



SEVEN LAKES SPARTAN WRESTLING

2023-24 Captain's Handbook

SLHS Wrestling Captain's Handbook 2023-24

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Seven Lakes Wrestling Leadership

Before I take the time to discuss exactly what it takes to become a Seven Lakes Wrestling Captain and what the job entails, you must know that it is a job – a responsibility – a calling. This is a difficult job with many responsibilities. It is not just a title or a patch for your letterman's jacket. It is not just telling people what to do and bossing your teammates around. It is so much more important and nuanced than just *"being in charge."*

Leaving a Legacy – As a leader, you will be leaving an extremely impactful legacy on this team for many years to come. You will have many responsibilities that include both tangible tasks as well as intangible jobs that will be judged subjectively. If you take care of these responsibilities in an appropriate and timely manner, you will leave a long lasting positive legacy. If you do the tasks poorly and take the team in the wrong direction, you will leave a long lasting negative legacy. If you just don't do your jobs, you will also leave a long lasting negative legacy. Be the Legacy you can be proud of. When the team succeeds, you succeed. When the next group after you is successful, it is because of the leadership you portrayed during your time that is handed down. Know that you will have a positive or negative impact on not only the current team, but on all the teams to follow. My team currently is riding high on positive legacies left behind by team captains from many years ago while we are still suffering the negative legacies of poor captains from just as long ago.

Yes, this is a huge responsibility and not everyone is strong enough to shoulder the load. The only way to insure that the legacy laid down by each group of leaders is constant vigilance by the leaders and coaching staff. Nothing worth

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having comes easy. Are you willing to take on the service role and put others before yourself? If so, read on. If you can't or you are afraid of hard work, stop here.

Servant Leadership – After being chosen as a SLHS Wrestling Captain, you have already passed an extensive and exhaustive list of prerequisites and have been selected as the best of the best in a group of great student-athletes. You are the best of the best and you are in charge, but the trick is to make sure that the athletes in your charge know that you work for them, and that you aren't there to boss them around. They have to know that you have their back in every situation. If someone is going through a tough weigh cut, you are doing it with them. If the mat needs to be moved, you are lifting first. If a wrestling is struggling with their coursework, you are there helping them with their homework before or after practice. If someone forgets to lock their lock, you lock it. If someone drops their headgear, you pick it up, figure out who it belongs to, and get it back to them. If there is something to be lifted, moved, carried, taken care of, etc., you are taking care of it. You are the employee of each and every student-athlete on this team. If you don't work for your employer, you have failed and should be fired.

It Is Your Team – Once you have been selected to serve as a captain, it is your team. Win, lose, underachieve, or overachieve and it is on you. You have a great attitude, so will everyone else. Have a bad attitude, well..... I tell you this "As goes you, goes the team." You have to be ready to shoulder the weight and it isn't ever light. On the bright side, there is nothing more rewarding than guiding someone else to success. Totally worth it!

Leading by Example – You will be expected to lead the team by your good example. That does not just mean by winning and placing at State. It means leading from the front in workouts. It means being an excellent student in the classroom and good citizen out in the community. When it is time to move mats and set up a gym, you are lifting the mats and running tables and chairs from gym to gym. It means having a positive attitude in losses and being gracious and classy in wins. It means acting right in the locker room and on the bus. Don't forget, you are always being watched by everyone since you are the captain. Do it right!

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Vocal Leading – You will be expected to lead the team by speaking up. You have to use your appropriate words all the time. When someone hits a move well or does a beautiful lift, you let them know you saw their awesome work. When someone is off task or not doing something right, you will need to hold them accountable for their mistake and make sure they fix it immediately. This is one of the most difficult skills as a leader. How do you call out one of your teammates and not make it a negative experience? How do you make a correction of your peers and still maintain a friendly relationship? If you have earned their respect (usually by leading by example) and make sure your correction is not a personal attack, then most athletes will respond appropriately. If you see something, say something. Be vocal.

Prerequisites of a SLHS Wrestling Captain

Choosing captains for the team is an arduous and sometimes even painful process for the coaching staff. We pine over every decision. We argue it out in the office multiple times over the course of many meetings (sometimes over months). The Assistant Coaches' input is highly valued and taken into account, but the ultimate decision is that of the Head Coach alone (except for prerequisite #2 below). That entire decision making process, why someone was chosen, why someone was not chosen, what prerequisites were met, and which ones were not will stay in the coaches' office. Nothing will be discussed with anyone outside of the coaching staff for any reason at any time. Please don't ask.

In order to be considered for the honor of the difficult job of being a SLHS Wrestling Captain, you need to meet **ALL** of the following 7 prerequisites:

1. **Be a Returning Letter Winner** – it is difficult for you to be a captain if you don't have a history of success on this team as a Seven Lakes Spartan.
2. **No Reason to be Refused by the Coaches** – the entire SLHS Wrestling Coaching Staff has to unanimously accept you as a candidate for captain. Wrestlers that break black letter rules and/or force us to have parent meetings to discuss negative issues will obviously not be considered for a captain's position. Everyone makes mistakes and mistakes will not be held against you unless you have not shown growth from those mistakes or if you are constantly making mistakes that prove to the coaching staff that we cannot trust you in your decision making process. These issues usually come from a

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lack of knowledge of the Wrestler's Handbook or just not caring enough to follow the advice listed in that important document.

3. **Be Respected by the Returning Wrestlers** – if you are going to be the leader of the team, you have to be respected by the wrestlers you are going to lead. It is very difficult to follow someone you don't respect. If you do not show dedication and hard work or follow the program plans, why would the wrestlers in your charge listen to what you have to say?
4. **Be Committed to Wrestling** – this means that you work your life and your schedule around wrestling instead of trying to fit in wrestling when you can. Being committed means being there and doing your level best even when it is inconvenient. A committed wrestler will not let family, homework, a job, a significant other, friends, or even an injury stop them from training with the team and doing their best. A committed wrestler is not just on the team for something to do or to earn a t-shirt to wear around school. Committed wrestlers are 100% bought in.
5. **Demonstrate Knowledge of Wrestling** – this means knowing the basic skills list completely. It will be impossible for you to lead the team if you are not knowledgeable of the sport and the technique that the coaching staff is teaching.
6. **Know the SLHS Wrestling Handbook** – in order to pass on information and lead the group, you have to know the program inside and out. That means finding, reading, and knowing The SLHS Wrestler's Handbook.
7. **Know the UIL / KISD Rules** – this is just about the same as knowing the handbook. It will save a great deal of time and energy if you know what we can and can't do legally as a team. If you have knowledge of the rules, you can explain why we have to do something a certain way or why we can't do something the way people want it done. Knowledge is power. Reading and memorizing every single word of the following documents is not required before you can be considered a captain, but having viewed them and knowing where to find them when you need them is.
 - a. UIL Wrestling Rules & Guidelines -
<http://www.uiltexas.org/wrestling/rules-guidelines>
 - b. UIL Constitution and Contest Rules -
<http://www.uiltexas.org/policy/constitution>

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- c. UIL/TEA Side by Side Guide - <http://www.uiltexas.org/policy/tea-uil-side-by-side>
- d. Katy ISD Athletic Site - <https://www.katyisd.org/Domain/3801>

Responsibilities of a Seven Lakes Wrestling Captain

Passing on Directives Completely – As a captain, you will meet regularly with Coach Demarchi. In those meetings, you will have the opportunity to share concerns or ask questions from the rest of the wrestlers so that Coach Demarchi can address them. You will also be afforded the opportunity to discuss the items on the agenda for the day. Your input is valued and will be used as part of the decision making process. Coach Demarchi will make the final call on all the decisions. After our discussion and the decision has been made, you must pass on the directive as if it was your decision and you believe in that decision 100%. It does not matter what your personal feelings are about the issue. As difficult as this may be for you, it is imperative that the captains echo the coaching staff's directives everywhere at all times. A new policy or decision that is made and supported in front of the team and then questioned later in the locker room is not a supported policy at all. If you can't get behind the decisions being made and the reasons why they were made, then you cannot be a captain of this team.

Accountability –

1. Accountability of yourself on and off the mat. As a captain, everyone is watching your every move all the time. If you don't do your job on and off the mat, how can you expect anyone to follow you?
2. Accountability of the wrestlers in your charge. You are responsible for the actions of all the wrestlers on the team. If you see or hear of something, say something. If you are afraid to lead verbally and hold your teammates accountable, then you cannot do this job. Your teammates will respect you as the hardest worker that is the most committed to the sport and the team. They will listen to you. If they don't they are not the right kind of people we need on this team and we need to deal with them. *See below for more details on squad accountability and contact information.*

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3. When to take care of a problem yourself and when to include the coaches.
This is an extremely difficult skill to master and it is a delicate balance to maintain. The best rule of thumb to follow is to take care of the problems yourself until you need help. If the wrestlers in your charge have a one-time simple mistake that can easily be redirected, then just take care of it. It isn't worth the time to involve the coaching staff and cause an incident. If that same wrestler is constantly making bad decisions and your repeated redirections have little or no effect on their behavior, it is time to get help from the coaches. If you know of a serious on or off the mat issue (drug abuse, disrespect of a teacher, disrespecting an opponent or an official in competition, thievery, talk of hurting themselves or others, etc.), you need help from the coaching staff immediately. You can accept the responsibility of having to bring the issue to the coaching staff's attention and risk losing friends, or you can keep it to yourself, pretend it isn't an issue, and allow the health, happiness, and success of the whole team to suffer. Remember it is a job. Not all parts of a job are pleasant and doing the right thing is almost always more difficult than doing it wrong.
4. Acceptable discipline. You can talk to a wrestler as many times as you need to in order to correct their behavior and tell them what they need to do, but it can get a bit dicey when you are handing out discipline. Hopefully, your redirection was enough, but if you feel the infraction has repeated too many times, you can hand out discipline. You can assign them duties that we all do, cleaning a mat, putting things away, carrying equipment, etc.... You can also assign them a reasonable amount of calisthenics (50 reps or less that should take less than 5 minutes to complete). If you assigning 50 reps isn't working, then this is an issue that needs to be handled by the coaches.

Accountability of the Wrestlers in Your Squad – You will be held accountable for the actions of the wrestlers in your squad (as listed above). When you teach a new skill to the wrestlers in your charge (performing a hi crotch, putting on a singlet, making weight, and so on), you must Explain, Demonstrate, Watch, then Check.

Explain – how to do it. Use descriptive words that paint a mental picture.

Demonstrate – how to do the skill. Provide a good example.

Watch – them do it where you can correct their mistakes.

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Check – after you have explained it previously, demonstrated how to do it already, and watched them do it right before, you still need to check to make sure that the task was completed. Once a wrestler has earned your trust, you can ask if it was done and not check, but checking doesn't hurt a bit. I still check that the doors are locked before I go to bed every night even if a family member says they already did it. If it isn't done or if it isn't done right, it is your fault.

Below is an incomplete list of items (there is no way I could list everything here) you are responsible for and a suggestion or two about how to make things work.

Off the mat behavior – lead by example and have squad discussions about acting right outside of wrestling. When the inappropriate off the mat behavior of a member of your squad becomes a problem, distraction, or gets them removed from the team, then you let them down.

Knowledge of Items on Basic Skills List – teach, reteach, and explain it a different way until they all get it. If they don't know the moves, it is your fault, so figure it out until they do.

Squad/Team Connection – everyone needs to know that they are a member of the wrestling family and are valued. Create appropriate social events. Eat together at lunch. Give shout outs at practice. Make contact in squad meetings. Let them know that you care and have their back.

Communication – you need to have an electronic communication system in place so you can pass on information and make announcements. Please keep these guidelines in mind in your communications with your squad members:

- Electronic communications cannot be on an open platform that others can access or a platform/app that contains inappropriate material.
- No electronic communications before 7:00am or after 8:00pm.
- Communications are to be wrestling information only and not social (can be informational about a group social event time or place).
- Communications are to be positive. If there is a potentially negative issue that must be taken care of, it must be done in person.
- E-communications are an excellent way to send shout outs when you see someone doing something great in their training or outside of wrestling.

Meetings – You will be expected to attend and participate in regularly scheduled meetings in and out of the season with Coach Demarchi. You will be expected to effectively communicate to Coach Demarchi the issues, concerns, and questions of

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the rest of the team. You will be expected to participate in the discussion of the items on the agenda for that meeting and provide your honest opinion and helpful information to assist Coach Demarchi in the decision making process. You will need to meet ahead of time with the rest of the captains to organize your ideas and questions so that the meeting can be productive.

Athletic Period Workouts –

1. Make sure that everyone is dressed out, on the mat, and finished with the room sanitized on time.
2. Take attendance correctly and communicate to Coach Demarchi.
3. Be aware of the workout for the day (check the board) and prepare the room and the wrestlers.
4. Set the tone in the room with a positive attitude about getting better at the sport you and your teammates love.
5. Lead the workouts by example and vocally.

Practice –

1. Practice has all of the same responsibilities as the athletic period, but right before practice is an excellent opportunity to lead by example and vocally. Typically, there is a large amount of “dead time” between the end of school and the beginning of practice. This is a time to drill a learned skill, work on your 10,000 repetitions, spar or play wrestle, discover something new, wrestle with the coaches and get direct feedback.
2. Practice is a place where you can make a large impact on the team as a whole as well as on every individual's performance through your excellent leadership by example. Wrestlers will compete how they practice, therefore proper drilling and a positive learning attitude from everyone in practice is essential. Lead by example and others will follow here.
3. With the importance of practice established above, this is also a place where you must lead vocally, but make sure it is positive. Yelling at those that aren't doing their job or giving maximum effort may seem easy when you are doing your job, but you can only use that tool a couple of times before it becomes completely ineffectual and actually detrimental to the welfare of the whole team. Being positive in your redirection can be difficult and will also become

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very taxing on your patience, but it is extremely important. It is part of the job. Do your job.

Locker Rooms – this is the place where small issues have the opportunity to become large ones. Act right and make sure those around you act right. If you see something, say something. If you need assistance dealing with inappropriate behavior in the locker room, get help immediately. In today's litigious America, nothing is counted as horseplay or kids messing around anymore. Words like abuse, assault, hazing, and sexual harassment are used in court for these kind of situations. Teams have and will continue to be ruined based upon the actions of immature teenagers. Be vigilant. Time in the locker room is also a time to set the positive attitude and quell complainers. Misery loves company and people who have just had a bad practice or may have been disciplined are looking for support as they commiserate about how they were "done wrong." Most complaining athletes aren't bad people or bad teammates. They are just having a bad day and complaining is human nature, but don't allow that. Remind them that they just had a bad day or made a mistake, and mistakes are an awesome opportunity for growth. Have them go back through the mistake and figure out what they did wrong so they know how to make better choices in the future. Sometimes you will have to deal with the wrong kind of people that are looking to become a locker room pirate and just pillage and destroy. They don't respect themselves, the sport, their teammates, or the program as a whole enough to care about their actions. A locker room pirate can wreck and divide a team in a matter of minutes. Do not allow that for even a second. You say something immediately to the offender. If a locker room pirate challenges you or continues, that needs to be brought to the coaching staff immediately.

Transportation to and from Competitions –

1. Captains will ride the bus to and from all competitions except for in the event of an emergency. Captains will always be the last off the bus so they can clean, put up windows, collect forgotten equipment, and empty the trash.
2. Leading by example and being vocal is imperative again here. On the way to competitions, we are silently mentally preparing for competition. Everyone does it differently, but we are not talking or interacting with others electronically. Sleeping, working on homework, listening to music, watching

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videos, playing games on your phone are all okay. On the way back, we can talk and socialize. Are you acting right? Is everyone else acting right? Continue to be vigilant. If you see something, say something.

3. Make sure that we take and return the needed equipment for each competition. Before the bus pulls out of the parking lot on the way to the event and on the way back from the event, you must personally do a team equipment check (cameras, finals singlets, med kit, extra clock, scale, etc.). It is extremely helpful if you ask a day in advance as well as right before we leave the room if we need to take anything special for the next trip.

Weigh Ins – there is a great deal to take care of here and it is all extremely important. In a couple of instances, the wrestlers in your squad may be in a different weigh in facility or be weighing in at a different time (like Varsity in one gym and JV in another and/or males in one place and females in another). You must assign a wrestler in your squad that you trust to take care of all of the items below for you. Specifically assign a person, explain all the duties, then follow up with that assigned person after weigh ins.

1. As soon as you get off the bus, guide the whole team to the weigh in facility and have everyone check their weight. Make sure that everyone has a chance to use the bathroom and be back together as a group.
2. Line up everyone to go over the weigh in procedures again (remember that you may have done it 10 times already this year, but this one time may be someone's first time in a weigh in) so there are no mistakes; especially:
 - a. Weight cutting or adding activities (banned)
 - b. Not leaving the weigh in facility until after weigh ins have completed for you.
3. Check:
 - a. Hair
 - b. Nails
 - c. Approved suitable under garment to legally weigh in with.
 - d. Special equipment including mouth guards for wrestlers with outward facing metal dental work and make sure the officials see and approve said items.
 - e. Skin notes.
4. Keep track of everyone so that no one wanders off and misses weigh ins.

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5. Collect actual weights and report them back to the coaching staff.
6. Captains are the last to leave the weigh in facility to make sure everyone is out and no personal items or team equipment has been left behind. Do not leave when you are finished weighing in and go take care of yourself. Stay and be there for your teammates.

Pre-Match Warm Ups – we will always warm up as a team after weigh ins and before the first competitions of the day. Captains will lead this warm up from start to finish. Just as with split weigh ins, there may be a time when wrestlers may be in different facilities or wrestling at different times. You are responsible for assigning and instructing a trusted wrestler in you squad to run the warm up. Whenever possible, the whole team needs to warm up together on all levels.

1. Check with the coaches (don't make us chase you) to discuss the time for warm ups to begin.
2. Lead by example and be vocal about making sure that all personal issues (bathroom, parent communications, refueling, etc.) are taken care of in time to get everyone on the mat on time.
3. Lead by example and vocally with proper hydration and refueling. If a wrestler does not have the proper food, see that they get some. Don't allow a teammate to go without food or to eat garbage. Check everyone and say something.
4. Lead by example and vocally by getting dressed for warm ups in time. Selfish wrestlers who work on their own schedule instead of putting the team first will bring down the overall attitude of the team and can negatively affect performance.
5. You have a very structured set of drills and times to cover for a short warm up before a dual and a longer warm up before an individual tournament. Make sure that the team does them and does them well.

Dual Competitions – when the team is competing in a dual (multiple dual tournament, quad, tri, or just regular dual), you will need to lead by excellent example as well as vocally.

1. Before each dual, you need to meet with the entire team to reiterate the importance of wrestling for the team. This needs to happen on top of any meetings the coaching staff will have with the team.

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2. Make sure that everyone knows where to meet and how to send everyone off for each match. Send off is not a time to be inappropriate or obnoxious.
3. Make certain that no wrestler steps on the mat cold or dry. Get wrestlers up off the bench and warming up 5 to 6 matches in advance.
4. If not warming up for or recovering from a match, all wrestlers need to be engaged in the competition. That means, no phones, no hanging out with family, or friends. That means watching the matches, cheering for teammates, or meeting with sergeants or captains to learn lessons.

Individual Competitions – the responsibilities for an individual tournament are a little different because of the nature of the competition.

1. Have a meeting with the whole team before each and every round where you discuss responsibilities of each individual wrestler to advance, place and score bonus points. Be positive and remind everyone to rely on all their hard training.
2. At your first team meeting at the conclusion of the warm up, make sure that everyone knows the procedure for finding their bouts and communicating with the managers and coaching staff about when and where they will be wrestling.
3. Make sure that everyone is warming up well in advance of their individual bouts.
4. Check to see if we have any Spartan vs. Spartan matches and assign wrestlers to coach/corner them since the coaching staff will not coach against any of our student/athletes.
5. Be vigilant in the team stands and on the edge of the mat. Act right. Make sure everyone else is acting right. You always represent your school, coaches and team, but you are highly visible at a competition in your gear and there is a great deal of down time at an individual tournament where a wrestler could find trouble.
6. Resting, eating, and hanging out in the stands is acceptable in moderation, but get people off of their devices and involved in the wrestling. They need to be cheering on their teammates (especially supporting the JV) or watching great matches and learning. Being disconnected from the event on a device is just plain wasted time. Checking your phone, getting much needed sleep during a

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big break, or eating is fine. Killing time is just plain wasteful and disrespectful of the sport and your teammates.

Other Duties – The coaches could not possibly write down everything that you are responsible for during every possible situation through the course of the season. So, we will just add this final statement; keep your head up, eyes and ears open, think ahead, look around, ask to help, and be ready to take on extra duties at any time. It does not matter how much planning you do, something unforeseen is always lurking around the corner you didn't even know was there.

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Seven Lake Wrestling's Pledge of Leadership

I, *(printed name of team leader)* _____ pledge to do the following to the best of my ability while serving as a leader of The Seven Lakes Wrestling Team.

(Please initial each item and sign and date at the bottom).

___ I will serve the team as a servant leader and put the needs of the team and needs of the wrestlers in my charge above my own.

___ Not only will I make this year's team as successful as possible, but I will also leave a positive legacy for every team after this one through my vocal leadership and the leadership of my actions.

___ I will hold myself accountable while also holding all the wrestlers on the team accountable for their actions on and off the mat.

___ I will embrace the hard work of leadership and celebrate the improvement and victories of everyone. I will also take responsibilities for my and the team's failures, learn from our mistakes, and do the work to correct those mistakes.

Leader's Signature

Date