

SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

TO: SOUTHERN PLAINS COACHES & LEADERS
FR: RUSTY DAVIDSON
RE: NATIONAL COACHES COUNCIL

Coaches and Leaders,

I hope you and yours are well. I know many of you are being able to practice and compete... congrats! We, in New Mexico are locked down hard. Being a large land area, with a small population, we don't have any large Club facilities. Pretty much all of our mats are being held hostage, in schools.

Like you, I believe kids need sport! I'm anxious for all of us to be together and do what we do. We know that Wrestling goes far beyond sport. It's lifestyle. We are comfortable with calculated risk... expect it... demand it.

I'll get to the point. I've always been cast as a bit of a rebel. The reputation is well-earned (and cherished). That said, I have to tell you, "I'm a rebel who is a proud, contributing, loyal member of a group". That group is USA Wrestling, the National Governing Body of Wrestling in the United States and a leader in the USOPC.

Our 2021 membership year began September 1st. First time members (over 18), as well as those renewing, must first complete a background check and become (or remain) SafeSport certified. All of this plays a key role in what you and I offer youth.

As an NGB, USAW answers to a ton of outside agencies and issues. It is in our National Staff's job-description to keep the peace with state High School Associations, the NCAA, NAIA, WCWA, UWW, and our several states. Tall order!

Having listened, rather carefully, to the conversations of our Virtual State Leaders' Summit, Board of Directors' Meeting, monthly Leaders' Calls, GRIT meetings, and our Coaches' Council Calls, the rebel in me has grown a deeper appreciation for what it means to be USA Wrestling.

There are other "organizations" (actually entrepreneurs is the most gentle term I can muster) out there. These money people can, and do, access facilities, mats and equipment, and personnel, to offer competitive opportunities... especially to youth.

These money people stand to lose nothing, if state governments over-react and shut down high school wrestling. Quite to the contrary, they stand to GAIN.

These money people completely disregard the implied relationship our Membership creates, between a seven-year-old and Snyder, Mensah-Stock, Burroughs. Absent any interest in Olympic Development / Dream, they will go to the bank every Monday, after their event.

I am NOT saying, "Don't go wrestle". The very fact that USAW membership covers athletes in ANY legitimate competition supports our athletes attending events run by all responsible groups. What I AM saying is, "Exercise sound judgement".

Beyond that, please take it upon yourself to enlighten parents and athletes. Let Mom know that her baby is part of our Olympic highlights. Ask her to really consider the burden of representing our sport, as NGB.

Membership is belongingness, and we all crave that right now. Kids grow from the knowledge that they really are part of something larger than themselves. Parents need to know that they are paying for something besides a trophy from the Itty Bitty All City Championship.

The rebel in me is confident that USA Wrestling is looking out for our sport's Long-Term well-being, through all of this nonsense. There are so many, out there, who can exercise power over our sport but who have no clue as to the wrestling Lifestyle. A knee-jerk reaction to second-hand panic can hurt us at our roots.

Seize responsible chances to get your kids a few handshakes. As you do, please talk up the responsibility we share, looking forward to Olympic Games, NCAA's and High School States. Recruit people to the lifestyle. Spread the word about Membership in a National Governing Body.

On behalf of the Coaches' Council... and personally... I wish you the best. Hang Tough.

Love,
Rusty