

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME



The evolution of Girls Wrestling has been something to behold. We just completed our Southern Section Boys and Girls Masters Meet Wrestling Championships last weekend on Friday, February 17, for Boys, and Saturday, February 18, for Girls. Our new format for the Masters Meet, having one-day tournaments each for Boys and for Girls at the same venue, instead of two-day tournaments in separate venues, was a tremendous success in every way possible. Student-athletes were able to showcase their talents and pursue their dreams in front of their coaches, parents and wrestling fans who did not have to try and be in two separate locations at the same time on the same weekend. Attendance numbers for the Boys tournament on Friday and the Girls tournament on Saturday were almost identical, further illustrating that Girls Wrestling in our section continues to grow and grow each year. In 2023, we have come a long way from where we started!

Before Girls Wrestling was adopted as a CIF sport, girls who wanted to wrestle could only do so against boys. Whenever that occurred, it usually resulted in a bad outcome either way. Girls who defeated boys, which happened plenty of times, or boys defeating girls, left those involved and those who observed it with an uneasy feeling. It went on that way for several years until Girls Wrestling was formally added as a CIF sport.

Girls Wrestling started a bit differently than most sports. Usually, adding a sport is proposed from a league, then to a Section Council for a vote and then to the CIF Federated Council for approval to be placed on the list of CIF sports. However, unlike some others, Girls Wrestling began from the top down. In other words, there was a CIF State Individual Girls Wrestling Championship before we even had a Southern Section Girls Individual Wrestling Championship, due to our specific Southern Section Bylaw 1200.1 requiring a minimum of 20% of our member schools fielding the sport before we can conduct a Southern Section Championship in that sport. Therefore, our first Girls Wrestling post-season competitions were held to serve as a qualifying event for the CIF State Girls Individual Wrestling Championships. Ours were invitational events, where any and all girl wrestlers were welcome to participate, regardless of how many matches they had wrestled during the season and the results of those matches, and we had just a few leagues that had dual meet competitions. It was extremely difficult to organize our qualifying tournaments in those early years without standards being established so we went to work trying very hard to get our schools with Girls Wrestling teams to form leagues, and have those leagues, at minimum, conduct a Girls Individual Wrestling League Finals. Our schools and leagues really stepped up, and we were quickly able to get almost every Girls Wrestling program in our section to be part of a viable league. By accomplishing that task, we could then identify automatic qualifiers from leagues who had earned that opportunity through their performance in their League Finals to the Southern Section Girls Individual Wrestling Championships. Now, our Southern Section Girls Individual Wrestling Championships are structured exactly as they are for Boys Individual Wrestling Championships.

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Once that took place, leagues began to have more dual meet competitions and conduct league championships in Girls Dual Meet Wrestling. As a result, in 2021, we debuted our inaugural Southern Section Girls Dual Meet Championships with one division, and this year, we expanded that program to have championships in two divisions.

Finally, the last issue to address was qualifying for the CIF State Girls Individual Wrestling Championships. When the Southern Section Girls Individual Wrestling Championships began, there was no Masters Meet needed because we did not have enough girls participating to necessitate another competition after our Southern Section Girls Individual Wrestling Championships were concluded. Once the Southern Section Individual Girls Wrestling Championships were over, our qualifiers went straight to the CIF State Girls Wrestling Individual Championships. That is no longer the case, as with the increased number of participants and number of leagues in the Southern Section, we held our first-ever Girls Masters Meet last year, and last weekend, as mentioned above, Girls Wrestling in our section took its place alongside Boys Wrestling in having a Masters Meet in the exact same format.



I am grateful to our girl wrestlers for their hard work and dedication in advancing Girls Wrestling in our section, to their coaches who devote countless hours toward getting their student-athletes to reach their potential, to our Girls Wrestling Coaches Advisory Committee for their guidance and vision and to the principals and administrators at our member schools who encourage their efforts.

I thank Assistant Commissioner, the late Glenn Martinez, who was our Girls Wrestling administrator when it all began as a CIF sport, and Assistant Commissioner Rich Shearer, who has taken the torch passed from Glenn and continued to develop on that foundation resulting in the successes we are enjoying today.

In searching for a way to try and capture what has taken place, I am reminded of the popular movie *Field of Dreams* and a famous line from that film. I think it has been proven in the sport of Girls Wrestling, "If you build it, they will come."

As always, I thank you for your continued help and support, it is truly appreciated.

All the best,

Rob Wignel



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