

It's snowing as I write this article, that represents three things for me, a long winter, a lot of shoveling and the best of all, wrestling season is just around the corner . The WWF had another banner year, the cadets won a national title in Greco/Roman , the Jrs finished in the top eight in both styles and the Schoolboys were double all-Americans at the USA National Duals in June. My hats are off to the competitors , coaches and parents for their relentless commitment and support. Wisconsin continues to be near the top in membership nation wide and we also have numerous opportunities for our athletes and coaches.

At this years annual meeting in Wisconsin Dells we were fortunate to have Rod Olson " The Coaches Coach" be our guest speaker. His message was heard by more than 100 parents and coaches and I'm confident that everyone left with some insight and a renewed confidence in themselves and wrestling. Rod is from Colorado and has been invited to speak to many audiences nation wide, those include a diverse group of coaches, parents, athletes, administrators and many Olympians, his message is sincere and his statistics are alarming but also his ideas are reassuring. One fact that he shared was related to numbers of participants that are involved in organized sports nationally, up to age 13 there are 57,000,000 kids involved in organized sports, at ages 14-18 that numbers drops to 7,000,000. What may be some of the reasons for the decline, could it be they are worn out, burned out, or maybe even scared out of those activities, it may be possible that they have seen it all and done it all by fourteen ? It is our responsibility as parents, coaches and leaders to promote , encourage and develop these young athletes to be passionate about their involvement and make it a fun and memorable experience for them, and to continue on into their teen years and beyond to be involved in sports and physical activities. In wrestling we have great opportunities for kids to compete as individuals and as a team member, not many sports offer that. I would encourage any parent or coach who has not had an opportunity to take any of the NCEP classes to consider it, the copper and bronze are available through the WWF and Mike Deroehn has been scheduling classes around the state, we also have several certified instructors that would be more than willing to teach to any club or parent group if needed. Please feel free to contact Mike or your district director if you have questions or an interest in hosting a clinic. The Copper instruction focuses on athlete development and also coaches and participant expectation and conduct concerns. The Bronze class expands on that and also includes some technique and coaching skills, both are well worth your time.

This years state tournaments will be modified some, the folkstyle regionals will have a split starting times for the age divisions. The youngest two divisions will start at 9:30 am and the oldest two divisions will start late morning or early afternoon, those times are still be determined by information that Jeff Jones is reviewing. It is our hopes that these start times will alleviate some of the crowding that we see at matside and also will allow the younger kids to get done at a reasonable time, get their awards and have the option of leaving earlier in the day if they choose to. We will also be holding a girls only tournament at the same time and location, any girl that wants to compete in the tournament will only be able to compete in the girls division , the ages and weights will be determined at the regional site based on entries. Those girls will then be able to compete at the state tournament in Madison the same day as the boys, those age divisions and weight classes will be determined by the participation at the regionals. The board of directors feel that we need to make this commitment if we want to see our numbers grow in the girls division, statistics show that the states that have made this commitment have positive growth in the girls program.

Another change to the Folkstyle State tournament will be the time periods for the oldest division, they will have three one and half minute periods, this will only take place at the state tournament as we recognize the time restraints at the regionals and it is only for the oldest division. This year we will have 16 mats rather than the prior 14, we will be able to accommodate the girls division and the extended periods for the oldest boys division. These changes have been discussed at length and we are confident that the enhancement will be in the best interest of those involved.

The WWF will have a cooperative membership with the WWCA this year, the fee will be \$50.00 and it will include a USA membership in the Wrestling Nation program and the the WWCA membership. The USA membership is not a coaching membership but it allows you to get the USA magazine and also gives you discount privileges for USA products and allows you to participate in USA Wrestling's video education and instruction program. The WWCA membership gives you the subscription to the Crossface magazine and it will also include schedules for both organizations. The membership will be called the WWCC , " Wisconsin Wrestling Community Connection", this is a pilot program and we are hopeful that we will be able to reach more coaches and parents with this combined membership. Look for info on both websites for more detail.

Yours in Wrestling : Dave Black