

SPARTA YOUTH WRESTLING

Training, Teaching and Triumphant

By Teresa Sellinger | Photos submitted by Dave Brodersen

Sparta offers a wide variety of youth sports programs, but if you're seeking a sport that develops mental and emotional resilience, builds character, enhances athleticism, promotes personal responsibility, teaches discipline, stresses the importance of being a good teammate and brings kids from all backgrounds together, look no further than Sparta Youth Wrestling.

Open to all Sparta residents—male and female—in grades kindergarten through eighth, and all skill levels, Sparta Youth Wrestling is the only local wrestling program exclusively for Sparta residents.

“Our goal is to provide an environment that allows youth athletes to learn fundamental wrestling skills while taking away long-lasting lessons and character traits from the great sport of wrestling,” explains head coach Bob Shearer.

Board president Dave Brodersen adds: “Wrestling can complement any other sport. It teaches kids how to handle and overcome adversity. One of our wrestlers could say, ‘I just got shellacked!’ but coach Bob (Shearer)’s going to say: ‘Hey, there were some really positive things going on in that match. We’re not going to focus on the loss, we’re going to focus on the positives.’ It’s the life skill of learning how to view problems and challenges with a positive outlook. You’re learning from your mistakes. You’re getting better with each attempt.”

Wrestling involves both individual competition and team mentality.

“You’re out there by yourself to win and compete,” Brodersen continues. “But you’re also looking at it in terms of, ‘Well, I may be losing and I know I can’t win this, but I can’t get pinned because if I get pinned, then the other team gets six



Teddy Harris performs a powerful mat return on his opponent.



Team practice is where it all begins.



Noah Ferrer pins his opponent.

points. I’ve got to get an escape to change it from a major decision to a decision.’ So there’s the match within the match.”

It was Brodersen, a Sparta Youth Wrestling parent and former wrestler himself, who spearheaded the recent successful expansion of the program, driving the number of registrants to 96 last season, more than double that of two years ago.

“Sparta has had general youth wrestling programs dating back to the early 80s,” says team secretary and wrestler parent Pete Skei, “But as a town, we’ve never done what we accomplished last year, winning the leagues that we were in. We had a lot of talent and it was great to watch them succeed. I got involved to help out coach Bob (Shearer)—we coach a lot of sports together—and it was nice turning this program around. I wouldn’t look back or do it any other way.”

Shearer and assistant head coach Darren Bruseo led the 2021-22 team to a record-breaking season, including winning Northern New Jersey Youth Wrestling League (NNJWL) K-8 League Team first place and K-6 League Team second place. (See sidebar.)

“My biggest achievement as a youth-level coach was having the kids come together to win team championships this past season and truly pulling for one another for the success of the group,” Bruseo shares. “I love watching kids gain a love for the sport through both successes and failures.”

Shearer adds, “I love being able to give back to kids what so many great people did for me in my journey in this sport. I feel a great sense of pride, knowing that I’m paying it forward.”

Looking ahead, Brodersen plans to continue expanding the program through building community awareness, driving

fundraising and increasing sponsorship. To that end, the first annual Sparta Youth Wrestling Golf Outing is taking place Tuesday, October 4, at SkyView Golf Club and will include a barbecue lunch, a silent auction, giveaways, sponsored merchandise and more.

“We’re a program, a nonprofit, a 501 tax exempt organization—we take care of it all and do it all ourselves,” Broderson explains.

What inspires Skei and Broderson to continue devoting themselves to Sparta Youth Wrestling?

“I just enjoy watching the kids learn and improve,” Broderson states. “Seeing the reward of their development in the sport and the life skills that the sport gives back to them is so powerful.”

Skei adds, “The kids—it’s great to see the enjoyment on their faces. And again, last year was an unbelievable year. The efforts the coaches put in, what the kids put in, makes all of our work and efforts enjoyable. You do it for the kids and the betterment of the town. That’s all it’s really about.”

2022-23 Sparta Youth Wrestling program registration is open now through October 31, 2022. Training begins the first weekend in November. The first match will be in early December and the season ends with the state tournament in March, 2023. For more information visit www.facebook.com/spartayouthwrestlingnj or email spartayouthwrestlingnj@gmail.com.



2021-22 Sparta Youth Wrestling Accolades

Participating Leagues

- K-8 League Team First Place (NNJYWL)
- K-6 League Team Second Place (NWJYWL)

Year End League Tournaments

- **K-8 (NNJYWL)**
 - Tournament Team Champion
 - 14 placers
 - 2 champions
- **K-6 (NWJYWL)**
 - Tournament Team Second Place
 - 9 placers
 - 3 champions

New Jersey State Wrestling Tournament

- 9 state qualifiers
- 3 state placers

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Fall Sangria

- 1/2 cup Triple Sec
- 1 (750 ml) bottle dry white wine
- 3 cups apple cider
- 2 medium apples, cored and diced
- 2 medium oranges, cut into wedges
- 2 medium lemons, cut into wedges
- 3 cinnamon sticks
- Ice
- Soda water



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