

Match-side Etiquette for Wrestler's Parents



Watching your child compete in wrestling is different from most other sports because of the inherent physical nature of competition. Furthermore, there is typically a lot of commotion going on during a wrestling match, which makes for an intense atmosphere that a parent simply may not be used to. This guide will give you a glimpse of what to expect at a

competitive wrestling match, and how you fit into the equation as a wrestler's parent or guardian.

Calm is Key

It's perfectly acceptable — and encouraged — to get psyched up about your child's performance. However, some parents have a tendency to become too intense, or even aggressive, while watching their child fight it out on the mat. Although it may be a bit nerve-racking, it's always best to remain as calm as possible while watching your child wrestle.

The most important reason for this is that your child may become influenced by your energy. Being overly excited or aggressive could have a negative effect on some wrestlers, causing them to become overexcited and lose focus. Keep your child in mind whenever you cheer, shout, boo, etc. If you think that any of your actions could possibly have a negative effect on his wrestling or his person, its best if you simply don't do them.

It's a good idea to talk to your child and see how he feels about how you carry yourself at his competitions. Maybe he wants you to cheer more, or perhaps less. Either way, creating this dialogue is invaluable. At the end of the day, it's all about your child and his needs. Lastly, understand that for your child, simply knowing that you are *at the event* is encouraging and supportive in itself.

Don't Sweat Injuries

Watching your child sustain an injury is not easy, to say the least. This is generally when a

wrestling parent feels most helpless. However, knowing that most injuries in wrestling are very minor should ease your mind. Don't worry if your child gets a bloody nose or a black eye; he stepped onto the mat by himself, which means he can deal with these issues on his own.

In the case of major injuries, which are obviously the scariest for parents, it's perfectly acceptable to join your child on the mat if he is immobile. It's your job to make sure he is safe and to support him. However, you are limited to what you can do in these situations. Do your best to remain calm and don't get in the way of his medical treatment. Again, here is where your demeanor is critical: Your child will feed off of the energy that you put out.

Be a Parent, Not a Coach

Your role as a wrestling parent is to do what you can to support your wrestler and help him succeed. If you are a parent with some wrestling experience, this may involve working with your child and teaching him techniques, strategies, etc. However, at a wrestling competition, unless you're sitting mat-side in the coach's chair, you shouldn't coach no matter what your level of experience is.

Hot Tip: The Referee's Responsibility

In wrestling, the referee's primary responsibility is to ensure that the wrestlers are kept safe and free of dangerous holds and positions. Although accidents do happen, knowing that the referee is specifically keeping your child's safety in mind during the match should calm your nerves.

The main issue with this involves shouting specific techniques or commands at your child. Wrestling competitions are notoriously loud, and of the many voices your child hears through his headgear, he may choose to listen to the one shouting an incorrect technique or action. Cheering for your child is great and obviously encouraged, but let the coach make the calls and advise him what to do; he knows your child's wrestling the best.

An incident may arise where a referee makes a bad call, or where your child is put in a dangerous position. Although these situations are displeasing for a parent to watch, do not ever approach the mat to argue with a referee, coach, or anyone else. Let your child's coach handle any wrestling-related situation.

Know Your Place

Generally speaking, the best place for you to locate yourself at a wrestling match is in the bleachers. You will have a good view of your child's match and you'll be able to stay out of the way of the chaos on the gym floor. In most cases, it is perfectly acceptable for you to

want to root for your child from the side of the mat. However, do understand that some competitions have specific rules against individuals other than coaches being on or around the mat(s); so be prepared for this.

Hot Tip: Mat-side Etiquette

If you would like to videotape your child, ask the coach if it would be possible to sit or kneel beside him on the coach's corner. If you are allowed to remain mat-side, be courteous of the individuals around you and sit or kneel.

competitions are filled with positive energy.

As a parent, you should act in a similar fashion, treating your child's competitors and their parents with utmost respect. Most experienced wrestlers will tell you that their sport produces an extremely tight-knit group of individuals that often transcend even the most heated rivalries — so you also have to realize that it's *just* a match.

Some parents take their child's wrestling far too seriously and bring a selfish aura of competitiveness upon themselves. It is not uncommon to see or hear a parent yelling at a referee, coach, another parent, or even their own child. It's best to stay away from these individuals and avoid all potential conflicts with them. Remember, at the end of the day, all that matters is that your child is enjoying himself at his competition — not if he wins or loses.

Enjoy the Experience

You should now have a better understanding of how you fit into the world of competitive wrestling. After becoming more familiar with the sport, you will quickly see how the suggestions in this guide come into play. Generally speaking, though, if you keep your child and his wrestling in mind, you can't go wrong. At the end of the day, your job is to simply support and enjoy your child's participation in the sport — all else is irrelevant.

Healthy Competition

Wrestling is an intense sport, and rivalries and matches can get heated at times. But at the root of it all, wrestling is healthy competition. Despite all wrestlers being extremely driven to win, there is still a great amount of respect between competitors. Most of the time,