



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

SEASON 7: 2023-2024

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is WWS?

The Winter Wrestling Series (WWS) is a series of 8 youth wrestling events during the winter (December-February) managed by Top of the Podium. Events are held at two primary locations in Virginia (Meridian High School in Falls Church, and Manassas Baptist Church campus). In addition to providing boys and girls the opportunity to compete, we take steps to help them have a great time, learn about and fall in love with the sport, and develop as wrestlers.

Who is eligible to compete?

WWS is for boys and girls primarily from ages 5-14. Athletes on high school wrestling teams are not allowed to participate.

How does a wrestler or team sign up?

The majority of WWS participants have Season Passes, making it their primary “league” for the season. For the 2023-2024 season, we are expecting close to one thousand Season Pass holders. Wrestlers without a Season Pass can sign up for tournaments but will be placed on our Wait List because many of our events sell out (and we need to ensure that Season Pass holders are accepted).

What is the experience level of the wrestlers?

WWS has large numbers of beginner, novice and intermediate-level wrestlers.

Does every event follow the same format like other youth leagues?

No way. We incorporate different formats to improve the wrestler’s overall experience (e.g., Rapid Wrestling, Takedown Tournament, WrestleQuest). We also begin each event with a “This Week in Wrestling” presentation (to help wrestlers and families follow the sport), give different types of awards for wrestlers to collect, and much more. We want to avoid the typical grind of wrestling season so kids are excited to attend each week.

BRACKETS

What types of brackets are used?

We use a variety of bracket types based on the circumstances. This includes traditional advancement, round robin, modified round robin, and round robin pools. All these options are included in an explanatory video on the TOP web site.

Are there fixed weight classes?

WWS uses the “Madison System” which groups wrestlers of similar weight together when forming brackets. Athletes do not have to “make weight” as there are no fixed weight classes. Ideally, opponents are within 5 percent of each other’s weight (our maximum differential is 10 percent). Exceptions must be approved by staff (based on knowledge of the wrestlers), usually with input and approval from coaches or parents/guardians.

Are there weigh-ins at each event?

Yes. However, when registering online, parents/guardians are responsible for providing TOP with accurate weights because we set up brackets in advance. The weigh-in is a final check to make sure there are no surprises.

What about age groups?

USA Wrestling has established two-year age windows for official tournaments. We use a similar approach (wrestlers must be born within 24 months of each other), and we try to keep the differential within one year whenever possible. This approach (rather than rigid DOB groups) gives us more flexibility in arranging quality matches. Exceptions must be approved by staff (based on knowledge of the wrestlers), often with input and approval from coaches or parents/guardians.

Will beginners compete against experienced wrestlers?

In general, we group wrestlers into a “rookie” division (first year wrestlers) and an “experienced” division. Rookies that begin to do very well are sometimes bumped up after proving they are ready for the next level. Conversely, if an experienced wrestler rarely wins and is clearly struggling, we may move this person into the rookie division.

At all levels, we try very hard to arrange quality matches for wrestlers based on past performance, experience level, etc. We also want to avoid wrestling teammates and common opponents too frequently. However, the process of determining matchups is not an exact science. For a plethora of reasons, it is difficult to predict results and we can only arrange matchups among wrestlers who attend. But rest assured, no youth league spends more time trying to find appropriate matchups for the kids.

FEES AND REGISTRATION

How much does it cost to join WWS?

For teams who purchase 10 or more Season Passes, the registration fee is \$76 per wrestler. For individuals, a Season Pass is \$120 and can be purchased on the TOP web site.

How do clubs pay for their teams?

A club has three choices for making payment. It can provide TOP with a listing of wrestlers (and other pertinent information) along with payment (check, venmo or paypal) before the season begins. Alternatively, it can instruct families to obtain their Season Passes on the TOP web site. In this case, we can provide a coupon code so families can pay the discounted rate of \$76. If the club pays for a Season Pass for a wrestler who ends up not attending any events, we will issue a refund. If a first-year wrestler only attends one event and never returns, we will issue a 50 percent refund if requested.

When does registration for tournaments open?

Even though a wrestler has a Season Pass, he/she still must sign up for specific events so we know who is attending. Coupon codes are distributed to all Pass Holders so they don't have to pay again. To avoid families from just signing up for all the tournaments in advance, we open registration for a few events at a time. We do this because too many families forget they signed up when doing it too far in advance. The dates when registration opens are posted on the TOP web site.

When does registration close?

Registration always closes on Monday at 11:59 PM during the week of an event. This gives us adequate time to process registrations, correct data input mistakes, review matchups, and formulate brackets. Late registrants will automatically be placed on a wait list, and if accepted, there is a \$15 late charge.

Why is TOP strict about registration deadlines?

We begin working on brackets immediately after registration closes. We spend a considerable amount of time reviewing data and trying to arrange the best possible matchups for wrestlers. Adding or deleting (see below) wrestlers after the deadline causes extra work and can produce mistakes.

What if I register and then discover I can't attend?

This should be rare and only happen in the event of injury, illness or family emergency. A scheduling conflict with other activities (especially basketball!) is not a good excuse. But if this happens, please notify us as soon as possible. As mentioned, it causes us a lot of extra work and can negatively impact other wrestlers and families once brackets have been completed.

TIME SLOTS

Why does WWS use "time slots" when scheduling matches?

Rather than requiring families to spend long periods a time (e.g., half day, full day) while everyone wrestles, we divide the athletes into groups and tell them to arrive at different times. The time slot approach is extremely popular because it enables wrestlers to obtain 3-4 matches in a two-hour window, allowing families to get "in and out" so they can enjoy the rest of the weekend. Other leagues have begun copying this approach because it's so effective.

What is the downside to time slots?

You will not know your time slot until midway through the week of the event. This is because we cannot figure out time slots until registration has closed. So, you must have flexibility when registering. Of course, the alternative is to spend a half-day or more at a tournament (very common). In general, however, you'll have a rough idea of when wrestlers compete. Young/light wrestlers usually kick off the morning, and heavier/older wrestlers wrap up the day.

Will a wrestler be assigned the same time slot each week?

Probably not. The exact time slot that a wrestler is assigned can vary for a host of reasons.

What if I miss the weekly email announcing the time slots?

Be on the lookout for the email on Wednesdays (usually in the afternoon). However, we also post the time slots on our web site. There's no excuse for not knowing your time slot. As always, if there is a conflict, let us know ASAP!

THINGS NEVER TO DO

What happens if I don't show up for an event (and forget to notify you in advance)?

It's a huge "NO-NO" to fail to show up without notifying us in advance. Even if your child wakes up sick on game day, you must inform us ASAP about the cancellation. The more advance notice we have, the better!

This is SUPER important. No-shows affect other families and create unnecessary stress and extra work for our staff. We work extremely hard to put together the best brackets and to start events on time, and no-shows puts this all at risk. Consequently, a family receives one stern warning if this ever happens. If it occurs again, the wrestler will not be allowed to participate in future WWS events.

What if I show up late for my time slot?

You are taking a big risk. Your wrestler will automatically be put on a "Stand By" list. This means they may be scratched and not able to wrestle. Why? When your designated arrival time ends, things are moving quickly to get the tournament started on time. We will only allow a late wrestler to participate if it's easier and quicker to do this. In many cases, we scratch the wrestler right away and start changing brackets. If a wrestler shows up late more than once, he/she may be disqualified from participating in future events. We're sorry if this sounds harsh, but nearly all families have no problems showing up on time (in fact, it's usually the same people who miss registrations or show up late). We want everyone to participate, but no-shows and late shows simply cause too much disruption and adversely impact other people, so we must enforce these policies.

What if I'm in route and there is an accident?

Text us or your coach so we know you're on your way and running late. It's best to give yourself plenty of time in case there are unexpected delays.

OTHER

What if my wrestler doesn't like to compete in formal competitions?

We begin the WWS season with Rapid Wrestling which does not include referees, score tables, etc. Also, we do a variety of things to make events enjoyable for those who don't thrive on competing.

Is there a season-ending championship tournament?

WWS does not hold a season-ending tournament. However, wrestlers have the option of entering the TOP Championships which occur right after the WWS season ends. This is not included in the WWS Season Pass because these tournaments have additional expenses to make them extra special. TOP generally holds a Middle School and Elementary Championship to conclude the youth season.