



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS SEASON 5: 2021-2022

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is WWS?

The Winter Wrestling Series (WWS) is a series of youth wrestling tournaments in the winter at Top of the Podium Wrestling Center. WWS is the main winter “league” for many clubs; however, each event is open to any eligible wrestler who wants to participate. We are not a “closed” league that prevents interested wrestlers from competing.

Who is eligible to compete?

WWS is for youth wrestlers from ages 5-14. Athletes on high school wrestling teams are not allowed to participate. All wrestlers should have active USA Wrestling memberships.

What type of wrestlers attend these events?

WWS is the primary winter league for many beginner, novice and intermediate-level wrestlers. Twice per season, we offer “hammer tournaments” that attract more advanced wrestlers. Now, the best wrestlers in the region can obtain quality matches in Northern Virginia at WWS as well as our Dulles Duals events.

Does every event follow the same format like most youth leagues?

No. WWS features traditional wrestling tournaments as well as alternative formats (e.g., takedown tourney, clinic wars, rapid wrestling tag team). These innovative formats educate wrestlers in new ways, allow participants to have fun, and help avoid the grind of a typical season (which often causes burnout).

BRACKETING

Are there fixed weight classes?

Except for Hammer tournaments, WWS uses the “Madison System” which groups wrestlers of similar weights together. Wrestlers do not have to “make weight” as there are no fixed weight classes. Ideally, opponents are within 5% of each other’s weight (our maximum differential is typically 10 percent). Exceptions must be approved by TOP staff (based on knowledge of the wrestlers), often with approval from coaches and parents/guardians.

Are there weigh-ins at each event?

When registering online, parents/guardians are responsible for providing TOP with accurate weights. TOP confirms weights through a variety of methods, including actual weigh-ins at most tourneys and certification from coaches. In some cases, weigh-ins are done on a spot basis. Athletes at hammer tournaments may compete in fixed weight classes and need to make weight prior to the event.

Is age considered when forming the brackets?

Absolutely. While many tournaments utilize rigid age divisions which cover a two-year span, we use a more reasonable approach so kids can wrestle more opponents. Ideally, we prefer opponents to have a DOB within one year, however our maximum differential is two years (just like USA Wrestling). Exceptions must be approved by TOP staff (based on knowledge of the wrestlers), often with approval from the competitors' coaches and parents/guardians.

Are any other factors considered in bracketing?

Yes, WWS considers experience level and wrestling ability. In general, we group wrestlers into a "rookie division" (first year wrestlers) and "experienced division." If certain rookies are having a lot of success against first year wrestlers, we consider gradually bumping them up. Conversely, if an experienced wrestler rarely wins and is truly struggling, we may move this person to the rookie division. It's not always possible and certainly not a guaranty, but we work extremely hard to find competitive matches for all participants. As the season progresses and we become more familiar with the wrestlers, this becomes easier.

FEES AND REGISTRATION

How much does it cost if clubs to pay for their wrestlers?

Clubs who purchase 10 or more Season Passes or Winter Passes pay only \$79/wrestler or \$59/wrestler, respectively. A club will provide a listing of wrestler names when making payment. We also offer a Travel Pass for clubs located more than 100 miles away from TOP (\$45/wrestler for 3 events; team members must attend same events). To give clubs even more flexibility, we offer a Pay-As-You-Go option where nothing is paid upfront, but TOP tracks attendance and then sends an invoice with a 20% discount if 10 or more wrestlers attend. This makes sense if you don't think wrestlers will attend many events; however, the Season Pass approach is much simpler administratively and the best bargain.

How much does it cost for individuals to enter WWS tournaments?

Any eligible, individual wrestler can sign up for WWS events. Individual tourney fees are \$24, and various bundles can be purchased to save money. This includes a Season Pass (all WWS events for \$99), Winter Pass (five 2022 events for \$59), and Travel Pass (see above description; 3 events for \$45). If you buy one of these special passes, you must still register for tournaments you will attend. TOP sends you a coupon code to use when registering so you don't have to pay again.

Do you issue refunds?

We're sorry, but we don't issue refunds. The administrative process is too burdensome, so if a wrestler doesn't attend after paying, please consider this as a tax-deductible contribution to our 501c3 nonprofit. This policy also includes instances when an individual pays for a tournament in which his/her club is already covering the fees.

Are there other advantages to buying a special pass (Season, Winter, Travel)?

Yes! In instances when we must cap the number of registrants, Pass holders always get priority. We also recognize clubs on social media and often provide links to their web sites.

When does registration open and close?

Even if you/your club purchases a Season Pass, Winter Pass or Travel Pass, you still must register for individual tournaments. We must know if a wrestler plans to attend a given event. As previously mentioned, you receive a coupon code so you don't have to pay again. To avoid families from just signing up for all tourneys in advance, we do not open registration until usually 2-3 weeks before the tourney. It's sort of like checking in for an airplane flight although you purchased the tickets much earlier. The "registration dates" for each tourney are clearly posted on the TOP web site.

On the back side, the registration window closes typically 4-5 days before each tourney. These dates are also clearly posted on the TOP web site.

Is there any way to enter a tournament if I miss the deadline?

Usually not, although we reserve the right to make exceptions if we need additional wrestlers at certain weights. Here's how it works: If you miss the deadline, you can still register using the same process, but you'll be placed on a wait list. If we need more wrestlers, you will be notified. Otherwise, you will not be notified. If you are selected and accept, there is a \$20 late fee to enter the tournament.

Why is TOP so strict about registration deadlines?

We begin working on brackets ASAP after the deadline closes. First, we send emails to all participants confirming registration in the event. If you can no longer attend, please notify us right away before we get too deep into the bracket creation process. After scrubbing registration data to ensure accuracy and consistency, we spend large amounts of time putting together brackets. This includes reviewing historical results, determining which competitors have wrestled before (to prevent competing against the same opponents too often), avoiding teammates in matches whenever possible, and more. After brackets are formulated, we assign "time slots" so you know when to arrive for the event.

TIME SLOTS

Why does WWS use the "time slot" approach?

TOP invented "time slot" tournaments in 2017 due to space limitations at our old building. It was impossible to have all participants in the building at the same time, so we assigned "time slots" that allowed wrestlers to arrive at different times. This approach became extremely popular with families because wrestlers would usually obtain 3-4 matches in a 90-120 minute window, thus allowing families to leave and enjoy the rest of the weekend. At a typical tourney, we have five or six time slots spread throughout the day. Other leagues are now copying this approach, but TOP has always done it this way!

When are time slots announced?

Time slots are emailed out 2-3 days before the event. You will not know your exact time slot until this email arrives, so you must have flexibility when registering. The alternative is to be forced to spend the entire day at a tournament (which is common in other leagues). That said, you will have a general idea of when your time slot will be (younger/lighter kids begin the day; older/heavier kids wrap up the day). This approach allows you to "get in and get out" much quicker, but you just don't know the exact time until we announce time slots. Since brackets have already been made at this point, we expect

cancellations to be rare. But if you must cancel, always give as much notice as possible so we can adjust brackets prior to the event.

Will I be assigned the same “time slot” at each WWS tourney?

Not necessarily. But usually you will be assigned to the same one or two slots. In general, the youngest and lightest wrestlers start off the day, and the oldest and heaviest wrestlers wrap up the day. The exact number of time slots (and exact starting times) depends on the number of participants. As WWS becomes increasingly popular, time slots may go into the evening for certain tournaments.

What if I miss the email with the time slot assignments?

First, be on the lookout for it. If you haven't received the day before the event, you missed the email. We also post participant time slots on our web site so a family can check anytime. Finally, we also send out text reminders on cell phones before the event to remind you that you are registered (it's amazing how many people are surprised to learn that they registered!). Cancellations should be extremely rare at this point, but if there is an emergency or sudden illness, we need to know as soon as possible.

THINGS NEVER TO DO

What happens if I don't show up for an event?

This is one of the few times we stop smiling. It's a huge “NO-NO” to not show up for an event without informing us in advance. Even if your child wakes up sick on game day, you must inform us ASAP about the cancellation. Responding to our text reminder or emailing TOP are acceptable ways of communicating.

Why is this so important? No-shows often affect other families and always cause unnecessary stress and work for TOP staff. We work very hard to put together fair brackets and start events on time, and no-shows puts this all at risk. As a result, a family gets one stern warning if a no-show occurs (hopefully this never happens!). If it happens again, the wrestler will not be allowed to participate in future WWS events.

What if I show up late for our time slot?

If you are late, your wrestler is automatically put on a “stand by” list. This means it's possible they will be scratched and not be able to wrestle. In some cases, we do not have to scratch the wrestler, but late wrestlers are definitely taking a risk. Either way, it counts as a “late arrival” in accordance with our policies. One or two warnings will be given before a wrestler is disqualified from participating in future events. While this may sound harsh, the vast majority of our families have no problem with any of these policies. In fact, it often seems to be the same people who miss registration deadlines or show up late. We want everyone to participate, but no-shows and late shows cause too much disruption and adversely impact other families, so we must enforce the policies for the benefit of all families.

OTHER EVENT DAY DETAILS

How can I be a hero for my club?

Rent TOP's VIP Box for the day or a time slot! The price is modest, and it provides your families/wrestlers with the best viewing spot in the building. You'll also enjoy comfortable chairs, live TV

for wrestling meets or football games, and a private refrigerator. Other teams will be jealous, and you will be a hero!

Why is there a small admission fee for spectators?

There is no other place in the country to wrestle like TOP, and we know most families don't mind making a small contribution to our 501c3 nonprofit to help the cause. But while the amenities at TOP are incredible, the original reason we decided to charge admission was to help pay for referees AND scoretable workers (this is rarely, if ever, done at tourneys). This means parents don't have to volunteer, it's more likely time slots start on time (and there are fewer delays during the matches with trained workers at each table), and we're providing employment opportunities for responsible workers (usually high schoolers).

What's your policy on bringing food into the facility?

Unless you have special dietary needs, this is discouraged. Our eatery, "Two Pound Allowance," is a significant improvement over the food selections at most wrestling tournaments. Not only do we offer tasty and healthy choices, this is an easy way to support our 501c3 nonprofit.

Is it true wrestlers are introduced with smoke machines and flashing lights at WWS events?

Yes. This is one of the highlights of our tournaments for both wrestlers and families.

Is it true different awards are distributed at most of the tourneys?

Yes. As a result, wrestlers often look forward to seeing what they can win each week. We usually give medals, but also have done ribbons, trophies, etc. We now have an official podium as well!

Is there really a movie theater at TOP?

Yes, our 37-seat movie theater called Crossface Cineman is used in various ways at WWS events. Before each time slot, a continuous loop broadcasts information about the day's tournament as well as Tom Houck's "This Week in Wrestling" presentation. Once wrestling begins, kids' movies are shown to occupy siblings.

OTHER

How do Hammer Tournament weekends work?

For two WWS weekends, we hold "Hammer Tournaments" in addition to our regular activities. This occurs on the other day of the weekend and targets more experienced and competitive wrestlers from around the region and outside of our area. We continue offer our regular WWS experience for rookie wrestlers and experienced wrestlers who view themselves as novice, but the Hammer Tourneys give wrestlers the option of competing against tougher, higher-level competition.

Are the "TOP CHAMPIONSHIPS" part of WWS?

No, the TOP Championship events are separate, special "year-end" tournaments that one must qualify for to participate in. The main way to qualify is to participate in at least 3 WWS tournaments during the year (or participate in a Dulles Duals tourney). Registration fees for these special tournaments are very affordable, just like WWS.