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7 RULES FOR A WRESTLERS MOM

I am *not* a soccer mom. I have said it for years. There is no disrespect intended to the sport, the moms involved or the participants. I possess complete respect for any child who participates in any sport and gives their all, as well as the parents who support them. I even have a child who plays soccer. **However, to be a wrestler's mom, you have to be more hardcore**, willing to devote virtually every moment of your time for six to eight months to the sport. You have to be willing to temporarily unlearn everything you know about being a mom.

Rule Number 1: Leave Mom in the Car. This is not a sport for the squeamish. It is physical from beginning to end. Moms cannot stand around gasping, covering their eyes or asking "Are you hurt?" They have to cheer, watch the whole match and yell, "Get up!" **Wrestling moms have to be every bit as tough as their wrestler.**

Rule Number 2: Prepare to Invest. It is easy to assume this is about money. There is considerable cost involved with wrestling. Wrestling costs entrance to the meets, gas and concessions. However, if you have a dedicated wrestler, then you will become very familiar with club wrestling. This ups your costs to include dues, insurance, state cards (*which are a requirement*), shoes, singlets (*because one is never enough*), gas for the long distance trips, hotel rooms, entrance fees for the wrestler and the spectators, food, etc. **Wrestling is not an inexpensive sport. Be prepared for it.** More important than the money, though, **is the time.** I'll break it down. Wrestling begins in the winter, anywhere between November and December, and ends around March. Spring season of Club wrestling generally picks up in the last week to two weeks of the winter schedule. The practices are long and intense. The meets are weekly, and, especially in club, far away. **Every moment of every day, seven days a week, until the last state meet in May, will be spent eating, breathing and living wrestling. Don't say I didn't warn you.**

Rule Number 3: Sacrifice. As obvious as it, given Rule Number 2, it has to be said. The largest sacrifice **as a wrestler's mom is time.** Give it up. Give every second of it up. This also means you will be sacrificing your life. Life will become wrestling. Just as important, you must sacrifice your emotions. **A mom cannot go into a wrestling meet as a mom. She has to be strong and tough. Don't take the sport lightly. It's rough.** You can't be sad after a loss, and you can't be too happy after a win, but I'll get to that later. **Leave the emotions in the car** with mom.

Rule Number 4: MAKE THEM EAT! Yes, I know I just yelled that. It was intentional. Wrestlers are very weight-conscious. They are very concerned about making weight and wrestling in the class they want to wrestle in. Do not pretend your wrestler is different. If you have a 110-pound wrestler who gets it in his head he wants to wrestle at 95, he will try to lose that weight in a week. Watch them like a hawk. If they complain, holler or get belligerent, give it right back to them. Some of these younger guys do not realize the risk they are putting themselves in. The older guys, those in high school and college, are more aware of what they can do and what they can't do. Even they need some supervision though. I'll let my son skin sunner the night before a meet. I'll even let him put off



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breakfast until after weigh-ins, but in no way, shape or form will I let him do more than that. Yes, he gets mad at me. Yes, he gets tired of me saying, "Then go run around the block." I don't care. He's going to eat.

Rule Number 5: Support a Win; Support a Loss. It doesn't matter if you have the best wrestler in the school or the club, he will lose. When it happens, it's probably not going to be pretty. First and foremost, don't say, "You did great. Sometimes you're just not going to win." The best thing to say is nothing at all. Don't tell your wrestler that the ref missed calls or scored the match wrong. That is teaching incredibly poor sportsmanship. This is what I love about wrestling: There is no one to blame. The wrestler either gets it done or not, but there is no blaming anyone else. When your wrestler finally comes around after a loss, it is fine to praise him. It is good to encourage him. If he asks for advice, and you can give it, by all means do it. Otherwise, step back. Properly supporting a win is just as important. Sportsmanship is my number one concern. Show respect to the opposing wrestler and his coaches. Win with grace. Encourage and praise your wrestler. Nine times out of ten, he is still going to sit around complaining about what he did wrong instead of how he won. That's fine. You won't be able to stop it. Just give the same positive feedback. He hears you, even if he doesn't acknowledge it.

Rule Number 6: Wrestling is Life. This is more than all the time spent. Wrestling truly is teaching the participants about life. They learn loyalty, dedication, hard work, reliance upon themselves, sportsmanship which equals respect, responsibility, focus, confidence, courage and perseverance, just to mention a few. I have sat wondering if there is anything in my everyday life that can't be taught through wrestling, and the answer is no. Team sports are good. A lot of the same lessons are learned. But team sports cannot teach self-reliance or independence. Only stepping onto the mat, face to face with an opponent, knowing the outcome is solely in your hands, can teach those lessons. If your wrestler continues from youth wrestling into high school you will see them start as a boy or girl and by graduation they will have grown into a confident young man or woman. Wrestling is a lifestyle.

Rule Number 7: Meet Mom at the Door. You're right. I told you to leave Mom in the car, but that was during the meets. Once that car enters the driveway of your home, it's perfectly fine to be Mom again. Let your wrestler complain or praise himself. Ask him if he's okay if there was a rough moment in the match. Start an Epsom bath for him. Just don't overdo it. It's good for him to know that "mom" is there when he needs her, but no wrestler wants to be coddled.

Beginning to end...Leave Mom in the car, but meet her at the door. Soccer teaches teamwork. Hockey is entertaining. But no mom is as hardcore as a wrestler's mom.