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## **Wrestling Tournaments – Look Out For Lines**

**By Jeff Pape**

A line is important in wrestling. It can determine whether you win or lose. If your opponent's back is out of bounds, you don't score the pin. If your toes remain in bounds, you score the take down. Each practice in high school we would drill edge of the mat drills, because our coach knew a "line" often determined the winner and the loser.

Just like in a wrestling match, a line can show which youth wrestling tournaments are well run or can show you which tournaments are poorly run. A line is the result of wrestlers, parents, or fans coming in faster than they are going out. For example, during weigh-ins, if you are not weighing kids in as fast as they are coming in, a line will develop. A line signals a potential problem. Catch the line while the build up of people is small.

When a line does develop, you should look to add more people to help speed up the weigh-in process. Many times kids are not ready to weigh-in at the scale, don't have their weigh-in cards ready, don't have their records on their weigh-cards, etc. All of these things can be done while they are in line, they should not be done when it is their turn to step on the scale. Another way to speed up the line, you can have several people writing the weights on the wrestlers arms. This way the scale is being used more efficiently. A final key is to make sure you have enough scales in the weigh-in room. Often times in Illinois, the 8 year-old and under division is the largest numbers of

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kids, and tournaments only allocate one scale to this division. When I would run a tournament we would have two scales for 8 and unders and one scale for each of the other divisions. If possible, use a digital scale, weigh-ins take a lot longer with a manual scale.

As long as all wrestlers are weighing in on the same scale, we have used Tanita \$80 bathroom scales to weigh kids in. Nothing will stall a tournament then a poorly planned weigh-in. After all, you can't start bracketing until all the kids are weighed in.

Same logic goes with bracketing; make sure the age group you plan to start out with has enough people working on it so you can start your tournament on time. We always invited coaches to help with bracketing, because they have a vested interest in getting the tournament started. They don't want to be waiting around at 9:15 wondering why the tournament did not start. Plus if there is a question about bumping a kid up or down, the coach is there ready to answer questions.

One thing we did before the kids were called to a bullpen was to post the brackets so the kids had an idea of what letter bracket they were assigned. This sped up the process of calling kids names since most knew where to go when they got into the bullpen area. We would let the coaches with kids in the bracket walk out to an open mat that was assigned by one of our tournament volunteers. Never back up too many kids at the table, because then you have fans that can't see and unnecessary distractions for the table workers. You do want to back up at least one bracket so the wrestling does not need to stop at the table.

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A final comment about concession stands. Make sure you have enough food, with most tournament sites near a Sam's Club, there is no reason to run out of food. Sam's Club will take back unsold pop, nachos, and many other unopened food items so why run out? And, just like the lines at weigh-ins, if you see a line at the concession stand there is a problem. Is there only one person taking money? Are there kids back there distracting their parents from helping others? Are enough helpers pulling the food from the back? All of these things will cause lines to build up. One way we remedied this was to have a self serve display for packaged food so a person could pick up a candy bar or a piece of fruit and say this is all I want. You don't need as many people in the back taking orders if they can help themselves and have their cash ready to pay you. If you have long lines at concession stands, you are losing money. Many coaches and parents will not wait in line to eat at your tournament and will simply wait till they leave to eat.

Running a tournament is not easy, but it does not have to be too difficult. Every tournament I was at, I tried to learn something to bring back to our tournaments...keep your eyes open and learn from others. These were just a few examples of "lines" you should look for when running a tournament. Moving volunteers to different areas to help make things move quicker can reduce most lines. Long lines at weigh-ins, spectator lines, concession stand lines, etc are going to effect what people will think of your tournament. Make sure you have enough help at these key areas and your tournament will run smoother and people will be talking about how well run your tournament is. Positive word

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of mouth goes back to the previous article I wrote about marketing your tournament. Take care of the wrestlers, coaches, and fans that support your tournament or someone else will...

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