

The Tournament Success Playbook

Prepare Better. Recover Smarter. Compete at Your Best.

Tournament success begins long before stepping onto the mat.

Many wrestlers believe tournaments are won by whoever wrestles the best that day. While performance certainly matters, experienced competitors understand that success is often determined by the decisions made in the days leading up to competition.

Poor sleep.

Poor nutrition.

Poor preparation.

Poor recovery between matches.

These mistakes can ruin months of hard work.

Champions don't leave tournament performance to chance.

They prepare for every detail.

This guide outlines a complete tournament strategy—from the week before competition until the ride home.

The Week Before the Tournament

Preparation begins seven days before competition.

This is not the time to experiment.

Instead, athletes should focus on consistency.

Training

Continue practicing hard early in the week.

By Thursday or Friday, intensity should gradually decrease while maintaining speed and sharpness.

Avoid trying to learn entirely new techniques.

Trust what has already been developed.

Sleep

The greatest recovery tool isn't expensive.

It's sleep.

Aim for:

Elementary School

9-11 hours

Middle School

9-10 hours

High School

8-10 hours

Trying to "catch up" on sleep the night before rarely works.

Sleep consistently throughout the week.

Nutrition

Eat normally.

Drink plenty of water.

Avoid:

Fast food

Large desserts

Energy drinks

Skipping meals

The body performs best when following familiar routines.

The Night Before

Preparation eliminates stress.

Pack everything before going to bed.

Tournament Checklist

✓ Wrestling Shoes

✓ Headgear

✓ Singlet

✓ Extra Socks

✓ Mouthguard

✓ Water Bottles

✓ Electrolytes

✓ Healthy Snacks

✓ Towel

✓ Hoodie

✓ Extra Shirt

✓ Athletic Tape

✓ Knee Pads

✓ Headgear Straps

✓ Nail Clippers

✓ Phone Charger

Nothing creates unnecessary anxiety like forgetting equipment.

Tournament Morning

Wake up early.

Don't rush.

Eat foods the body already knows.

Examples:

Oatmeal

Eggs

Banana

Greek Yogurt

Peanut Butter Toast

Avoid greasy breakfasts.

Continue sipping water.

Arrival

Arrive early.

Never arrive barely on time.

Use extra time to:

Find the weigh-in location.

Locate the mats.

Identify bathrooms.

Check brackets.

Become comfortable with the environment.

The less uncertainty...

The more confidence.

Warm-Up

Never wait until your name is called.

Begin warming up approximately 30 minutes before wrestling.

Warm-Up Progression

5 minutes

Light movement

↓

Dynamic stretching

↓

Penetration steps

↓

Shadow wrestling

↓

Hand fighting

↓

Short explosive attacks

↓

Light drilling



Ready

The goal is to sweat.

Not become tired.

The Staging Area

When waiting for the match:

Stay loose.

Keep moving.

Control breathing.

Avoid watching every other match.

Avoid comparing yourself to opponents.

Focus only on your match plan.

The First Minute

The opening minute often determines the match.

Objectives:

Win first contact.

Control ties.

Move the feet.

Score first.

Stay disciplined.

Do not rush attacks.

Create opportunities.

Between Periods

Keep adjustments simple.

Examples:

Move your feet.

Clear ties.

Attack earlier.

Hands lower.

Stay inside.

One adjustment.

Not ten.

Between Matches

This is where tournaments are often won.

Immediately after wrestling:

Cool down.

Walk.

Hydrate.

Eat.

Recover.

Avoid sitting for long periods.

Nutrition Between Matches

Small amounts.

Frequently.

Examples:

Bananas

Applesauce

Pretzels

Rice Krispie Treats

Turkey Sandwich

Peanut Butter Sandwich

Electrolytes

Continue drinking water.

Avoid huge meals.

Recovery Between Matches

Walk for several minutes.

Stretch lightly.

Stay warm.

Replace fluids.

Relax mentally.

Don't replay the previous match over and over.

The next match deserves full attention.

Handling Wins

Celebrate briefly.

Move on.

Winning one match guarantees nothing.

The next opponent doesn't care what happened earlier.

Stay humble.

Stay focused.

Handling Losses

Every tournament includes disappointment.

Accept it.

Learn from it.

Then move forward.

Never allow one match to affect the next.

Champions have short memories.

Parents During Tournaments

Parents play an enormous role.

The best parents:

Stay positive.

Encourage effort.

Avoid coaching.

Trust the coaches.

Keep conversations calm.

The athlete needs support.

Not another coach.

Coaches During Tournaments

Great coaches provide:

Clear instruction.

Simple adjustments.

Calm leadership.

Perspective.

Confidence.

Too much information creates hesitation.

Less is often more.

Championship Matches

Nothing changes.

Don't wrestle differently because the stakes are higher.

Trust preparation.

Trust the system.

Trust the work.

Championship matches reward disciplined athletes.

Not emotional ones.

After the Tournament

The tournament isn't over when the medals are awarded.

It's over when lessons have been learned.

Within 48 hours:

Watch film.

Evaluate performance.

Identify strengths.

Identify weaknesses.

Create the next improvement plan.

Every tournament should make the next one better.

Tournament Evaluation

Every wrestler should answer these questions.

Preparation

Did the athlete sleep enough?

Did they hydrate properly?

Was nutrition adequate?

Was the warm-up effective?

Competition

Did the athlete score first?

Did they follow the game plan?

Did conditioning hold up?

Did they remain composed?

Growth

What improved?

What needs work?

What will become next week's priority?

Growth starts immediately.

Not next season.

Tomorrow.

Final Thoughts

Tournaments don't simply test wrestling ability.

They test preparation.

Organization.

Nutrition.

Recovery.

Discipline.

Mental toughness.

The wrestlers who consistently perform their best are rarely the ones who hope everything goes well.

They're the ones who prepare for everything that can happen.

Because success isn't accidental.

It's organized.

It's intentional.

It's earned.

Every decision made before, during, and after competition influences performance.

Control those decisions, and better results will follow.

Tournament success doesn't begin with the opening whistle.

It begins with preparation.