

International Network of Wrestling Researchers (INWR)



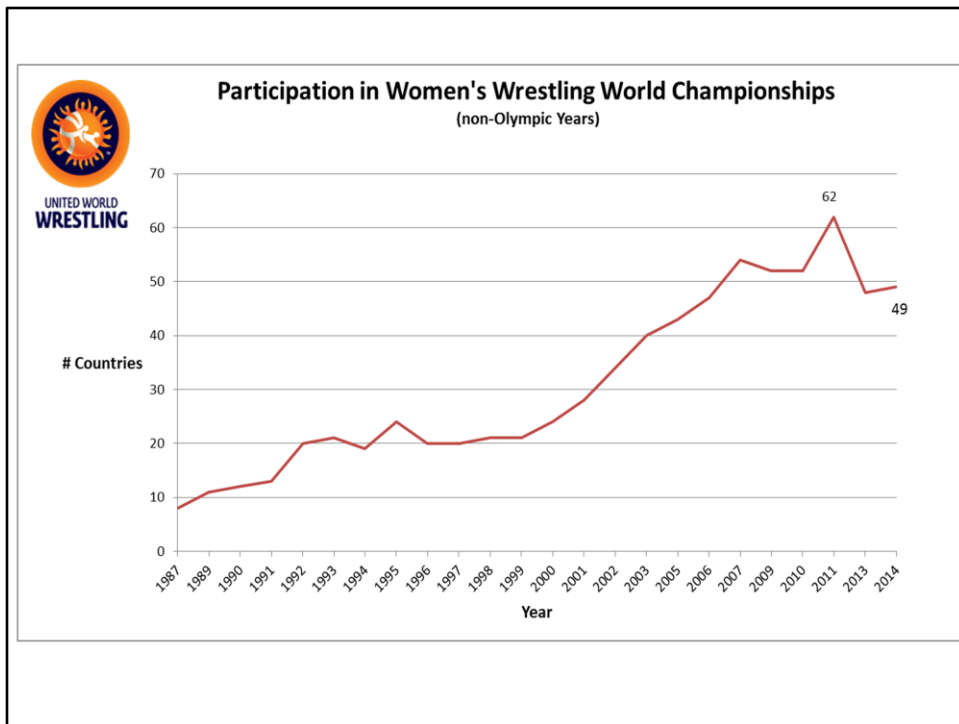
Advancing Our Sport Through Knowledge
Faire progresser notre sport à travers la connaissance
Развитие нашего вида спорта через образование



THE EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S WRESTLING: HISTORY, ISSUES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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In the overall history of wrestling, the development of modern women's wrestling has been dramatic. In roughly one generation, it has developed from the novelty with a small number of young girls competing in a handful of countries, to women from over 100 countries striving for Olympic medals.

Tracing the growth of women's wrestling around the world with an actual number of participants has proven difficult. One indicator of the growth of world-wide interest is to trace the number of countries that participate in the world championships. The first official world championship for women that was sanctioned by wrestling's international governing body was held in 1987. At that time the governing body was known as the International Federation of Amateur Wrestling, known as FILA from the French, *Fédération Internationale de Lutte Amateur*. In 2014 the name was changed to United World Wrestling (UWW). There were 8 countries in that first world championship in 1987, and this has grown to a high of 62 countries in 2011. The need to qualify the weight class for a country causes the participation to peak in the year preceding an Olympics.

Table 1. Participation in Women's World Wrestling Championships by Country

| Country | 1987 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Algeria | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | P | | | | | | | |
| Argentina | | | M | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | P | P | P | | P | P |
| Armenia | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | P | P | | P | | | | | P |
| Australia | | | | P | P | P | | P | P | P | P | P | | P | P | P | | | P | P | P | | | | | |
| Austria | | | | | P | C | C | C | M | P | C | P | C | | P | P | P | P | P | P | P | P | P | P | | P |
| Azerbaijan | | | | | | | | P | P | | | | | | | | | | P | M | C | M | M | P | M | M |
| Belarus | | | | | | | | | | | | | | P | P | P | M | M | P | M | M | P | M | C | P | M |
| Belgium | | C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Brazil | | | | | | | | | | | | P | | P | | P | P | | P | P | P | P | P | P | P | M |
| Bulgaria | | | | | | | M | P | M | P | P | P | P | P | P | P | P | C | C | C | M | C | C | M | M | M |

Another useful indicator is the number of countries that have ever sent competitors to the world championships. Listed in table 1 is a record of all countries that have had a representative participating, as well as a record of whether medals were won—an indicator of achievement. Since the world championships for women have been held, 85 countries have been represented; 39 countries have had an athlete win a medal; and 21 countries have had a world champion.



For instance, we see for the country of Austria, they had their first participant in the world championships in 1993

Nikola Hartmann won her first of 5 WC

Participation in Women's World Wrestling Championships by Country

Evangelia Nikolaou, 5th 1990

Helen Mitzifri, 3rd 1990

Sofia Poumpouridou, World Champion 2002

Fani Psatha, 4th 2003

Stavroula Zyouri, 4th Athens Olympic Games 2004

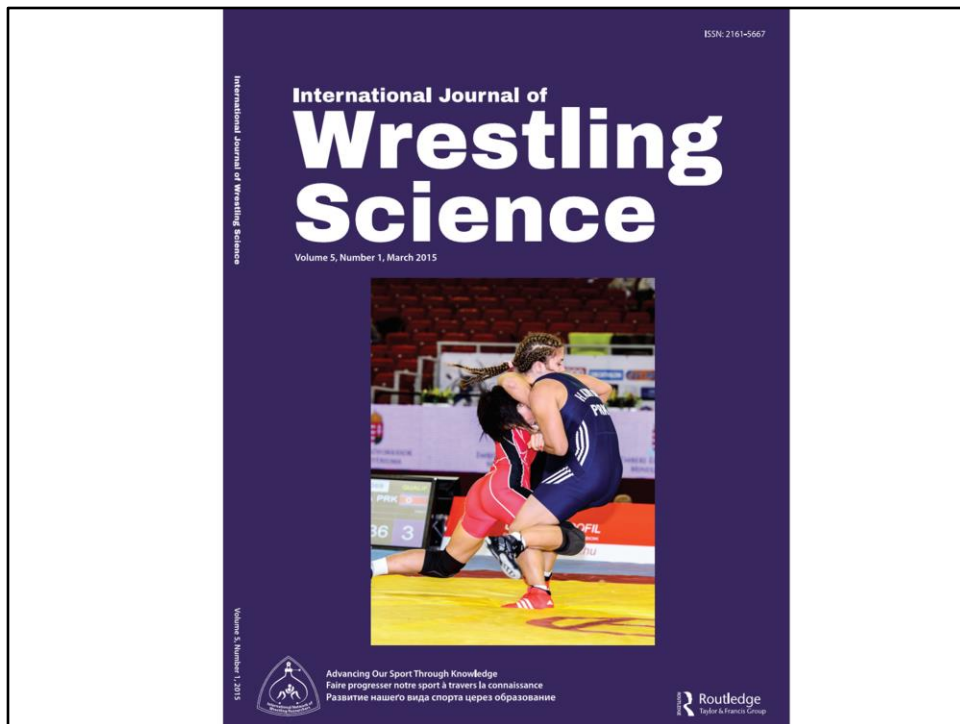
Maria Prevolaraki, 3rd 2012

United World Wrestling SUPER 8 Campaign



2015 is proving to be an historic year for women's wrestling, and its promotion is at the center of a number of events around the world. United World Wrestling (UWW), the international governing body for wrestling, initiated a "Super 8" campaign at the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Museum in Lausanne in January. This promotional program brought together eight outstanding women from the sport of wrestling to help create increased female participation in the sport. IOC President Thomas Bach attended the event, at the IOC Museum in Lausanne. "We're committed to matching the IOC and President Bach's pledge to ensure more opportunities for female athletes around the world. This event is only the beginning of our progress." said UWW President Nenad Lalovic .

the Greece Wrestling Federation and their Annual Scientific Forum at Olympia in May, will have the theme of Women's Olympic Wrestling; and the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in the USA will focus its Educational Outreach Exhibit for 2015 on women's wrestling (National Wrestling Hall of Fame, 2014).



The International Network of Wrestling Researchers (INWR) named 2015 as the Year of Women's Wrestling;

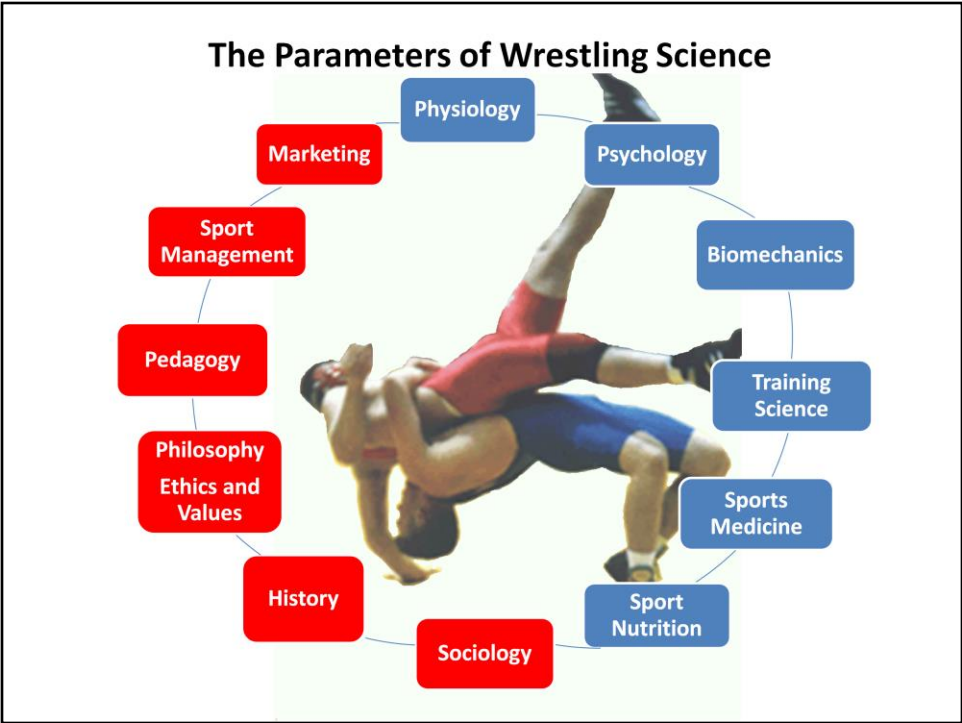
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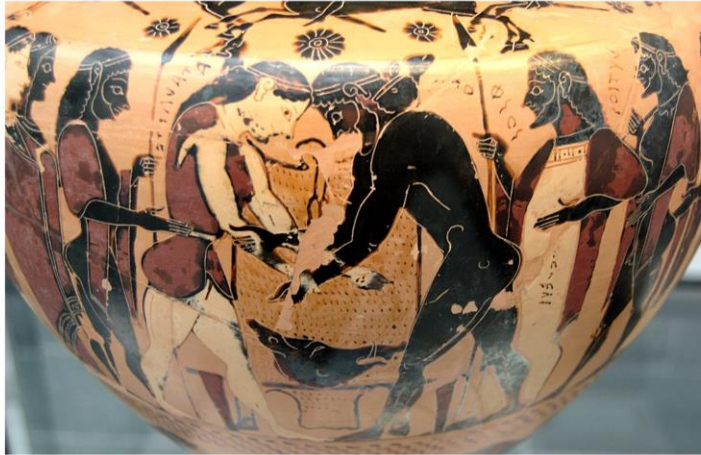
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From the myths of ancient Greece - Atalanta is described as a very skilled wrestler. She is shown on a vase wrestling the hero Peleus



From the myths of ancient Greece Atalanta is described as a very skilled wrestler. She is shown on a Chalcidian black-figured hydria vase wrestling the hero Peleus

Spartan Women



The females in Sparta were different from the rest of Greece, because they valued physical fitness and courage in girls as well as the boys. Xenophon and Plutarch have both described the the upbringing of Spartan girls included running and wrestling (Guttmann, 1991). Plutarch wrote that Spartan women "unlike all the other Greek women, they lived outdoors, were training for the race and wrestling, and competed on this with men,"

Indigenous and Primitive Wrestling



There are numerous examples of women wrestling among various tribes in Africa. Ritual wrestling existed (and still exists) in some tribal societies where pubescent girls often wrestled as part of their initiation into mature womanhood. Some of the countries where wrestling among women exists are Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal and the Congo. Among the Diola tribe of Gambia adolescent boys and girls wrestled (but not against one another) and the male champion often married the female champion. In other tribes, such as the Yala of Nigeria, men and women wrestled one another. In the Congo, women's wrestling is present in the Igbo and Njabi tribes. The Igbo women would wrestle women from other villages to be considered more desirable for marriage (Paul, 1987; Guttman, 1991). In South America, Huka-huka is the Brazilian folk wrestling style practiced by the indigenous people of Xingu and is performed by both men and women



Борьба женщин на празднике ямарикума.



The late 19th century and early 20th century was the age of wrestling and displays of strength in circuses, music halls and fairs. Throughout Europe and the United States crowds came to watch both the strongmen and strongwomen perform. These shows also included wrestling. It seems clear that many of these exhibitions of strength and wrestling skill were legitimate, but in some cases declined into more of a spectacle. In the famous cabaret music halls of Paris, such as the Folies Bergeres and Moulin Rouge, women wrestled other women, but also put out challenges to the men in the audience to come onstage and face them in a match



One of the most famous performers was Masha (Maria) Poddubny from Russia, who 6-times between 1889 and 1910 was crowned the “lady world wrestling champion.” She was the sister of the great wrestler, Ivan Poddubny

**France is the birthplace of women's wrestling:
Cercle Calonnois de Lutte Hercule in Calonnes
Ricouart in 1971**



Pierre Burmer François Jacob

Internationally, the birthplace of modern women's wrestling is in France. The atmosphere in France in the late 1960s and early 1970s was conducive to changes in the opportunities for women in society. This was a part of the feminist movement of the time that advocated for equality between men and women in all of society.

The first women's wrestling in an established sports club in France took place in Cercle Calonnois de Lutte Hercule located in Calonnes Ricouart in September 1971. Pierre Burmer, a former miner and coach began wrestling training for twenty girls, 15 to 26 years old. Girls first practiced with the boys, but because the number of girls grew very quickly, one session per week was devoted to them. He was assisted by Theodule Toulotte, a two-time Olympian for France, and François Jacob, who were wrestlers at the club (TOMOE, 1992; Ballery, 1988). Pierre Burmer (1931-2009) was a champion wrestler as well as a respected coach. In 2003 he received the FILA Gold medal (Burmer, 2009). The son of François Jacob, Daniel Jacob, eventually took over the training of the girls division which produced world champion Martine Poupon, and the club is still in existence today

**1974-Claude & Denise Picavet
Tourcoing Wrestling Union
1977-Tourcoing Wrestling Club**



Anna Gomis

In another city in Northern France, Denise Picavet heard of the wrestling that Burmer was conducting and became involved as a competitor. In 1974, Denise and her husband Claude Picavet founded the first all-female wrestling club, the Tourcoing Wrestling Union, which in 1977 merged with the Tourcoing Wrestling Club. This dynamic couple helped establish the great reputation of this club. The Tourcoing Wrestling Club is still a leading club in France. It can claim credit for producing 12 women world champions, among them is Anna Gomis, a member of the UWW Hall of Fame. It annually hosts an international women's tournament.



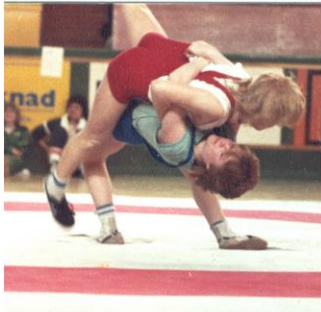
Another person of note from the Tourcoing Wrestling Club is Régine Le Gleut, who was 4-time champion of France, was the first woman to officiate in France, and has officiated at the past four Olympic Games.

These developments in France forced the Fédération Française de Lutte (FFL, French Wrestling Federation) to approve licenses for women in 1975, but for practice only. This was quickly changed in response to the rapid growth of licensed women, from 51 in 1976, 84 in 1977, 296 in 1981, and over 1,000 by 1984 (Louveau, 1986). The FFL began promoting female participation with the establishment of a National Women's Commission, and its first meeting was held in February of 1978. It was chaired by Michel Dusson and one of the members was Denise Picavet, who was still competing. The first championship of France, organized by the FFL was held in Montauban in 1980.

Sheila Wager
USA
Seoul



Norway
Kolbotn
Ove Gundersen
1979



Norway also played an important role. The leader in Norway was Ove Gundersen who was an active wrestler on the Norwegian national team and general secretary of the Norwegian Wrestling Federation. movement of the time that advocated for equality between men and women in all of society.

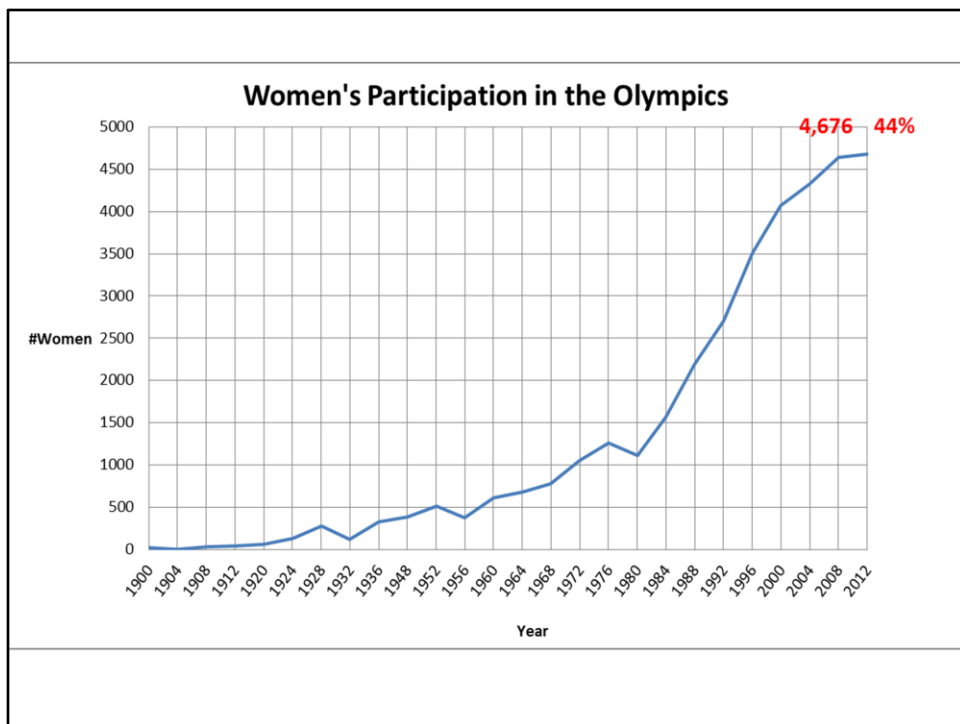
In the autumn of 1979 Marit Foss, a young girl 15 years of age, asked Ove Gundersen, to coach her in wrestling. Gundersen agreed, but only if she could bring at least five other girls that wanted to wrestle. Following that first season the group of women grew to 20 girls, along with a large interest from the media. News spread about the girls wrestling in the club at Kolbotn and soon other clubs followed with own programs.

For the 1980 season, Bjørn Eilert Eriksen, the director of the Kolbotn Cup (he was also a FILA Bureau member) added female wrestling to the program. Ten girls from three clubs attended the competition in three weight categories. This experiment was a huge success and subsequently, nearly all clubs in Norway included girls wrestling in their competitions.

In August 1981 the World Championship for Greco Roman wrestling was held in Oslo and women's wrestling was included in the opening ceremony. This was vital for it led to an exchange of information between the people from France, Belgium and Norway.

At the FILA Congress held on August 10, 1982 in Edmonton, Canada, Mr. Dusson presents the advantage to be found by the federation's acceptance of wrestling by woman. This presentation provided both a practical and philosophical rationale for what wrestling can do for women, as well as what women will bring to wrestling,

At a Commission meeting in Norway on January 31, 1987 it was decided that the full-nelson be prohibited, the matches were of shorter duration than men's freestyle and there was a shorter time to work on the mat, in par terre position. Following these decisions, there was no disagreement when Ove Gundersen and Svein Haanshuus of Norway proposed a Women's World Wrestling Championship be held in Norway on October of that same year. The commission was unanimous in their support for Norway. France requested the year 1989 and Tokyo, Japan for 1991. The European Championships had already been planned for 1988 in Dijon, France.



The growth of women's participation in the Olympics has been dramatic. In the first modern Olympic Games in 1896, women were not allowed to participate. This reflected the views of the father of the modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin (1912) as he described the Olympics as the, "...solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism, with internationalism at a base, loyalty as a means, art for its setting, and female applause as reward." However, in 1900 in Paris women participated in lawn tennis and golf, but these 22 women out of 997 total athletes only made up 2% of the total. Thus began the slow struggle for gender equity in the Olympic Games and is documented in table 2. This struggle is not yet complete as women made up 44.2% of Olympians in the 2012 London Games



Wrestler Annabelle Ali of Cameroon was the nation's first woman flag bearer at the opening ceremony. Three other women wrestlers given this extraordinary honor are Kyoko Hamaguchi of Japan in 2004, Maria McQueen Dunn of Guam and Saori Yoshida of Japan, both in 2012.

Hall of Fame and Other Notable Performers



Yayoi Urano

Hall of Fame and Other Notable Performers

Women's wrestling has already added greatly to the history of our sport. Fourteen women have been inducted into the UWW Hall of Fame. Saori Yosida and Kaori Icho of Japan are among the all-time icons of wrestling, both having won three Olympic titles.

Women in the United World Wrestling Hall of Fame

| Year Inducted | Inductee | Country | Accomplishments |
|---------------|-------------------------|-------------|--|
| 2006 | Christine Nordhagen | Canada | 6 x World Champion |
| 2007 | Yayoi Urano | Japan | 6 x World Champion |
| 2008 | Xiue Zhong | China | 5x World Champion |
| 2008 | Dong Feng Liu | China | 5x World Champion |
| 2009 | Shoko Yoshimura | Japan | 5x World Champion |
| 2010 | Anna Gomis | France | 4x World Champion and Olympic Bronze |
| 2010 | Nikola Hartmann-Duenser | Austria | 5x World Champion |
| 2011 | Patricia Saunders | USA | 4x World Champion |
| 2012 | Gudrun Hoeie | Norway | 4x World Champion |
| 2013 | Marianne Nobs | Switzerland | Official from 1988-2012 |
| 2013 | Carol Huynh | Canada | Olympic Gold and Bronze |
| 2013 | Irini Merleni | Ukraine | 3x World Champion won the first Olympic gold medal |
| 2014 | Sara Eriksson | Sweden | 2x World Champion |
| 2014 | Lise Golliot-Legrand | France | 2x World Champion and Olympic Bronze |

Current Issues

Promotion

**Sexual Exploitation
(Marketing & Media)**

Muslim Athletes





