

## **Interview with John Gramuglia, head coach at Wadsworth.**

Wadsworth is currently ranked #1 in the state and has won the State Duals the past two years. They are also projected, by the excellent Brakeman Report, to unseat Lakewood St. Edward and become the first public school to win the Big School division in wrestling in 33 years. I talked to Coach Gramuglia recently, and we discussed how he built this excellent program that has finished in the top 10 in state for the past 15 years.

**RWS:** [Randyswrestlingsite.com](http://Randyswrestlingsite.com)

**JG:** **Coach Gramuglia**

**RWS:** I wanted to get at the core of the program, and hear from you, how you have built the program into what it is today.

**RWS:** First of all, how many athletes do you have at the high school level?

**JG:** We have 62 athletes at 4 levels: 2 Varsity, JV, and Freshman.

**RWS:** How many at Junior High?

**JG:** Over 50 athletes, 2 teams.

**RWS:** How many youth athletes do you have at the various grade levels?

**JG:** We have 120 athletes over 3 teams. 1st-2nd graders, 3rd-4th graders and 5th-6th graders. We work out on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and wrestle on Saturday.

**RWS:** How do you handle all those youth wrestlers - how do you practice?

**JG:** We warm them up, all together, then split them off into 4 different rooms.

**RWS:** How do parents of young athletes find out about youth wrestling at Wadsworth?

**JG:** We go to the elementary schools, send papers around there.

**RWS:** How do you keep those young guys interested in wrestling for 10+ years?

**JG:** It has to be a fun experience, there has to be a lot of parental involvement, and you have to have the right kind of people coaching them. If they like the coaches, and respect them, and it is fun, they keep wrestling. Also, the head coach has to be involved in every aspect of the program, and gets to know the younger kids - they know I care about them, and by the time they get to high school, they have known me for many years.

**RWS:** What qualities do you look for in coaches running your youth programs?

**JG:** They have to be coaches that the kids 'gravitate towards', can interact with. They have to be good role models, they can't be coming into the room with booze on their breath and things like that.

**RWS:** I imagine that has to be a hard thing to do, when you end up having to talk to someone and tell them they can't be a part of the program and do these things, show up drunk, etc.

**JG:** Sure, but as a coach, you have to be able to do those things.

**RWS:** So tell me, what shape was the program in when you got here? Was there a youth program?

**JG:** Pitiful - it was so bad, they were about to drop the program. We had no youth program at all and the program was in shambles.

**RWS:** How long ago was that? How long have you been there?

**JG:** 26 years ago - I was 26 when I took over the program.

**RWS:** So how did you get it started?

**JG:** First of all, we got the high school and junior high programs set and in good shape. We didn't even start the youth program until the next year or the following year, and we started with Saturday clinics. We sent out information to all the elementary schools, and held free clinics on Saturdays. We would have our high school practice from 9-12 on Saturday mornings, and then have a free clinic from 1-3. For some reason, we hardly ever had a Saturday meet, which seems odd, looking back at it, because we wrestle so often on Saturdays now. After a while, the kids and parents wanted more - so we started having practices, and we'd set up meets, and it just went from there.

**RWS:** Tell me about your support staff, your coaches - have you had a lot of stability with your coaches?

**JG:** Oh yeah, and that's been a big key. Mike Kallai has been coaching for 18 years. He's the police chief in Barberton, and his sons have come through and wrestled. Mike Wenger wrestled at Kent State, and his son is our 152 lber. He's the Junior High club coach. He has a poll barn and the guys go out there and work with him after the junior high season...Jerry Nadeau is our freestyle coach, and Todd Baughman...all these guys have been with us for years - just a great, great group of coaches.

**RWS:** So you have a club junior high program, or...

**JG:** We have both club and junior high. We go through the junior high season, which I think is a very important part of it - they are part of the school, get recognized by the school, walk around the junior high being recognized as wrestlers on the team - and all that is very important stuff. And then when the junior high season ends, they go right into club wrestling, go to junior high districts and state, etc.

**RWS:** So when they get to the high school level, most of these kids have grown up in Wadsworth's youth program all these years and have been with the program all these years?

**JG:** Yeah, they've grown up in the program all their lives.

**RWS:** So its not like you're getting kids transferring in from Wyoming and California then.

**RWS:** What method do you use to peak your athletes at the end of the year?

**JG:** We go shorter and harder, cut back on weight training - good stretching at the end of the year. We start off with our core workout, sit-ups, neck bridges, tumbles, movement drills - then it is 60 minutes from the end of that. So, in total, about 1:15.

At this time of year, we want them well rested.

We'll come in on Sundays at 5 for film sessions, and do a bike workout and swimming - stay off the pavement, which is hard on your knees and ankles.

**RWS:** Thank you very much, and good luck to you at the State Tournament.