Recruiting and retaining athletes is crucial to the success of an individual team as well as the National Federation. All coaches should be actively recruiting new participants into their wrestling rooms and taking intentional steps to retain those athletes for years to come. Many of our potential recruits have never seen Olympic wrestling which is both a positive and a negative. Potential athletes will have limited knowledge, experience, and will likely carry preconceived notions of wrestling, but coaches can redefine the way they see, hear, and experience introduction to sport.

Start by painting a picture of who can wrestle. Wrestling favors no body size or type which makes it unique and inclusive to all. Do this by utilizing former and current wrestlers as spokespersons, point out potential role models, be inclusive in photos and videos chosen for social media and flyers (gender, race, weight, experience, accomplishments, etc).

Change the language used to describe wrestling and who can wrestle. Wrestling has an aggressive and masculine connotation to most newcomers. Redefine the sport as gender neutral in which all athletes can develop a healthy lifestyle, learn positive life skills, and create a community of support. Relate how these will help athletes in sport, the classroom, at home, and in a career.

Intentionally shape the path by reducing initial fears and challenges while also jump-starting connections and success. Start connecting the new athlete to current team members and staff. Introduce the sport through fun games and skill level appropriate challenges. You can decrease anxiety by holding small group workouts for new athletes focusing on basic skills. Encourage a growth mindset and make a point to celebrate success in effort, positive attitude and skill acquisition along the way.

"We’re excited to be working with Wrestle Like a Girl to help bring new girls into wrestling and help existing female members take part in our sport during these difficult times.

British Wrestling is committed to increasing female participation in wrestling across the UK and this project aligns with our commitment to provide a free female place on every coaching course in building interest in women’s wrestling."

-Andreas Michaelas
-Craig Anthony
ATHLETE ASSESSMENTS

We can’t reach the destination without first knowing the starting point. Athlete Assessments allow for coaching staff to measure the skill levels of each student-athlete in their program. Knowing each student-athlete’s skill level is crucial to developing age and stage appropriate programming for the group as the whole. When practices can meet the overall goals of the team as well as the individual goals of each participant, coaches will begin to experience:

- Strengthening of skill acquisition and physical literacy
- Focus on individual competition vs. external outcomes
- Commitment to autonomous learning
- Increase in self confidence within their athletes

Assessments can be delivered either formally or informally through 3 Key platforms:

- Coach to Athlete
- Peer to Peer
- Self administered

The chart below discusses ways to incorporate Athlete Assessment into your daily programming:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach to Athlete</th>
<th>Peer to Peer</th>
<th>Self Administered</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaching staff can simply incorporate core skills into warm ups, dribbling, live, and conditioning in order to <strong>OBSERVE</strong> an athlete and assess competency</td>
<td>Athletes can act as <strong>PEER COACHES AND MENTORS</strong> to their teammates. This includes: - Giving constructive feedback to practice partners - Giving positive reinforcement when teammates are experiencing difficulty</td>
<td>DAILY ATHLETE JOURNALING is a safe and non-threatening format of self-reflection and assessment. Include prompts that ask athletes to review mental, emotional, and physical goal setting strategies plus the progress they are making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaching staff can create a <strong>STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT TEST</strong> or do <strong>FILM REVIEW</strong> of practice or competition to assess an athlete</td>
<td>Incorporate <strong>POST PRACTICE TEAM HUDDLES</strong> that encourage athletes to share ‘shout outs’ to teammates</td>
<td>Athletes can fill out a standardized and individualized <strong>SELF ASSESSMENT TEST</strong>, do <strong>VIDEO REVIEW</strong> of competition, or video review of drills at home to analyze positioning and progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONNECTION CORNER

Your team culture is made up of the values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of your team. Coaches have the opportunity to shape a culture that aligns athletes, staff, and parents in a unified direction of movement towards a shared goal. A strong, positive culture pulls stakeholders in, engages them in the creation of values and goals as well the decision making process on how to achieve success. This shared ownership strengthens “buy in” by increasing focus, energy, motivation, resilience of stakeholders. Each newsletter will feature a “Connection Corner” in which we will continue to provide strategies for you to strengthen the culture within your own club. Over the next two weeks we encourage you begin strengthening your team culture by:

- Host a Virtual Team Gathering
- Collaborate with athletes to set Team Goals and Expectations
- Create a Team communication channel such as Sports U, GroupMe, or WhatsApp

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