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PWCA Scholarship Essay

Improvements on Wrestling

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### How to Improve Wrestling

The sport of wrestling is one that requires the highest level of dedication and commitment. This is known all too well, to those that participated in, or have been around the sport. Other people, who are not familiar with the sport, do not fully understand the various aspects of wrestling and they then misinterpret it and look upon it in a negative light. Of these misconceptions, the ones about wrestlers starving themselves and cutting weight are the most prominent. These misconceptions deter a lot of people from coming out for wrestling, or even coming to watch it. They also convince many parents to not allow their kids to wrestle at all. So in order to improve wrestling, it is necessary to make people aware of what the sport of wrestling is really about and to educate them on its various aspects.

Currently, there are many regulations that act as safeguards for wrestling participants. The most important being weight certifications. Ultimately, weight certifications determine how much weight the wrestler can lose per week at a healthy rate, and ultimately how much total weight that wrestler can lose and still maintain good health. Another point that most people do not understand, is that a coach does not have the authority to force a wrestler to cut any amount of weight. People need to understand that when a wrestler makes the decision to cut weight, he does so entirely by choice, not because a coach made him do so.

There are multiple means by which people could be made aware of these regulations. One possibility would be to have an article printed in the newspaper each year before the start of the wrestling season about these safeguards that have been put into place to protect the wrestlers. If the PIAA were able to work with the local sports writers of the different newspapers, they would be able to make these regulations, and any possible new ones in the future, known to the public. This would help to inform people that wrestling has changed and is not what it used to be. Another possibility to further notify people of the current regulations on weight cutting would be to encourage the schools, or whoever makes the wrestling programs for match nights to briefly outline and explain the procedures and rules about wrestlers losing weight within the programs that the fans purchase as they walk in the door.

Another possibility for raising public awareness about wrestling would be to use social media as a means of distributing information. With the growing popularity of social media, many people, mostly consisting of the younger generations, would be more likely to come across and read the information there, than in a newspaper article. Also, since the newspapers use social media often, the newspaper writers would be able to use the exact same articles that were printed in the newspapers. This would be just as effective as printing an article in the newspaper due to the fact that many people follow and read the news via social media.

So, in order to improve the sport of wrestling, it is necessary to inform people about the policies that have been put into place to protect wrestlers. This can be done efficiently through the newspapers, match night programs, and social media in order to educate people about the current regulations that ensure the health of today's wrestling participants.

The sport of wrestling is a very intense and emotional sport. Over 10 years of my career, I have seen some great matches and some matches that have made me question the officiating in wrestling today. Many times I have witnessed referees stand by and watch wrestlers stall in a match. I feel wrestling could benefit tremendously if referees called stall warnings quicker. This would make both wrestlers work harder and actually wrestle the whole 6 minutes of the match. Some wrestlers score their points and then ride their opponent out, run on their feet, or curl up on the bottom; preventing the losing opponent any opportunity to score points. Even a wrestler winning a match, would know that he would have to continue to wrestle or risk being called for stalling; which could cost him a match.

Also, unless injury time is called by a referee or blood time is called, when a wrestler calls for injury time, the opposing wrestler should get his choice of position (like in college wrestling). Too many times wrestlers take injury time due to being tired, need a drink, or they are winning the match and want to stop the momentum. This may limit unnecessary injury time.

I truly believe that both of these topics would improve high school wrestling.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Anthony D.L. Benson", written over a horizontal line.

Anthony D.L. Benson

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## **How Can We Improve The Sport of Wrestling?**

Wrestling is, without a doubt, the greatest sport on the Earth. Everybody in the wrestling community knows this to be fact. But in a true wrestlers mindset, there is always room for improvement. Wrestling can improve in a variety of different areas but at this point in our sport's long history, just after the recent almost removal from the Olympics, promoting the sport and making it more fan friendly are two of the most important improvements that can be made. Specifically, the utilization of various media outlets to spread knowledge about the sport and the adaptation of rules to enhance the fan experience are the main points.

Wrestling is a very tight knit community but to grow as a sport it has to reach out and try to gain the attention of people who may not necessarily cross the paths wrestling people do. The internet is probably the most important tool that can be used in spreading the sport of wrestling. Flowrestling.org and Intermat.com lead the way in broadcasting all of the news via the internet. Flowrestling originated with just videos of various matches, training, and a few articles but has now expanded to a radio show, weekly rankings and updates, and broadcasting live tournaments and events across the country. Intermat has been a mainstay in the wrestling community with articles. They provide in depth reports and rankings for weight classes and recruiting. Both Flowrestling and Intermat cover high school, collegiate, and Senior level international competition. Social media is also a great tool in spreading the sport of wrestling.

Almost every senior level competitor in the United States has a twitter or Facebook and many college and even high school teams have joined in on the trend. Social media can allow these teams to broadcast their results and post information about their program and about wrestling in general. Teams not only can use this but individual competitors can to promote themselves. As a sport we are using these tools pretty well but could make improvements in the local and national television and paper news media. Many times on our local news channels and newspapers, wrestling is put as a back burner behind football and basketball because the wrestling community has not reached out to the local media. As coaches and athletes we must do a better job communicating with the local media to gain a better local fan base. It is integral for the sport to grow that we branch out to our local media and ensure that they are promoting and portraying the sport in a good light. This can be done by email, [trackwrestling.com](http://trackwrestling.com) or even social media. On top of our local media, national media is important too. Although wrestlers may never achieve the superstardom of football and basketball players, it is important for the sport of wrestling to have a few national superstars so that the sport can remain relevant. Ultimately, the sport needs not only the wrestlers, but also its supporters to reach out to media to help the sport grow.

Sports are not just about the competitors; fans are the second most important part besides the competition. Thus, as a sport we must do all in our power to make wrestling more fan friendly and provide a better experience for the fan. Simple modifications to the current rules could vastly improve the fan experience. For high school wrestling, expanding to the college out of bounds rules would be a giant leap towards making the sport more exciting. This allows for more wrestling to occur and reduces stoppage time. A lot of wrestling can happen on the edge of the mat and as long as there is one part of the body in bounds, wrestling should continue.

Another area of wrestling that is constantly looked upon for improvements is how to eliminate stalling, promote offense, and make the sport more exciting. Fans come to see high flying offense matches with a ton of points scored. For the most part the offensive wrestler wins the match. Guys like David Taylor and Logan Steiber are the epitome of being offensive and scoring a lot of points in big matches. But other guys tend to hold on to small leads and stall their way to victory. This is bad for the sport because to the passive fan, those type of matches are boring and often times can turn people off from the sport. Eliminating stalling is something that will never happen because some wrestlers will always try to hold on to leads. But the sport could do a better job rewarding the offensive wrestler and/or punishing the defensive wrestler. One idea is to change the takedown from 2 to 3 points. This would make the value of being offensive to get the takedown that much more important to win the match. Offense and scoring is what the fans want to see and this would only increase such type of wrestling. There will be critics to rule changes but ultimately they are needed.

As competitors and fans, we enjoy the sport of wrestling. To keep our beloved sport relevant and popular, we have to constantly be adapting and doing whatever possible to grow and make the sport better for everyone. The difference between good and great is a very thin line. In my opinion, the difference between the two is execution. A champion executes in all situations while the rest falter. As a sport, we must execute the utilization of media and the adaptation of rules so that wrestling can grow and prosper in the future. That will make us the true champion sport.