

High School Wrestling Coaches Need a "Dress Code"

By
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Having been involved in high school wrestling for over fifty years, I have observed many wrestling rule changes including modifications of the wrestling uniform. When I started wrestling, we wore full length leg tights with tight fitting shorts over the tights without a top or headgear. We eventually added the shirt with suspender shoulder straps and a button down crotch so that the shirt would not slide up during the match. And now, our wrestlers wear singlets with headgear and all types of fancy shoes, some without shoe laces. We also went from horsehair mats to Resilite and Polvomite mats and now the lightweight, easy to carry mats.

The only thing that hasn't changed in high school wrestling is the appearance of the coaches. Since I have always lived in California, I thought that possibly it was only the coaches in California who appeared at dual or tournament competition in shorts, flip-flops, tank tops and warmup suits. After all, we are near the beautiful California beaches and beach attire is always "in". However, this is a nation wide problem among the majority of high school wrestling coaches.

Shorts and T-shirts seem to be the preferred apparel for many coaches during competitions. Coaches should be role models and dress in an appropriate manner. It is not too much to ask or require that a coach wear dress shoes, neat slacks and a polo shirt when coaching before the public. Yes, he could also wear a shirt and tie and really look professional. I never thought I would use the sport of basketball as an example, but I have always admired how the majority of basketball coaches dress when coaching their athletes at competitions. Most wear suits or sport suits and during the game they might shed their sport coats and coach in slacks, shirt and tie.

The NCAA took steps five years ago to insure that the wrestling coaches appeared in a professional manner when they added a "Coaches Code of Conduct". It reads as follows, "It is the moral obligation of all collegiate wrestling coaches to conduct themselves in such a way as to reflect credit upon their institutions, their profession and themselves. Personal grooming and appropriate dress is a standard of professionalism. Jeans, T-shirt, sweat suits, or warm-up suits (top or bottom), headwear, and similar apparel are not considered suitable attire and are prohibited. Moral obligation and ethical conduct are part of winning and losing. Good sportsmanship, appearance, pride, honor and concern for the welfare of the competitors should be placed before all else. These rules have been established in the spirit of this statement". It has also been clarified that school medical staff or trainers will also dress professionally if sitting on the team bench. The college wrestling coaches are setting a positive example by dressing in a professional manner. They look good. Is it asking too much of our high school wrestling coaches to dress in a similar manner?

High School Coaches, I compare this Code of Conduct” to another situation that we are encountering at the present time, and that is the mandatory weight certification programs being instituted. We had the opportunity to take responsibility for making some recommendations and setting some standards for weight reduction and control. However, we did not act. We just hoped the problem would go away. It didn't and now it's being forced upon you. If you cannot police yourselves by dressing appropriately in a professional manner, then I recommend that the National High School Federation establish a “Coaches' Code of Conduct” stating the minimal dress standards for high school wrestling coaches during competition. I anticipate that this will be done in the near future.

High School Wrestling Coaches...it's time you start looking professional.