

Practice Start Reminder - Group Assignments

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Good evening,

I wanted to send out a quick reminder that youth practices begin next Monday at the middle school (group 1 and 2) and high school wrestling rooms (group 3). I have received a number of emails asking which group new and returning wrestlers should attend. At the bottom of this email I've provided the descriptions that we use in the information sheet at registration, but also wanted to provide some responses to frequently asked questions that I've received over the past few years that should assist you as you make decisions. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me as practices draw closer.

We wrestled last year, does that mean we should move up to group 2?

This is a very common question that I receive, followed by the assumption that group 3 is designed for those that are going into their third year of wrestling. Primarily the groups have been organized in a fashion to have wrestlers in their first two years take part in group 1, and then move up accordingly with two years in group 2, and then finish off in group 3 before moving into middle school. I began my youngest son at age 4 and he wrestled two years in group one, and will be in his second year of group 2 this year. My older boys followed the same path as they worked up through the program and our goal is to ensure that kids don't move up into the next group before they are ready both physically and emotionally.

My son is really advanced and I think he should go straight to group 2/3.

The groups are not designed for wrestlers with varying degrees of success, and you can find many of our wrestlers having success at their age group regardless of which group they are in. Group 1 is designed to reinforce a very limited range of moves. This foundation is then extended in group 2 to a series 2-3 takedowns, pinning combinations, and escapes that are drilled more routinely throughout the season. Group 3 takes that to a higher level and tries to expose wrestlers to a very robust set of techniques and combinations. Group coaches do not spend much time going over foundational aspects that are learned in the lower groups as wrestlers as expected to have mastered these features before advancing to the next group. The best way to have continued success is by working through the groups at the appropriate pace. I can point to a few examples of this just in the past few years to highlight this:

1. Gavin Stotts started at age 3 and was in group 1 for almost 3 years and was a state champion last year in the 6-under weight class.
2. Noah Williams was a state champion his second year in the 6-under weight class after two years in group 1, and then repeated last year in the 7-8 year old group after just one year in group 2. He will be back in group 2 again this year as he starts his 4th year in the program.
3. Blake Judson made it to state his second year in group 1 and placed 3rd. He won Rocky Mountain Nationals and placed 4th last year at state in his first year of group 2 and also plans to work with that group this year.

Are there any exceptions for when a wrestlers should move up to different groups?

The coaches are very good at monitoring wrestlers progress throughout the year and talking with

parents if they feel it is appropriate for them to move up to the next group. There are times when a first time wrestler begins in 2nd or 3rd grade and they are capable of picking up new techniques much faster than the younger kids. We encourage these kids to move up through the group structure quicker. Also, there are times when heavier kids would benefit from kids their size in the more advanced group, and when few practice partners are available they also will be encouraged to move up. Two years ago Jace Bench-Bresher wrestler for the 1st time as a 2nd grader and I encouraged him to move up and start attending group 2 practices during the middle of the season and he qualified for state his first year. He split his time between group 2 and 3 last year and was a runner-up at the state tournament.

Do I have to stay in the group that we start with at the beginning of the season?

Movement between groups occurs quite often and normally comes from encouragement from the head coach. Many parents will attend the lower level practice both days each week, and come and attend the front part of the next group practices just to get a feel for how different things are. Practices occur at a much quicker pace as you work through the group structure so your son should be ready to adjust to a different set of expectations for how much drilling/technique will be employed.

What are the basic parameters for the three groups?

Group 1/Beginners: - Practices designed for an introduction to wrestling with an emphasis on providing young wrestlers with a general orientation to the sport, exposure to simple takedowns (single and double legs) and basics for success in the bottom position. Roughly half of the practice time will be devoted to skills development, while the other half will emphasize games/activities that develop mat coordination and fundamentals

Group 2/Intermediate: - Practices designed for wrestlers with 2 or more years of experience with an emphasis on developing technique and beginning to expand a wrestler's range of takedowns, riding skills, bottom work, and pinning combinations. Sixty percent of practice time will be devoted to enhanced skills development with live wrestling, with an emphasis on activities that foster continued enjoyment for the sport and enhancing wrestler conditioning.

Group 3/Advanced: - Practices designed for wrestlers with 3/4 or more years of experience with an emphasis on providing a complete range of takedowns, riding skills, bottom work, and pinning combinations. This is a fast paced practice emphasizing skill development, extensive live wrestling, and wrestler conditioning.

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