

Wow... what a wrestling season! It was the beginning of the Olympic Trials for 2012, most athletes know their place on the ladder or if they will be battling through the pool to get to the ladder matches, our juniors are on their way to the worlds. Blood was lost, sweat dripped and tears have been shed, out of that Champions emerged, and the energy as all of that unfolded was intense. It has been my distinct pleasure this season, to have had the opportunity to attend and participate in the four National Championships in our country this year, and my son still has to compete in the Bantam Championships (Canada East and Provincials) this year. So in essence I will be able to take part in five National Championships, that does not include all the Provincial Championships and OFSSA, it has been one real fun ride this year, full of ups and downs, bends and twists, but really all of that is why we do it right? Cause without it, life gets to be a little ho hum!

As the 2010-2011 season moves to the slow time of year for the masses, some athletes move on to other sports, some move on in life by graduating school and they never give wrestling a second thought. That is until you see these people out and about, they come up to you and say; "Are you still involved with wrestling..." "Hey do you remember that time, on that trip to..." "Man do I miss wrestling...", "Wish I could still be a part of it...", "Wrestling was always good for me". These are the common things that I hear time and time again when I run in to old wrestlers, once the wrestling bug bites, this sport is in you for good, in some way, shape or form. Wrestling is as much a social culture as it is an athletic culture and inside of that people find competition, camaraderie, but most of all a place they fit very comfortably. For me, I know that there are friendships I have had that are 20+ years old, for example I will be going fishing next weekend for the trout opener on Manitoulin Island with one of my good friends, who I happened to have met on the mat. Without wrestling as part of my life, I know there would have been many things I missed out on, people, trips, life lessons... the list of life experience gained through wrestling really and truly can be endless. Wrestling makes people better; it builds strong, intelligent individuals who are filled with respect and tradition.

Lets flip over the coin for a moment. People come up and say how much they would like to stay involved, then you hear how they don't have the time to commit like they used to, because of work or other time restraints, an old injury that has sidelined them. All very valid points and concerns shared by many. Coaching and competing requires a full time commitment and a full time involvement. There are many other ways of staying involved with limited time. Volunteer in some way, get in with administration, or head for the gray and blue, grab a whistle and officiate. It is a great way to stay involved at a high level, with a full time involvement and a part time commitment. Think about this, for some who never made it to the gold medal match at OFSSA. Provincials or Nationals, this is a great way to get to feel that energy! I, who never wrestled at the Senior Nationals, now as an official to be able to take part on the mat during a tough final gold medal match is exhilarating, The anticipation of waiting for the start list, to see your name and if you have been good enough throughout the meet, to blow the whistle for

that one real good final. Where everyone else is in the stands, coaches are in the corners, and there you are in the middle shaking hands with the two best. While everyone is watching the legends of tomorrow rise to the top and take their place in history, either beside the greats or by beating one to stand alone at the top, there you are standing beside them having the honor of raising the hand of the Champion.

So, if you would like to stay involved? Be an Official.... visit oawoa.ca to sign up and contact the area chairperson in your region.