of the page.

As the brackets are filled in, they can be stacked and sorted by weight, lightest to heaviest. Once the age group is completely written, number each bracket 1 through #? and record this number. Be sure to include your 5-man brackets in your count, if you have any. Count your sets of cards. The number of bracket sheets and the number of sets of cards should match! If not, you may have forgotten to write a bracket or you may have misplaced a set of cards onto another table. Find the problem now before wrestling starts. Keep the cards on their appropriate table in their groups until after the first round is complete.

STAGING

The staging room should be a quiet place, able to accommodate 150 people. As an age group is called, have the kids form a rough weight line. Parents should be QUIET, or absent. The reader should call the wrestlers names from each bracket and write this number on the back of their hand with a sharpie. This will be their bracket number throughout the tournament (barring problems later on). As the wrestlers are bracketed, send them to the mats to wrestle. The first round is the toughest because there are always wrestlers that didn't get called. Be patient with them. Either their coach didn't know they were there, or they didn't hear their name. It will take some leg work, but try to get everyone taken care of. Send the wrestlers, WITH THEIR COACH, to the bracket room.

At the beginning of the day, the ONE person assigning mats should send 2 matches to each mat. DO THIS ONLY ONCE. Thereafter, send only ONE match to each mat so the mats have one match wrestling and one match on deck. Develop some sort of signaling system between your tables and the person assigning mats. (flags, balloons, walkie-talkies, whatever).

Some clubs stage wrestlers for the next two rounds by having numbers on the wall above head height. Wrestlers will gather under the number corresponding to the bracket number on their hand. Send them to the mat ONLY if all wrestlers are present. If you have lost a bracket sheet but you have wrestlers in front of you, ask them if they have the bracket. If not, it may have made it's way back to the bracket room OR it may still be out on a table somewhere.

THE GYM

A loudspeaker or microphone is necessary. A parent could man this station and a loud, clear voice is helpful. Everything will need to be repeated, once to gain attention and twice for the message to get through. A rendition of the national anthem is a nice touch. Mats should be laid out in a logical manner with mat numbers visible from both sides of the gym. A waste basket, paper towels, rubber gloves and disinfectant should be available at each table. Score cards and time clocks should be provided by each club.

PUT GARBAGE CANS OUT EVERYWHERE!!!

REFEREES

Each club could provide one referee, but the local high school team is by far the most reliable source of good referees. You may do it either way, or some combination, whichever you think is best. If you will be using parent volunteers for referees, be sure the clubs know this before the tournament so they can recruit volunteers.

TABLE HELP

Each club should provide table help. Two people per table works best. Clubs should be able to provide backup volunteers for their tables also. A quick review for table help on scoring is helpful but not necessary. Also, a scoring signals sheet taped to the score table is helpful.

CONCESSIONS

You can earn \$500-\$1000 on any Saturday depending on the size of your tournament. Be sure that any businesses that donate are given credit on your signs. Keep track of what you sell for next year. Please don't mark things up out of sight. You will need 2-3 people at the concession stand, as it's a very busy place.

SIGNS

Signs should be made for EVERYTHING!! Bathrooms, staging, bracket room, staging wall numbers, mat numbers, concessions (items and prices), etc.

AT THE END OF THE DAY

Our League Tournaments are for the benefit of our wrestlers. They are NOT national championships. We depend on the honor system for these tournaments to work. Weigh your wrestlers more than once throughout the season so there cards reflect accurate weights. Do not sandbag. White is inexperience, losing most matches each tournament, blue cards are experience kids who win most matches each tournament. At some point, your blue card wrestlers need to move up to Open tournaments!