
Youth “Open” Tournament Information

What to Expect

This page contains information about the ins-and-outs of “open” youth tournaments. For many parents, this was a rite of passage as they went to their first tournament without any context or idea of what to expect. This is to help you understand what is going on and what to expect.

Tournaments are usually on weekends. Most open tournament details are posted in advance on the internet. Three popular sites where you can find such information are riverfallswrestling.org, Wisconsin wrestling online and the guillotine. Spectators and family are highly encouraged to come, so why not invite the family to watch and go out afterwards. As the year progresses we may send notices home - of tournament dates that our club will attend or simply as a courtesy for those that want to attend.

If you have never attended a tournament or come into one without proper expectations – there is just one word - overwhelming. It may appear to be chaotic; however have faith, most tournaments are well organized and there is a method to the sometime-apparent madness.

You will spend most of your time sitting on a bleacher. If you need it - bring something soft to sit on or something to support your back. You may consider bring along water and food for yourself too. Most tournaments have concessions; some may even have clothing, headgear and shoes for sale. Occasionally, you may see area youth tournament fliers or summer camp information distributed on lunch tables or in common areas. We suggest labeling all your clothing, except your singlet. Bring along your wrestling equipment in a designated bag for wrestling: headgear, shoes, knee pads, singlet, sweats or anything to be comfortable. These items are often lost and misplaced. Start good habits by having your wrestler put everything in the same bag after each practice, each match and each tournament.

Registration Process

1. Registration is often early morning (~ 7:00 – 9:00 AM). For the sake of bracketing, scheduling, building obligations, etc., some tournaments will turn away late registrations (no matter the circumstance or distance traveled).
2. Do not worry about eating before you arrive to register. There will usually be time to eat after weigh-ins.
3. At this age level, wrestler weight should be of no significance to you or your wrestler. Please keep this in mind.
4. Save yourself some headache by downloading the tournament flyer online and filling it out in advance.
5. Some tournaments have separate medical waivers that may also have to be filled in before competition. Often these flyers list the tournament rules, start times, weigh-in times, styles, concessions, costs, etc.
6. Some tournaments require a “USA card” and / or a proof of birth. All River Falls Youth wrestlers have an annual USA Card for the season.
7. Bring along food. Most tournaments have concessions; but to save money have a sack lunch along. Also, bring your own water and sport drink. Note that some schools do not allow food, beverages and / or coolers in the gym.
8. Once you fill out the paper work, pay the entry fee (usually between \$3 and \$10 for wrestlers). After registration the wrestlers proceed to weigh-in area.

Weigh-Ins

1. After registration, your wrestler needs to get ready to weigh in. Parents may not be able to directly accompany the wrestler at the weigh-in scale.
2. There may not be a specific place to change clothing at the tournament (other than the restroom). Many kids simply wear their singlet under their warm ups, shorts and t-shirt.
3. Wrestlers usually must wear their singlet while at the scale.
4. Fingernails will be checked and may require clipping (for the safety of others) before proceeding.
5. Any obvious rashes or skin infections may warrant non-admission to the tournament. Skin infections are extremely contagious and clubs are very proactive to protect the other kids and anyone who may come in contact with the mats.
6. At weigh in, the actual weight will usually be noted on the form and / or with a marker on the hand or shoulder.
7. After weigh-ins, the tournament organizers group the wrestlers based on weight, age and possibly experience. This is known as "bracketing."

Waiting For Brackets

1. After weigh-ins, the first question that both wrestlers and parents ask "when does wrestling start?" The short answer is – (shortly) after the brackets are complete. Please be patient.
2. Once the host club completes the grouping of wrestlers, they may post bracket cards or sheets along a wall. It will inform parents, coaches and wrestlers the following: group/chart/mat number. Some parents take a quick snapshot of the bracket for reference throughout the day; others bring a pen and paper to write.
3. Also, when the brackets are posted, you will still have time before wrestling actually starts. If your wrestler is missing when his match is supposed to start, most tournaments will page loudly until the wrestler shows up.
4. When you are not wrestling stay warm with warm-ups or sweatpants and sweatshirt. Parents - bring along something for you to do. There is always a waiting period after registration and before the tournament begins.
5. If the tournament is run by mat assignments, the wrestlers will always be on the same mat; they will likely stay together.
6. Be patient - sometimes the bracketing process may take over an hour to finish; bracketing is a very labor intensive process.
7. There are numerous reasons (theft, distraction) for wrestlers to keep cell phones, iPods, videos and games at home; focus on the wrestling itself. This is a great time to have breakfast, either on site or locally.

Waiting To Wrestle - Warm-Up

1. Before wrestling begins (during bracketing) the wrestling mats are usually open for kids to roll around, chat, stretch and warm up.
2. Support your River Falls Wildcats team and stick together - remember you are representing river falls wrestling and our community.
3. Act like a champion; the mat is not a playground. Follow the code of conduct.
4. We will warm up together as a team, even when there are two or more gyms.
5. When you are not wrestling, watch and support your teammates. It is a good way to learn.
6. You are representing River Falls.
7. Be respectful, follow directions and be a good sport. Clean up after yourself.

Wrestling The Tournament

1. Please remember that with most youth tournaments, it is very commonplace for current high school wrestlers to referee the matches. They are human and will make mistakes; however, their decisions are final. Please keep this in mind and keep your cool. Emotions can get really high and sometimes out of control.
2. Most tournaments use a four-person "round robin" format. This means that your child will wrestle at least 3 times; although, this always depends on the number of wrestlers that show up in the same age, experience or weight category.
3. There are three rounds for most tournaments. There are other formats where four or more rounds are used.
4. Each youth wrestler will compete in each three periods for 1 minute. Older kids may get 1.5 or 2-minute rounds.
5. Each round involves all ages/weights wrestling before the next round begins. It may take up to 90 minutes per round. Sometimes things take longer / sometimes rounds go quick. Pay attention.
6. Most, not all, tournaments are finished before 3:00 pm.
7. A "bullpen" or a "staging area" is used to organize the wrestlers into their group/chart. This may be located outside the gym. Wrestlers, when called, should go to this designated area. Coaches usually are with the youngest wrestlers in the bullpen. Older wrestlers usually can handle the wait until they get to the mat.
8. After each match, the wrestler is to go to the coach at mat side for final tips and a "pep talk".
9. If you pinned your opponent you will likely receive a pin, sometimes the host club will hand out pins.
10. You will see many parents crouching up close to the mat in order to "mat-side" coach. Please be responsive and sensitive – if a coach is available, let them coach. Your presence may undermine, distract and confuse your child from the direction and objective feedback - coming from the coach.
11. Spectators should note that a maximum number of persons on the mat might be limited to two. Either one coach and one video recorder or coaches only. Each tournament is different. State & national tournaments are far stricter.

Awards / Afterwards / Positive Reinforcement / Injury

1. After your last round of wrestling, stay with your group and proceed to the awards area.
2. Tournaments usually give out some type of award to all wrestlers in the form of a medal or trophy. The 1st place champion is often also awarded the wall chart or paper bracket itself for their performance.
3. In round robin format, a tie is very commonplace; some tournaments will post their tie-breaking criteria in order to eliminate duplicate places (i.e. four 1st places, two 2nd places, etc.). Criteria may include (but not limited to) most pins, most points, fastest pin, coin toss, etc. If tie criteria is not posted, do not be surprised if your idea of place is different than the final outcome.
4. Parents may take photos/video at any time throughout the tournament. Wrestling is finished once the awards are distributed.
5. Tournaments should have first aid handy. Nosebleeds do happen. Do not be alarmed. Also, do not overreact at tears that may flow. The referee is there not only to score the match but also to try to prevent injury. Sometimes, kids are simply not used to some positions that may be unfamiliar or rightfully uncomfortable.
6. This is a personal sport and kids need to learn how to handle it when it is not going their way. The coaches are there to coach and will be truthful with your child and support him/her. Your job is to be the supportive parent giving the young athlete a hug or a pat on the back. Be aware of your behavior.
7. Often after the tournament, families sometimes stop as a group to eat; this is not a required activity. It builds camaraderie and is fun for the kids; as they grow older, they will likely remember this more than the wrestling.
8. Take pictures / video. This is the good stuff that they will cherish at some point down the road.