

Who will be Crowned as Arizona's Strongest High School?



ARIZONA HIGH SCHOOL WEIGHTLIFTING ASSOCIATION 2019-2020 WINTER SEASON & 2020 HIGH SCHOOL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP **Athletic Director & Coaches Packet**

*Helping to Develop Arizona High School Athletes
Through the Sport of Weightlifting*

www.azweightlifting.org

Dear Athletic Directors & Coaches,

Thank you for your interest in the Arizona High School Weightlifting Association, and in bringing the Sport of Weightlifting to your school!

We are excited to introduce to you the 2020 High School Weightlifting State Championship event that will crown Arizona's strongest High School! As a lead up to this event, a competitive season will be conducted during the High School Winter Sport Season from November 2019 through January 2020 that will include a series of qualifying events for the State Championship. We invite you to participate, and support any of your athletes and coaches in this endeavor, and take pride in those striving to represent your school in the world's strongest sport.

Weightlifting is one of the safest all competitive sports, and is a non-contact, non-collision activity that relies on perfected technique, mental focus, physical strength, and explosive power to perform highly-athletic lifts – The Snatch and the Clean & Jerk, the two lifts contested at the Olympic Games.

Weightlifting has been proven to be an extremely positive activity for all participants, and is responsible for increasing overall health and fitness, building self-esteem and confidence, and providing rewarding atmosphere of hard work, commitment, and achieving personal bests.

The Sport of Weightlifting will be a positive addition to your school athletic program and your students as it offers these unique benefits:

- ★ Weightlifting, and its well-known lifts that are used by elite athletes worldwide, has inherent benefits to your current athletes, and training for the competitive lifts has been proven through science and countless studies to increase performance in every sport.
- ★ Weightlifting is a challenging and fun co-ed sport that offers a supportive Team atmosphere, while participating in an individual event. Students learn the value of helping and encouraging their teammates, while pushing themselves to be a better athlete.
- ★ It is a "Weight Class" sport, where athletes compete on an equal playing-field with those of similar size. This has a wide appeal to athletes of all sizes and provides a rare opportunity for some of the "undersized" athletes that might otherwise struggle in some sports, to excel, as well as for some of the "larger" athletes that might face similar challenges. With (10) ten weight classes for boys, and (10) ten for girls, this sport offers an equal chance for athletes of all sizes, and students may discover a sport that was "designed" for their body type.
- ★ It can be implemented with little to no cost to your school, as it may already have the facility and majority of the equipment required. If your school has a weight room, you can start!
- ★ The High School competitive season will be conducted as a Winter Sport, which makes it complimentary to Football and Volleyball as an "Off-Season" training program, and a "Pre-season" program for Track & Field, Baseball, Softball or other Spring sport athletes. Weightlifting will help develop better overall athletes, generate interest and excitement about weight training in general, and provide a boost your overall athletic program.
- ★ Students will have the opportunity to be selected to represent Arizona, and receive potential funding and support at the USAW Youth and/or Junior National Championships.

This packet will help explain a few details about the Sport of Weightlifting, the Arizona High School Weightlifting Association, and provide a guide to get your program started and to participate in the upcoming 2019-2020 Winter Season & 2020 State Championship!

ARIZONA HIGH SCHOOL WEIGHTLIFTING ASSOCIATION

2019-2020 WINTER SEASON &

2020 HIGH SCHOOL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Athletic Director & Coaches Packet

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I. THE SPORT OF WEIGHTLIFTING

The competitive lifts in the Sport of Weightlifting includes the two movements that are contested at the Olympic Games:

1. **The “Snatch”** - One of the most explosive movements in all of sports, where the barbell is taken from the floor and lifted directly to a locked out position overhead.

PHOTO: Alex Lee, Former Arizona High School Weightlifter (Gilbert High School), setting an American Record in the Men’s 69kg Weight Class with a 140kg (309lb) Snatch at the 2015 IWF World Championship in Houston, TX. Alex is a current USAW Senior World Team Member.



2. **The “Clean & Jerk”** – A two-part movement which first starts with the “Clean”, taking the barbell from the floor to the shoulders in a front squat position, then standing up with the weight. The second part of the lift, the “Jerk”, is performed by the lifter then driving to the barbell to a locked out position overhead.

PHOTO: Kaija Bramwell, Former Arizona High School Weightlifter (Mountain View High School), setting an American Record in the Youth Girls 53kg (115lb) Weight Class with a 89kg (196lb) Clean & Jerk at the USAW National Championship in 2014. Kaija was a 2013 & 2014 Youth World Team Member, 2014 Youth National Champion, 2015 Junior World Team Member, 2015 University National Champion, and is current college track athlete. Photo courtesy of Hookgrip.



In competition, each athlete is given three attempts in each lift, and best weight lifted for each lift is added together for a “Total”, to determine the overall winner in each weight class. Additional Competition information is available on the AZHSPA website: www.azweightlifting.org

The Sport of Weightlifting in the U.S. is governed by USA Weightlifting (USAW), with oversight by the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC). USAW conducts National Competitions each year for Youth, Juniors, University, and Seniors, and supports International Teams at all levels. The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), oversees Weightlifting worldwide and at the Olympic Games.

Weightlifting has experienced rapid growth recently in the U.S., and is also now offered at various Universities as a collegiate sport with scholarship opportunities. The Sport of Weightlifting now offers High School athletes the opportunity to pursue both a college path and an Olympic Sport!

II. WEIGHTLIFTING SAFETY

Weightlifting, by all current measures and statistics, is the safest of all competitive sports. Not only is it safest in terms of injuries per 100 participation hours (see below), but also in severity of injuries (being the least severe). Weightlifting is a non-contact, non-collision sport, and has little external or unknown factors that occur when training or competing. The lifter is in control of almost all the variables surrounding both training and competition, and Coaches help monitor that athletes are lifting with safe technique and within their physical limits.

Sport or Activity	Injury Rate
Soccer	6.2
Rugby	1.92
Basketball	1.03
U.S. Track-and-Field	0.57
Cross-country	0.37
U.K. Track-and-Field	0.26
Physical Education	0.18
Football	0.1
Squash	0.1
Tennis	0.07
Badminton	0.05
Gymnastics	0.044
Weight Training	0.0012
Powerlifting (competitive)	0.0008
Weightlifting (competitive)	0.0006

Injury rate = injuries per 100 participation hours

When performed under a qualified coach, Weightlifting is simply a series of controlled lifts or “attempts”, that have been practiced hundreds of times leading up to the competition. The lifts themselves, while typically being heavy single lifts, are almost always limited by an athletes technique, and the weights lifted are much lower than their maximum squatting or pulling strength.

There still are many safety precautions that need to take place to keep the sport safe, many of which has to do with safety when training around a lot of other lifters, and following weight room rules.

Risk & Liability

Despite it being a really safe sport, it is still recommended that all athletes complete standard School or District required paperwork, waivers, and liability releases, as they would for any other school sport, including an Physical each year, in order to be cleared to participate.

During competitions, where meets are USAW Sanctioned, lifters are all USAW Members, which provides a layer of liability protection through USAW Insurance coverage at the events. In addition, all meets must have a Legal Disclaimer relieving schools, coaches, districts, and volunteers of liability in the case of athlete injury while attending a competition.

Since athletes are USAW Members, those training with a USAW Coach or USAW Club also have addition coverage while training under USAW insurance policy.

III. The Right Time for Weightlifting in Arizona High Schools

When considering the current state of Weightlifting in the U.S., and growing participation at the Youth level, the timing is perfect for Weightlifting to be introduced as a sport option in High School.

The following facts present a foundation for Weightlifting to be a successful High School Sport:

1. There is growing awareness of the “Olympic Lifts” (Primarily the “Snatch” and “Clean & Jerk”, and their derivative exercises – Power Clean, Power Snatch, Squats, Pulls, etc.) and their benefits to athletes of all sports, specifically the development of “explosive” power and strength, and highly-athletic movements that require a combination of speed, flexibility, balance, and coordination. These lifts are already part almost every college athletic program, as well as elite-level training program for Professional Sports, and are now making their way into High School Weight rooms across the U.S.
2. If a High School athlete is going to continue at the collegiate level in almost any sport, and primarily in the “Power” sports like Football, Track & Field, Volleyball, and Baseball they likely will train using the Olympic Lifts in some capacity, and an early exposure and technical proficiency in these lifts will assist athletes to further their collegiate career.
3. Weightlifting is an Olympic Sport, one of the oldest contested events at the Olympic Games, and has long been the standard for “ultimate” athletic strength & power. Weightlifting is governed and funded in the U.S. by the U.S. Olympic Committee, and by USA Weightlifting, the National Governing Body, and is a rapidly growing sport as new exposure through TV coverage, Live Streaming and Webcasting of National & International Events, as well as major sponsorships. Youth participation in the sport is growing at an unprecedented rate.
4. Weightlifting now has a path for athletes beyond high school, including a growing number of Universities with scholarship opportunities, as well as USA Weightlifting Youth & Junior Developmental & High-Performance Programs, and Youth & Junior International Teams.
5. The rapid expansion of “CrossFit”, “Sports Performance”, and other “Functional Fitness” programs has brought the Olympic Lifts (all primary movements in these programs) to the forefront, and also provided exposure and opportunities for both coaches and athletes.
6. Other States in U.S. the already have Weightlifting as a High School Sport, and have implement successful programs, with a growing number of participating schools each year. One successful example is in Minnesota, where Weightlifting has been contested as a High School Sport for 10 years, and Minnesota Athletes have developed to the point where they have won the last two USAW Junior National Championship Team Titles. California, Florida, Georgia, Texas, and other States have also successfully conducted Weightlifting as a High School sport. With the athletes, coaches, opportunities, and resources available in Arizona, we could also develop into a national leader in the Weightlifting over the next few years.
7. Weightlifting can be introduced easily into most High Schools without additional equipment or facilities, as many weightroom already have what is needed to perform the lifts. The combination of Weightlifting being one of the safest of all competitive sports, without the need for new facilities, makes it a win-win for High Schools and their students to begin participating immediately!

IV. The Arizona High School Weightlifting Association (AZHSWA)

The Arizona High School Weightlifting Association (AZHSWA) is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization comprised of High School coaches, referees, and other volunteers interested in promoting Youth Weightlifting in Arizona. It is truly a “grass-roots” movement, with the focus on the support and development of the participating students, and to bring organized Weightlifting as a competitive sport to Arizona High Schools. The organization’s officers are selected from the active coaches and referees, as voted by other coaches and referees, and rotate on a regular basis to allow all to participate and provide insight, ideas, and other contributions to grow Weightlifting at the Youth level, and improve the overall experience for the athletes. We want you to get involved!

Goals & Purpose of the Arizona High School Weightlifting Association (AZHSWA):

- ★ Provide opportunities for youth athletes to experience the Sport of Weightlifting
- ★ Promote awareness and proper technique of the “Olympic” lifts to be included in current strength and sports performance programs as part overall athlete development, and an effective way to improve speed, power, coordination, flexibility, and explosiveness.
- ★ Conduct an annual High School Weightlifting State Championship event, and provide an organized series of competitions where High School athletes can represent their schools and experience and enjoy Team competition.
- ★ Make Weightlifting Competitions more accessible and “friendly” to youth athletes, by providing regularly scheduled competitions with “youth sessions” that are affordable, and by working with major Arizona Weightlifting events to provide High School divisions.
- ★ Conduct Competitions to help qualify Arizona High School athletes for USAW Youth & Junior National Championship events.
- ★ Support Arizona Athletes that represent “Team Arizona” at the USAW Youth & Junior National Championships, by providing financial assistance, team gear, and other support.
- ★ Organize a committee to prepare and submit bids for hosting USAW Youth or Junior National Championships in Arizona.
- ★ Establish an Arizona Weightlifting Hall of Fame to recognize past Youth Athletes & Coaches

AFFILIATION WITH ARIZONA ATHLETIC ORGANIZATIONS:

The Arizona High School Weightlifting Association is not currently part of the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA), or Canyon Athletic Association (CAA), but conducts itself along similar rules & regulations. In the case that an association with either of these organizations would be beneficial to the expansion of the Arizona High School Weightlifting Association, and lead to greater promotion and exposure of the High School State Weightlifting Championship, there would be a seamless transition to partner with one of these existing organizations.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE ARIZONA HIGH SCHOOL WEIGHTLIFTING ASSOCIATION

There is no currently no fee to become a member of AZHSWA. Participation in AZHSWA occurs by being part of a High School affiliated Team or Club, and registering for AZHSWA Meets.

Membership is as simple as submitting a brief School Interest Form & Application to provide some basic details about your school, contact information, and level of participation. This Form is provided at the end of this packet, and also available to submit online on the AZHSWA website.

V. High School Weightlifting State Championship & Season

SPORT SEASON:

The Arizona High School Weightlifting season will run during the Winter Sport Season each year, starting in November, and concluding with a State Championship event in January/February. Please refer to the current AZHSWA Competition Schedule for dates and locations.

Conducting the Weightlifting season during this time, will allow this opportunity to be used as the “Off-Season” lifting program for Football or Volleyball athletes, and as a “Pre-Season” program for Track & Field, Baseball, and Softball athletes. These “power” sports involve athletes that are good Weightlifting prospects, and training the Olympic lifts provide a great benefit and carry-over to their specific sports, and in developing them as athletes.

There will also be the possibility of a few pre-season (August-October) competitions, as well as a post-season (March-May) series that builds toward the USAW Youth National Championships held at the end of June each year.

Since the Teams are primarily consist of School “Clubs” as well as athletes from USAW Registered Clubs, there is not a restriction on training or competition outside of the High School Season, or on a year-round basis. The top youth weightlifters in the U.S. all train year-round, with programs that help them “peak” for key competitions, so likewise a similar approach will help aide the long-term development of your lifters.

COMPETITIONS:

There are (3) three types of Meets that may be included in the AZHSWA Season:

DEVELOPMENTAL MEETS - These are unsanctioned meets, often referred to as “gym” meets. These meets may include one or more schools. The primary purpose is to provide “experience” for new lifters, conduct a mock meet, or for other reasons. The results are not official, and do not count toward State Qualification or State Records. Schools should notify the AZHSWA of these meets, in order to list their meet in the case other schools are invited to attend. It is recommended that a “Technique Only” Meet be held early in the season each year to focus on fundamentals, and give lifters feedback on the progress of their technique development and proficiency of the lifts.

STATE QUALIFYING MEETS - These are referred to as “Open” or “Invitational” Meets. Both Individual and Team Awards will presented at all State Qualifying meets. These Meets will be official meets, sanctioned by USAW, and will follow all USAW and LWC sanctioning rules.



STATE CHAMPIONSHIP - This is the primary annual event of the AZHSWA, which will recognize Individual State Champions for each Weight Class, overall Best Lifters, and the High School State Champion Team – the crowning of “Arizona’s Strongest High School”!

FREQUENCY OF COMPETITIONS:

Weightlifting is different from many sports in the frequency in which athletes compete. Whereas some sports allow for weekly or even multiple times-per-week contests, Weightlifting is a longer “process sport”, where consistent training over time produces the best long-term results. Due to this nature of the sport, it is recommended that there be at least (2) two weeks between competitions for athletes, to allow for sufficient recovery time, as well as continued training to prepare and improve for the next competition. In addition, athletes may “train through” some of the competitions, where they will simply take more controlled attempts, and view the competition as a training workout, in order to peak for the State Championship.

The AZHSWA does not monitor the frequency in which individual athletes compete, so it is up to the each Team Coach and the individual athletes to train and compete in a responsible manner.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFICATION

In order for an athlete to qualify for the High School Varsity Divisions at the AZHSWA State Championships, they must make a qualifying total at a meet listed on the Arizona High School Weightlifting Schedule. All USAW and LWC sanctioning rules apply. The qualifying meets will be listed on the AZHSWA website and be listed on the State Championship entry form. The AZHSWA State Championship Qualifying Totals will be posted in the AZHSWA website.

SEASON RANKING LIST

The AZHSWA will keep and post a current Ranking list, updated after receiving the results of all AZHSWA Meets. This Ranking list will show the current standings for each weight class and each gender. At the conclusion of the last State Qualifying competition, the Ranking list will be used in part to determine the full list of State Qualifiers.

STATE RECORDS

The AZHSWA will track, record, and post State Records for each gender, weight class, and grade. AZHSWA Records may be set at any State Qualifying Meet, the State Championship, as well as USAW Junior & Youth National Championships and IWF International Events. Current Records are posted in the AZHSWA website. Other non-AZHSW meets do not count toward these State Records.

The AZHSWA will also track, record, and post USAW Age Group State Records as well, so that all of the Arizona Records will be located in one place for easy access and reference.

VI. Competition Details

Please refer to the **AZHSWA Competition Rules & Guidelines** publication on the AZHSWA website. In general, competition rules follow both IWF (International Weightlifting Federation), and USA Weightlifting (U.S. National Governing Body for Weightlifting), competitions, with a few minor exceptions as applicable to youth athletes and appropriate to High School students.

VII. GETTING STARTED – School Participation Options

SCHOOL TEAMS

Most High School already have the facilities and equipment needed for a Weightlifting Team, and already have established “Strength & Conditioning” programs, many of which already use or incorporate the Olympic lifts in some degree. This endeavor is an easy transition for a school to make, with the goal to offer it to students with little or no additional expense to the school. A few ideas will be presented as to how to make this a “net zero” cost to implement, and how it can be a “self-sustaining”, low-overhead sport.

There are a few simple ways to begin participation in the AZHSPA, and bring the Sport of Weightlifting to your school.

OPTIONS:

1. **VARISTY SPORT** - Offer Weightlifting as a school-recognized Varsity Winter Sport. This provides another great opportunity for students to pursue earning a “Varsity Letter” representing their school in interscholastic competition.
2. **CLUB SPORT** - Offer Weightlifting as a Club Sport or Extra-Curricular Program.
3. **INDIVIDUAL SPORT** - Allow students to compete as Individual Athlete, but still representing the high school. Basically, the student would be responsible for their own coaching and training, likely outside of the school, but could include making arrangements with school coaches or teacher for training. The students will be allowed to represent the High School at AZHSPA Competitions.

TEAM SIZE & LIMITATIONS

In terms of competitions, the Top (10) ten boys, and Top (10) girls from each school will be allowed to compete in the Varsity, but there is no limit of additional lifters that will compete in the Junior Varsity division, but Junior Varsity Scoring will be limited to the top (10) Junior Varsity lifters.

Weightlifting is beneficial to all participants, regardless of how experienced or competitive they may be. As such, it is encouraged to be a “no-cut” Sport or Club. It is up to each School and Coaches to determine the number of athletes for their team or club, and may be limited due to following:

Facility & Equipment - Facility constraints or number of platforms in your school weightroom. It is typically recommended no more than 3 lifters per bar/platform, in order to keep effective and concise training sessions, but there may be exceptions to that. It could be that there are multiple session options for training, like before/after-school, or during school classes to may allow more lifters, or staggering or overlapping sessions in order to accommodate more lifters.

Coaching Staff – Ideally it is recommended a minimum 1:10 ratio of coaches-to-athletes – That is at least (1) one coach for every (10) ten lifters. While that may not be possible in all situations, there will become a point where too many athletes may prevent effective coaching and progress to occur.

TEAM FUNDING

It is up to each School and Team to determine how funding for a Weightlifting program is achieved. One or more of the following options may be included in a strategy to offer the Sport to students:

Participation Fee – A Standard “Pay-to-Play” Fee of \$100-150, similar to any other sport, to cover equipment, coaching stipends, meet entries, transportation, etc. These are often Tax Credit eligible.

Club / Uniform / Competition Fees – There can be separate Club or Competition Fees as needed.

Fundraising – Any form of fundraising may be used to help athletes raise money for the program.

VIII. GETTING STARTED – Facilities & Equipment

Facility Requirements

Weightroom – As a minimum facility, a large enough area is needed to complete full lifts, as well as sufficient equipment to do some basic exercises like squats, deadlifts, and if possible access to things like bench press, pull-up bars, dumbbells, or other “standard” weight room equipment.

Restroom Access – Ideally a restroom/locker room is located relative close to the weightroom.

Drinking Fountain / Available Water – Athletes should have access to water to stay hydrated.

Equipment Requirements

Barbells – This is probably the most important piece of equipment needed for safe Weightlifting. There are barbells made specific weightlifting, which are designed to “spin” when a snatch or clean is pulled from the floor then caught, in order to not place excessive torque or force on the wrists. While in the beginning, some basic bars (currently used for bench press, squats, etc.) may suffice when first learning lifting positions, once proficiency is gained, and loads become heavier, it will be necessary to migrate to more of a true weightlifting bar, and may require some investment.

NOTE: Many bars that have “Olympic” in the name are NOT Weightlifting bars. Weightlifting Bars range in price starting from around \$150 for training bars to over \$1,000 for high-end Certified Competition bars. Most school programs can probably get by using the lower-cost “bushing” bars, while the higher-cost “bearing” bars have a better spin, and are used in competition.

Men’s Bars – 20kg (44 pounds), with a 28mm Diameter

Women’s Bars – 15kg (33 pounds), with a 25mm Diameter, for smaller hands.

Specialty Bars – These can be lighter “technique” bars that usually are 5kg, 7kg, or 10kg in weight, to allow practicing the lifts with light weights until technique and strength is sufficient to move to regular bars. PVC Pipe and even broomstick can also be used in initially teaching the lifts, but one or more technique bars are usually helpful as young athletes are learning to lift properly.

Bumper Plates – These are the larger “rubber” plates for loading the bar, and placing the bar the correct distance from the ground. These can be in pounds (10lb, 15lb, 25lb, 35lb, 45lb, 55lb) or in kilograms (10kg, 15kg, 20kg, 25kg). Kilograms are used in competition, but training can use either.

Change Plates – These are the smaller, usually metal discs, that help make smaller weight changes possible. These can be in pounds (0.5lb, 1lb, 1.25lb, 2.5lb, 5lb, 10lb), or kilograms (0.25kg, 0.5kg, 1kg, 1.5kg, 2kg, 2.5kg, 5kg). Kilograms are used in competition, but training can use either.

Platforms – Usually an area at least 6’ x 8’ or bigger, often with a “wood” area to perform the lift, and rubber flooring, mats, or pads where the barbell is dropped. Ideally, one for every 2-3 lifters.

Chalk – A Chalk Holder & Chalk will be needed for the lifts to protect the hands, provide better grip, and reduce sweat on the hands. This should be used in moderation, but is a useful tool.

Cleaning Items – Basic Cleaning items like a broom to keep platforms free of dust and chalk, a mop for cleaning floors and chalk, and a Blood Removal Kit (Brush & Bleach/Cleaner, Clorex wipes, etc.).

Optional Equipment

Blocks / Risers – Pulling Blocks, Jerk Blocks, various risers, are optional, but useful equipment.

Other Assistance Equipment – Many weightlifting program includes optional exercises that involve equipment like GHD Machines, Kettlebells, Plyometric Boxes, Jump Ropes, Med Balls, etc.

IX. GETTING STARTED – Coaches & Training Plans

Coaching Qualifications

One of the key factors for a successful Weightlifting Team and program will be an experienced and qualified coach, with specific training, familiarity, and proficiency with the Olympic Lifts. These lifts are not necessarily very intuitive, and as such most schools traditionally do not have or properly train the lifts due to their technical nature. Some schools may already have Coaches or Strength & Conditioning Specialists that understand how to perform and teach these lifts. Most may be somewhat familiar with what they are, but not experienced how to coach the lifts or implement safe and proper technical progressions for new/beginning youth lifters.

Part of the goal of the AZHSWA is to be a resource for all current Strength or Sport Coaches, and assist in getting them training as needed to fully implement a school weightlifting program. Periodic Coaching Clinics will be offered for coaches interested in learning more.

It is not required, but recommended that coaches attain USAW Sports Performance Coaching Certification (WSPCC), to at least provide a basic knowledge and understanding of the Sport, lifting Technique, and teaching progressions. For more information please see: www.usaweighting.org

***NOTE:** If your school does not have an experienced or qualified Weightlifting Coach, please contact the AZHSWA to be directed to a listing a Qualified & Certified Weightlifting Coaches in your area. Many of these coaches have facilities and equipment where students could go and train as part of an “after-school” program, while some are willing to come and coach at your school and facility.*

Coaching Staff

Like most other sports, a weightlifting coaching staff will be comprised of Head, Assistant, and Volunteer Coaches. The team size, number of interested athletes, and number of available qualified will all begin to shape make-up of the Weightlifting program, and often takes a few years to develop. Schools and Coaches need to have patience with the process, and understand that it is a newer, and growing sport that will evolve over time.

Overall Training Outlines

While the Snatch and the Clean & Jerk are the contested lifts, training for weightlifting, especially at the Youth or High School level, is more representative of a “sports performance” program, where Squats, Pulls, Plyometrics, Core Work, Bodyweight exercises, Upper Body and accessory lifting is also done in order to develop the “overall athlete”. This type of training already parallels many of the Strength & Conditioning program in schools, so is not a dramatic change to implement certain sessions with emphasis on one or both of the competitive lifts.

Programming & Training Plans - Season Plan / Weekly Plans / Daily Plans

While this informational guide will not get into the specific details of Weightlifting Programming, the general idea is that a weightlifting season is a 3-4 months long, that typically have 3-5 smaller three or four-week “blocks” or training cycles, each with specific goals. The goals of each cycle will drive each weekly and daily training plan. When planned effectively, consistent training will lead to better all-around fitness and strength levels, as well as helping athletes peak and achieve personal records in Weightlifting competitions.

X. GETTING STARTED – Athletes

The goal is to have as few barriers as possible to allow students to join a school program. Whether offered as a class at school, an after-school club, or a Varsity sport, keep in mind the easier it is to join a Team, the better chance to attract and keep athletes. If a positive first experience is provided, and athletes can learn proper lifting technique, Weightlifting will quickly grow on most athletes!

We want athletes to get started, and begin lifting as quickly as possible. Weightlifting takes lots of time and consistency, and repeated strength cycles in order to improve and excel at the sport, so the sooner they start the better. Ideally new athletes should have 3-6 months of technique training and focusing on sound fundamentals prior to competing. However, some may wish to try and compete sooner than that, in order to gain some experience. The early focus should always be on perfecting technique, and not on the amount of weight lifted.

To be successful in Weightlifting, there are a few items athletes need to be aware of and incorporate into their training:

Personal Equipment

While some of these items may be provided by the school, the following are some items of personal equipment that are used in Weightlifting:

Weightlifting Shoes or “Boots” – Weightlifting shoes are probably the most important piece of safety equipment for lifting, as it provides a solid, stable foundation, and the elevated heels provide ankle flexion and assist with putting the body at a proper angle to squat deeper, while keeping the torso upright.

Weightlifting Belt – While belts typically aren’t necessary for beginners, and should be used sparingly, belts can be beneficial for heavy Clean & Jerk attempts, and in training when doing near maximal squats, pulls, and deadlifts. Please note competition restriction for belt widths.

Straps – Lifting straps are used to latch your wrist to the bar, in order to save your hands when doing high-rep or heavy snatches and pulls. They should NOT be used for cleans as they can result in injuries to the wrist when catching the clean.

Knee Sleeves – Knee sleeve, either made of neoprene or stretch fabric, are sometimes used to provide warmth to the knee joints, and offer some slight support around the joint.

Athletic Tape – Tape is used to wrap/protect thumbs, fingers, and provide support to wrists.

Wrist/Knee Wraps – Long wraps of tight, stretchy materials, may be used to provide some additional support of the knees or wrists during maximal attempts. This can also limit mobility if wrapped too tight, so these should be used sparingly.

Palm Guards – For those with sensitive hands, or tear/rip easily, palm guards (like those used in gymnastics, without dowels) can help protect the palm.

Physical Needs & Health

Nutrition – Probably one of the biggest factors for both fueling for training, and recovering in between training. A sound, solid nutrition plan and eating “clean” should be emphasized.

Recovery – Adequate sleep, programmed light days, active recovery, and complete rest are all critical to stay healthy, maintain progress, and avoiding physical overtraining and mental burnout. Special care and planning should be taken with multi-sport athletes that start weightlifting.

Hand Care/Health – Those new to Weightlifting will find out quickly that their hands will start developing callouses. If not cared for properly, and trimmed or sanded regularly, these callouses can rip, bleed, and be very painful until healed. Athletes should learn proper hand care.

XI. Frequently Asked Questions

Do High School Coaches need to be USA Weightlifting Certified?

NO. While it is recommended that Weightlifting Coaches pursue at a minimum the USA Weightlifting Sports Performance Coaching Certification (WSPCC), it is not required. However, if the school decides to form an Official USA Weightlifting Club, there will need a Certified Coach to be associated with the Club, and follow all other USAW Club regulations.

Do High Schools need to form their own official USA Weightlifting Club?

NO. High Schools may conduct Weightlifting as a before-school or after-school sport, a school “club”, or may even elect to hold Weightlifting as a class, similar to current Weight Training classes. Schools may choose to form their own USAW Club, but please note they will be need to have USAW Certified Coaches on staff as part of the Club Organization, be responsible for the annual fees, and all requirements to maintain the USAW Club.

Do High School Athletes need to have USA Weightlifting Membership?

DEPENDS. Athletes must have a USAW Membership in order to compete at the Sanctioned meets and State Championship. However, USAW Membership is NOT required for any of the unsanctioned meets. USAW Membership provides insurance and liability coverage at events and during training with USAW Clubs, as well as some other benefits and member perks. Currently, USAW Membership is \$30 per year (valid for 12-months from registration date) for Youth athletes (Age 17 & Under), and \$40 for Junior athletes (Age 18-20). USAW Membership registration is available online at: www.usaweightinglifting.org

What Team should an athlete select when registering for the USAW Membership?

If the athlete’s High School chooses to form their own USAW Club, then the athlete will join USAW as part of that club. If the school is NOT affiliated with a USAW Club, then it is recommended the athletes register as part of “TEAM ARIZONA”. Otherwise, they can elect to compete as “Unattached”. In the event an athlete is selected to Team Arizona, and wish to receive support or funding from Team Arizona, unless the athlete is already registered as “TEAM ARIZONA” in the membership profile, the athlete will need to switch their Club affiliation to “TEAM ARIZONA” prior to registering for the National Competition. The “Team Arizona Weightlifting” Club has been set up to be the default organization for Arizona High School Weightlifting Association athletes.

What are the Age or Grade requirements or restrictions for competing in AZHSWA Meets?

Currently, all students that attend an Arizona Public, Charter, or Private School are allowed to participate in the AZHSWA. For Schools that have additional grades as part of their High School campus (example: 7-12 Grade Schools), the younger grades (example: Grades 7-8) are also allowed to compete. The only Age limitation is that the participants must either be classified as Youth or Junior Athletes by USAW, which would allow enrolled High Schools students to compete up until the year in which they turn 20. Athletes cannot compete as part of the AZHSWA if they turn 21 during the current calendar year that the competition is held.

Where can I find more information about the AZHSWA and other resources?

Please visit the AZHSWA website at: www.azweightlifting.org