

What to expect as a first-time wrestling parent

An Editorial

I am a first-time wrestling parent. Both of my kids - one in kindergarten and one in first grade - joined the team together. During the first match, when the referees yelled “Time!” I didn’t even know that my kids were wrestling three, 1-minute periods for each of the 2 to 4 opponents they would have in the match that day. I wasn’t alone. Like other first-time parents, we learned as we went along.

Although my husband has high school and college wrestling experience, he is still a first-time wrestling parent. I did not have experience with wrestling at all. So, some things came as a surprise to

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me as a parent. So, I just want to share some of our personal experiences and thoughts for other parents whose kids want to begin wrestling with the Ewing Recreational Wrestling team.

Being aware of a few things will help you and your child have a great experience for your first few matches. First of all, the day of a match can be long. It takes a long time to get every child out there on the mat a few times. Second, wrestling is both a team sport and an individual sport. Supporting your team will make the day more fun as you wait for your child to be up. Third: it can be intense. There may be a lot of emotions on match day. And finally, be aware that parents need to help out in this league. Especially during home matches, parents are needed to help with scoring, running the matches, and running the concession stands.

I was all for it

My kids love to play wrestling at home. They truly like the contact element and the high energy level of this activity. So when the flyer came home for registration, the kids showed interest in joining the team. I thought to myself - exercise during the winter with a group of other kids along with learning techniques from skilled coaches - I was all in.

We started wrestling practice in December, and it totally delivers. The kids look forward to each practice. They run hard, they meet new friends, they learn techniques to take down an opponent, and they learn one move at a time with interest. They also get to play a game during the last 5 to 10 minutes of the one-and-a-half-hour practices, which all the kids seem to love. The coaches also encourage the kids to focus on homework, and talk to the kids about having team spirit and sportsmanship.



It takes a lot of organization. Bout numbers and mat numbers may be written on the kids’ hands.

The first match

Be aware that parents are expected to purchase headgear and wrestling shoes, but the program provides the singlets, sweatshirts, and shorts to wear to the match with a collected deposit. And even though we had only had a few weeks of practice with a winter break in between, we headed out for our first match early one Saturday morning.

When we arrived, the gym was packed with kids from three other teams all eager to get their chance. We quickly realized that there are so many more things for our kids to learn. They had only just started learning moves, but that is to be expected in the beginning. The kids are matched to skill level, age, and size.

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It was an intense long day. Each kid had about four matches; we were all there for about five to six hours. It was nothing like the Rec basketball games I had been to for my nephews: Tip-off was at 10 a.m., you watched the game with your kids playing the whole time, and it was over within an hour - just in time to go to lunch. This was nothing like that.

In wrestling, the kids all need to be assigned bout numbers, they need to be weighed in, and they need to have their nails checked. Once it finally started, it was still only three matches at a time across the gym with one or two hundred to go.

This is where it is best to have a team spirit. Your child may not be up, but when another child on your team is on the mat, you need to be there for that child too in his or her individual match. That is the child that practices with your child and helps



make your child a better wrestler. Try not to go in with the attitude that you are sitting there all day to only see your child wrestle for a few minutes. You are there for the whole team just as your child needs to support and watch his teammates. Your child's teammates are the ones that will help him or her when they get back into the practice room with the coaches. It also makes the day more fun during the times your child is not wrestling. Bring water and snacks and plan to support the home team with their concessions to enjoy the four, five, or six hours that you may be at the gym that day.

Intense day, intense excitement

Kids will cry at times. It happens mostly when the kids really care and really want to win. They are putting themselves out on the mat alone with an opponent in front of a big crowd. So, this is the individual part of the sport. It is intense. The good thing is that I feel I can see the kids getting stronger and better able to handle this type of pressure as the matches go on. Expect it to be intense at times, and watch the kids learn to handle the ups and downs involved in the individual aspect of the sport.

As a recreational team, parents are needed to help. Don't be afraid to learn the scoring and the timing. The faster you learn it, the more you can help your kids.

On the way home from our first match, my 5-year-old asked, "Why did I get my hand raised in the air?" My husband and I said, "Because you won that match." Her eyes got real big and twinkly and she said, "I want to get my hand raised again!"



It takes a while for the kids to understand how they are scored, and when to even use the moves they are learning in practice. But the more my kids and I learn, the more we are excited to continue, and the more we all enjoy it. We hope you do, too.