

## THE WEIGHT OF WRESTLING

Story by: Alexis Purdy

Stepping onto a scale and looking down at the number can be no big deal for some, but difficult for others. Regardless, checking their weight is a daily requirement for wrestlers, despite how challenging it may be.

Though the process of checking weight becomes exhausting, the athletes strive to stay on track for weigh-ins. Makayla Rivera (12) calls this a “burn out.” Maintaining strength mentally and physically is crucial for female wrestlers as they undergo the pressure of the demanding sport.

“We love the sport, but then it becomes too heavy for us because we’re constantly having to wake up [and] weigh ourselves,” Rivera said. “We get to school, after lunch we weigh ourselves. After practice, we see how much we lose. It becomes a lot and it feels like a chore sometimes.”

Wrestlers are separated into specific weight classes depending on how much they weigh, as they must wrestle opponents in their same weight class. Fluctuating in weight causes the athletes to be bumped into different classes, which can be a challenge.

“My senior year, I’ve dropped a weight class,” Rivera said. “It’s really starting to get stressful because I’ve been wrestling the same people since freshman year. Now that I’m in a new weight class, it kind of gets harder because you’re seeing new faces, you’re seeing people with new techniques, and you’re still having the stress of being able to make weight.”

Along with the stress of weight classes, some wrestlers also face a common battle in today’s society: body image.

“We want to look a certain way and we’re putting a number on that,” Laney Finazzo (12) said. “A lot of people struggle with that and that’s definitely a big deal. It’s like, ‘Oh if I’m not 155, then I don’t look good.’ It’s like no. You look good, you feel good, you wrestle good. There should not be a number there.”

Simply spending time with friends can come with temptations, but athletes hold themselves accountable by obtaining healthy diets throughout their season, despite the difficulty.

“It’s hard because you see people around you eating what they want,” Gianna De Cicco (12) said. “I mean, it’s not depressing, but it’s like, man, I want to go drink a milkshake. My friends are like, ‘Let’s go to Sonic,’ well, I can’t always do that, so that’s frustrating.”

Through the intimacy of wrestling, De Cicco has found ways to stay in tune with her body and maintain a realistic mindset regarding her relationship with food.

“It’s just kind of understanding, how does my body work? What can I eat?,” De Cicco said. “And then accepting that you’re a human being, you’re going to want to eat certain things, and it’s OK to do that. This is only a short period. It’s a long season, but it’s not forever.”

De Cicco notes that being a female wrestler comes with its own setbacks, as cutting weight for wrestling is a different experience for men versus women.

“Women can’t cut weight like men can,” De Cicco said. “Men can put on sweats and just sweat it out. And women can do that a little bit, but not really. It’s much harder for us.”

Through her years of experience, Finazzo has found that altering her mindset as a wrestler has better affected her performance on the mat.

“Last year I struggled a lot with getting in my head and it really messed with me,” Finazzo said. “But this year I was like, ‘I’m gonna start a new mindset.’ Whenever I’m on the mat, I always just think of [how] I want to win more. I want to get better.”

With the support of their coaches and teammates, the girls wrestling team has pushed the toxicity of the sport aside, as they’ve learned to love their bodies and become the strongest athletes they can be.

“[Wrestling] really helped me a lot with confidence, being able to build muscle, and just feel better in my own body,” Rivera said. “I know I’m capable in this sport. I know I’m really athletic. I don’t really care what other people say, so it’s just helped me grow a lot mentally.”