

# Should High School Wrestling Be Encouraged?

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Wrestling is one of the oldest forms of exercise and competition and dates from the very beginning of the race. It is natural for every normal boy to scuffle or grapple with his fellows, which becomes what we term "wrestling" as greater skill is acquired. If it is reasonable to assume that the educational value of various forms of physical education is attained through the development of motor skills, self-control, muscular and organic health and strength, and the quickening of a high sense of fair play, high school wrestling, under careful and intelligent supervision of school authorities, should be accorded a place on the calendar of sports.

While wrestling is practised by practically every tribe and nation in the world, there are some distinctive types which have been developed from the earliest times until the present day. The Greeks from early Olympic times and on through the Periclean age and later, probably developed wrestling to a greater degree than any nation of antiquity. These wonderful exponents of physical, moral, mental, and aesthetic development surely believed in virility and grace of body. Other distinctive styles of wrestling may be summarized as the Greco-Roman, Jiu Jitsu, Cornish, Lancashire, Cumberland, American Indian, and the modern style known as Catch-as-catch-can, which originated in this country. All of these various styles or types are intended to develop skill, stamina, self-mastery, good sportsmanship, alertness, and strength.

Active opponents, and also many who may be said to be neutral in the matter, too frequently condemn this sport because of newspaper accounts of professional wrestling. It is a well known fact that there are many questionable practises among professional wrestlers and promoters today, just as there have been in other ages and other countries. But to assert that such practises nullify the benefits to be derived from wrestling as an amateur sport under the proper auspices, is illogical. Extend the foregoing argument that the influence of professionals is condemnatory and it becomes applicable to practically every known sport. One might just as fitly stigmatize tennis, football, baseball *ad lib* as being attainted, because the "root of all evil" sometimes grows into a giant and casts its shadow over almost every human activity. Loose and unintelligent supervision of any form of physical competition, and particularly that of a personal contact nature, will result in undesirable after-effects in the educational field and elsewhere.

As a participant, coach and close observer over a period of three decades, the writer is convinced that minor and major physical injuries, such as breaks, strains, abrasions, dislocations, etc., are far less common in amateur wrestling groups than in those corresponding in size and age in football, which, perhaps, may be used for purposes of analogy; that emotional stress and reactions therefrom have been appreciatively less in the former group; that mental and physical tension preceding competition in both single matches and tournaments, is as a rule noticeably lower than observable in football, some track events, and boxing; and, that the state high school wrestling championship meet held at Ohio Wesleyan University last year resulted in no censorable after-effects.

State or sectional high school wrestling meets are sanctioned in Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, California, Ohio, and Massachusetts. Well organized boys' clubs throughout the country, such as Hull House in Chicago, and St. Thomas' in New York, encourage and promote wrestling for boys. Y.M.C.A. organizations throughout the country also give wrestling instruction and promote the sport. Last year the first state meet was held under the auspices of Ohio Wesleyan University, at Delaware, Ohio, and proved a very successful affair. Columbus has conducted city championships in wrestling during the past four years and there have been no harmful results. The rules and regulations in Columbus may be briefly outlined as follows:

1. Time limit of bouts eight minutes;
2. Holds barred; strangle, full-nelson, hammer-lock, head-scissors, all toe holds, all wrist locks;
3. The referee has full power to disqualify for all holds applied for punishment only, and also for deliberate "stalling" to avoid a fall by leaving the mat.

To summarize, it is my belief that high school wrestling is a wholesome and generally beneficial form of exercise when coached and properly supervised by some member of the school faculty and the necessary limitations placed upon the time of bouts and holds. On the other hand, if professional wrestlers (not members of the faculty) or influences are sanctioned, and practically no limitations are placed upon physical fitness, duration of effort and holds barred, this sport should not be permitted in our high schools.