



## 2020-2021 Welcome Letter

Hello wrestling families,

Welcome to the Eastern Loudoun Wrestling Club (ELWC). Our club was formed in the 1970s and is now one of the largest clubs in the nation. We are thrilled wrestling is growing rapidly in our area, and we hope your child has a tremendous experience in our program.

Due to COVID-19, it appears this season will be unique in many respects. At the present time, we're not what local conditions will be like throughout the season or how state/local governments will respond. So it's difficult to plan with certainty, but this letter will do its best to inform you about our club, this season, and the sport of wrestling. We will update registered families through email as well as social media as new information becomes available.

### **SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**

During 2020, the wrestling community has adapted and changed practices and traditions to help keep wrestlers and communities safe. This has successfully taken place throughout the country (many large camps and tournaments have been conducted without incidents) as well as in Virginia. Top of the Podium, our club's training and competition home, has been in the forefront of establishing innovative ways to operate responsibly. During the summer, it developed "Operation Safe Mat Return" guidelines which have now been used by governing authorities.

This season, ELWC will operate under these guidelines while practicing at TOP. It includes daily screening of all participants, daily safety messages and reminders, reduced building capacity, limited exposure to other athletes and distancing requirements, enhanced cleaning procedures, and more. We believe such practices are responsible and in full compliance with governmental directives during Phase 3 of Virginia's Reopening Plans.

### **SEASON SCHEDULE**

The traditional winter wrestling season runs from November into March. This year, ELWC is dividing our season into two separate components: Pre-Season (November 9-December 18) and the Winter Season (January 4-early March). This is being done to

give families choices. While many families are looking forward to beginning the season, other families are reluctant to participate at the present time. We don't want these kids to be left out of an entire season, especially when conditions in the world might change by January for a variety of reasons. So families can choose between Pre-Season and Winter Season and, of course, decide to do both.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Coaches.** ELWC is typically comprised of many teams, each with its own coaches who are responsible for managing the teams and communicating with families. The latter usually occurs through email or a site like TeamSnap. Especially in the pre-season, you also receive communications from the club on matters that affect all teams. We still hope to have such teams for our Winter Season.

ELWC coaches are required to obtain USA Wrestling memberships which includes safety training and a background check. ELWC also has a policy that prohibits coaches from being alone with minor athletes---parents should be sure to arrive/pick up their children in a timely manner to assist in compliance with this policy. If you want to be involved on the mats with helping the team (on or off the mat), we are always looking for more volunteers—just let the coaches know!

**Team Parent.** In addition to the coaches, it's very helpful when there is a Team Parent/Manager that helps the coaches with administrative matters. This may include distributing uniforms, planning team parties, finding volunteers for key events, etc.

**Hygiene.** It is VERY important to shower as soon as possible after practice or competition. Otherwise, wrestlers risk obtaining skin infections such as ringworm, staph, etc. Prompt showering with good soap (Top of the Podium Wrestling Center sells DEFENSE Soap which is made specifically for wrestlers) in a timely manner is essential, especially for wrestlers practicing at high schools where infections may be more prevalent. If a wrestler cannot shower in a prompt manner, DEFENSE also makes wipes which can be used before leaving the wrestling facility.

If you see evidence of potential skin infections, please visit a doctor to assess as soon as possible. Wrestlers with ringworm, for example, are not allowed to wrestle without a doctor's note saying they have been treated for at least three days. If you are not sure, please ask a coach before practicing (or competing) because some conditions are contagious. Finally, it's important to wipe down gear regularly, avoid wearing wrestling shoes outside of the practice room, and always wearing clean clothes.

**Fingernails.** Wrestlers should be sure their fingernails are trimmed at all times.

**Sportsmanship and Conduct.** In practice and competition, wrestlers are expected to display good sportsmanship and exhibit exemplary behavior at all times. Foul language, rude/offensive comments, bullying, unnecessary rough behavior, etc. will not be

tolerated and is grounds for suspension or dismissal from the club. We expect wrestlers to respect coaches, referees, spectators, and fellow athletes at all times.

**Parental Conduct.** Wrestling is an intense sport, and parents sometimes get emotional or “caught up” in the excitement of a moment. It is critical that parents also abide by the same standards that we demand of athletes. Referees, coaches, and all others should be respected at all times. Inappropriate, rude, or antagonistic behavior/comments will not be tolerated and are grounds for removal from events. ELWC is committed to ensuring family-friendly, positive environments for youth athletes.

In addition, parents and other family members are certainly allowed to help their children become better wrestlers, but in general, this is the coaches’ responsibility. When parents are too intense, it often drives kids out of the sport. Wrestling is demanding enough, so we believe parents should be encouragers and resist the temptation to over teach and put too much pressure on youth athletes. Along these lines, especially for novice wrestlers, winning and losing simply isn’t that important. What is more important is that wrestlers fall in love with the sport and enjoy the learning process so they will stick with it as they get older. Please keep youth sports in perspective! Learning life lessons over time is more important than a win-loss record.

## **PRACTICES**

**Safety.** Wrestling is a physical sport, and it’s essential that athletes practice commonsense safety measures at all times. This includes being aware of your surroundings (e.g., other wrestlers, edge of mat) and not engaging in dangerous “horseplay” which can cause injuries.

**Day/Time/Location.** ELWC practices at numerous locations for our various teams. The days/times/locations for each team are listed on our web site under the “Our Teams” tab. In most cases, you won’t have any problem knowing what team your wrestler is on. However, as the season approaches, we will provide an official list of the Leopard teams to confirm your assignment.

**Arrival/Dismissal.** Athletes are encouraged to arrive on time and be ready to wrestle (shoes on, bathroom breaks already taken) when practice begins. If your schedule is tight, consider purchasing shoe skins from TOP so your wrestler can put wrestling shoes on in the car (and then put on the “skins” for walking in the parking lot). Wrestling shoes should only be worn inside the facility. It’s not the end of the world if your athlete arrives late, but he/she will miss warmup time. If your athlete must depart practice early, please make sure the coach knows the wrestler is leaving.

**Absentee Policy.** Unless your coach informs you otherwise, it is not necessary to inform coaches in advance that a wrestler will miss practice or competition.

**Sickness.** If your wrestler is ill (or getting sick), it’s better to skip practice, especially in 2020-2021. Not only is this likely to speed up the wrestler’s eventual return to practice,

but it will prevent germs from being spread and negatively impacting other wrestlers and families. As mentioned earlier, until conditions change significantly, all wrestlers will be screened before being allowed to participate in any activities.

**School Closing.** If your wrestler practices at a high school, there will not be practice if the facility is closed due to holiday, weather, etc. If your coach is able to reschedule a practice, he will let you know.

In contrast, practices at Top of the Podium Wrestling Center are rarely cancelled. TOP is open on school holidays, snow days (unless a storm is really bad), etc. You should assume practices or competitions at TOP are taking place unless the TOP website and its social media platforms state otherwise.

## **EQUIPMENT**

Wrestling equipment is less expensive than most sports. The only required gear is a headgear and wrestling shoes (also mouth guards for those with braces). We strongly recommend supporting TOP OF THE PODIUM by purchasing your gear at TOP's store called "Takedowns." It is a local, 501(3) nonprofit and your purchase supports youth wrestling in our area. Just as importantly, prices are usually cheaper than Big Box stores, and our staff is knowledgeable about wrestling equipment. For planning purposes, shoes ranges from \$50-100+, while headgear typically ranges from \$20-45.

TOP's hours are limited but are always posted at [www.topofthepodium.org](http://www.topofthepodium.org) under the "Store" tab. As the season approaches, TOP announces special hours to acquire gear.

## **UNIFORMS**

Your exact uniform depends on your team, as follows:

**Junior Leopards:** This group does not compete, although we often hold a special event at the end of the season in which the kids wear ELWC singlets and do exhibition bouts for their families. If individual wrestlers decide to compete in other events, the club will loan them a singlet.

**Leopards:** The Leopard teams (red, blue, gold) wear traditional wrestling singlets (one-piece uniforms). These are distributed during practices. To help combat disappearance of uniforms), teams collect deposit checks for singlets. When the uniform is returned at the end of the season, the check will be ripped up. You will also have the option of purchasing your own singlet (and even customizing it)!

**Middle School Teams:** Our MS teams wear fight shorts and compression shirts. The latter is purchased by the club (all Ashburn/Sterling middle schools have their own team shirts), while families purchase the fight shorts. Most of the teams wear TOP fight shorts which are available at TOP for approximately \$35. Shirts are distributed at practice, while shorts can be purchased whenever the TOP store is open.

## **COMPETITION**

**To Compete or Not to Compete.** Deciding to compete is an individual decision based on a wrestler's age, maturity, attitude, etc. Wrestling is an intense sport, and not all kids are ready for this experience. In the old days, teams often pushed kids to wrestle whether they wanted to or not---and it drove kids out of the sport. As kids get older (e.g., middle school), they generally want to compete, but it's not required to be on the team.

Interestingly, the decision to wrestle isn't always based on ability. Sometimes very talented kids get "worked up" and the experience isn't good. Conversely, kids who aren't very good may have no problem competing and losing on a regular basis. If you're not sure about your child, always feel free to talk to a coach who might have insights as they get to know your child. You can try it, too, and see how it goes (then back off, if necessary). Either way, especially for novice wrestlers, don't overemphasize winning but rather improvement and effort. Be an encouraging cheerleader for your child!

**Location/Times of Competitions.** This depends on your team and will be communicated by coaches. In the meantime, general information about each team's competition schedule is provided on our web site under the "Our Teams" tab.

**Attendance Policy.** In most cases, wrestlers must decide during the week if they will compete on a given weekend. The process for making your intentions known depends on the team and the event. Coaches will let you know how to register in advance.

## **OUR MASCOT**

The Leopard is the best mascot in wrestling for several reasons!

- It is one of the few animals in the savannah that does not retreat when wounded. Instead, it fights back rather than giving up.
- Leopards are so strong they can climb trees while carrying their meals. This way, they don't have to share with other animals 😊
- Leopards are super quick, agile and powerful (great traits of wrestlers!)

We hope your wrestler is proud to be a member of the Eastern Loudoun Leopards!

