

Advice Articles for the Sport of Wrestling

By: **Nick Purler**
Purler Wrestling, Inc
& Foundation Wrestling



“Those who stay will be Champions”



“Wrestling taught. Wrestling simplified.”

www.PurlerWrestling.com

www.FoundationWrestling.com

Contact information:

Purler Wrestling, Inc
c/o Nick Purler
84 Quiet Ridge Ct
Foristell, MO 63348
314-229-3540
nick@purlerwrestling.com

Winning the mental game

It is often said that wrestling is 90% mental. This is key...and it is also very true.

If you don't think you can beat someone yet...then admit it. It is tough to go from not placing in State to winning Nat'ls without 'baby-stepping' yourself to that final goal. Set a goal to GO CLOSE with those kids. Don't worry about beating them yet. Once you get within 3-4 points of them, THEN you are ready to beat them. It is not an ALL or NONE deal. That is a loser mentality.

I believe we lack confidence because we focus so much on winning and we are TERRIFIED of losing. Bottom line is that the only one that REALLY cares about your wrestling match is you. Not everyone is staring at you after you lose. Furthermore, we do not have absolute control over winning no matter how good we are. Our opponent has something to say about it, the official can make a mistake, the clock worker can mess up, you can blow your knee out during the match, etc. Focus on what you DO have total control over.

Examples of what you do have total control over:

You have control over wrestling smart, battling your opponent and being smart and calm throughout the match, etc. You also have control over whether or not you pressure your opponent and stay after him. You have control over the amount of time you spend developing your technique and skills. You have control over jogging back to the middle or walking back with your head down. You have control over fighting for the first takedown and fighting off bottom. You have control over whether or not you give up your arms on bottom or fighting to keep them free. You have control over many things. If you focus on some of what I have outlined for you, and you still lose...then accept the loss and move on. Your goal is not to win every match for the rest of your life anyway...that isn't realistic. All best football teams lose, all best baseball players strike out...you get the idea. Your goal is to go 4-0 at the State Championships.

Don't fear losing. If you are afraid to lose, then you will never be good at anything. There is no certainty you will win. Get over it. This uncertainty of outcome should fire you up and fuel your performance, not poison your performance by causing you to choke or panic. There is a 'thrill' involved in going into a match versus a great opponent...one that either has or is capable of beating you. Those that have a 'thrill-seeking' mentality are ALWAYS the best athletes. Others are grouped as 'practice room wrestlers'. The uncertainty about competition is what draws all these great athletes that you read about who come out of retirement. The very reason some of you reading this choke in competition is the very reason so many others CAN'T STAND being away from the competition. It is how you DEAL with the pressures of competition that matters.

Do this: Instead of getting SCARED when you have a top kid to face off against, feel CHALLENGED. If I say: "I'm gonna see if I can beat this kid today" then I will be feeling excited about the match. If I say "Oh my God, I have to wrestle him!?!!" then I will step on the mat terrified and won't be able to win. Feel CHALLENGED about the match.

Don't fear winning. Yes, that is what I said. I believe I have had kids that are afraid of winning. They are afraid of being the man! Being on top is scary I guess and we are taught that once you get on top, it is harder since everyone is gunning for you. That simply is wrong and I don't know where this mentality came from. Once you are on top, most of them (95%) will lay down. They get psyched out and choke when they face you...just as some of you reading this have done in the past. I say that once you get on top, it is EASIER to stay there. Sure, there is the remaining 5% that will go harder against you but those kids go hard against everyone. Once you get on top, many kids will fear you and their parents and coaches won't expect them to beat you. There is this mentality that it is okay to lose to certain kids or certain teams. I believe that the kids on top win way too many matches because no one goes after them. THIS is why I think it is easier to stay on top than climb to the top. The kids that go after you are the one's that will go after everyone, the rest will hold back or just plain lay down. You should WANT to be the man. You should want to be the kid that everyone wants to watch but nobody wants to wrestle. There is nothing wrong with wanting it all.

Example of this: At OSU, I was involved with that program for 6 years and we won the Division I NCAA title 3 times! Well, as we were handed out our singlets and gear each year we were told in no uncertain terms that "We were expected to win first, expected to be All-Americans and expected by our fans, team-mates, and the rest of the nation to be FIRST" Also, we were told that our Orange & Black singlets were worth 2 points a match. Those 2 points came from our competition being scared and intimidated. Every match began 2-0 in our favor. I found this to be true.

What is mental toughness?

This is easy. Mental toughness is like being a robot...not thinking. This is a common theme in my room. Thinking will get you beat. If my coach says we have 20 more sprints, the tough ones will step on the line while the weak ones will whine or make faces and act like a crybaby...they will go into *thinking mode* and feel sorry for themselves. The tough ones will remain 'detached' from the pain and step on the line. The Soviet coaches of the former Soviet athletic empire did not allow their athletes to show ANY emotion.

Mental toughness is also about being stubborn. You will score more points each match by being stubborn than with moves. Moves are a relatively small part of wrestling. Being tough and absolutely stubborn is what scores 90% of all points in the sport of wrestling. This is the bottom line and if you don't take this advice as absolute fact, then you will not reach your goals in wrestling. I am right about this.

Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing. It is not OK to lose to certain kids over and over again. If you get beat by the same kid in practice each day and begin to accept it, then before you know it an entire year will go by and you will still be getting your face rubbed in the mat by the same kid. People that win make a decision to win. Success is no accident.

Story time:

When I was a young kid, we would travel to meets and it seemed like many of the parents we traveled with had this mentality that it was OK to lose to Oklahoma kids. If their son got 3rd, then mom was happy and dad was proud...as long as it was an Oklahoma kid that won 1st. There was a 'safety-net' mentality here. My dad was furious with this and it was NOT OK for us to lose to Oklahoma kids. We beat a lot of them and also lost to some as well...but went after all kids...regardless of what wrestling state they were from. Sometimes it is the parents' fault that their son doesn't reach his potential. Think about it.

If your coach or parents don't have high expectations for you...then do it yourself. Shannon Miller (Olympic Champion gymnast) once said: "No one ever had high expectations of me, but that was okay because I had high expectations of myself!" There you go.

Story time:

An Olympian once told my Sudden Victory Wrestling Camp kids that the reason he is such of a consistent performer is because he finds a way to feed off of the negative things he encounters in competition. In sports psychology, this is called reframing. You RE-FRAME your negative reactions into positive ones. For example, before he wrestled for the spot on Olympic team, he began feeling nervous and thinking negative thoughts. He did not want to be the Olympic team alternate AGAIN, he had not beaten this opponent in the last 2 years and had just lost their first bout of the evening. Things were not looking good. Then he began to think about the match that was about to happen. He started thinking of the elevated mat that was up on a 5-foot platform and how cool it was to run up those stairs to square off in front of the sold out crowd. He thought about how his opponent would be all angry and muscled up and try to rip his head off and how he was going to try to rip this man's head off too. He thought about all the fans and TV cameras there and how the entire wrestling

world was waiting to hear of the outcome of their matches so they'd know who was on the US team.

*Notice, he did not think or worry about winning (remember, only think about what you have TOTAL control over) but instead thought about the FUN part of wrestling. Within 2 minutes, he went from being totally unmotivated and scared (choking) to being so fired up he could not wait for the match. This is the most vital piece of advice anyone can give you. THIS STORY EXEMPLIFIES PERFORMANCE AND GETTING READY. Use this story and the advice in this story and you will know what it takes to get ready. You will also look forward to competition instead of fearing it. This is what you do when your coach says to 'get mentally ready for this match'.

*Coaches: Define exactly what you mean when you tell your kids to 'get ready' and use this story as an example. They need to think about the match and the battle that will ensue.

ps This is also how you get motivated to practice. Think about the drilling and how great a technician you are going to be. Think about getting big and broad and you will begin to get motivated to lift the weights. Don't think about the work or how tired you are going to be...think about the pay off. Many people think about the work and the downside...so they stay in the couch. Motivating yourself is a necessary skill. If you don't have this skill, you will never be any good at anything.

If you feel like you are going to choke, do what is mentioned above. Reframe your thoughts. People always give athletes the advice of "Just don't think about it". Well, that is impossible! Our brains run 24 hours a day and you can't stop thinking. But, you can take control over WHAT you think about. Replace your thoughts with thoughts that make you feel like wrestling. Replacing your thoughts is another skill you must have. These are all essential skills to performing, getting mentally ready for a match or getting motivated to train.

Winning close ones:

As for winning close matches versus great opponents, you must realize that many matches can go either way. Winning your first State or National title or medal will require you to win close matches. Just as you cannot be afraid to lose, you cannot be afraid to have close matches.

How do you win close matches? Several keys come to mind:

1. Don't make mistakes. Most big matches are lost, not won. Mistake-free wrestling equals winning wrestling. Wrestle smart.

2. Have a game plan (read below)
3. Focus on our one-point-at-a-time wrestling philosophy. Remember, the only way to beat a great opponent (or anyone else for that matter) is one point at a time.
4. You MUST get your escape point. If you can't get up, you will end up with a lot of bronze medals.
5. Get the first takedown and 2nd period escape point. I know that this sounds easier said than done but if you focus ALL your efforts on getting the first takedown, you'll generally get it. This is the bottom line. Plus, it gives you a starting point for winning the match. As for the 2nd period, if you pick bottom and get away, you are now winning the match 3-0 or 3-1 (if he got away at the end of the first). Going into the 3rd with a lead like this puts you in the drivers seat and if you stay tough and smart, it is almost mathematically impossible for you to lose.

** Don't defer your chance to score now!*

SELDOMLY DO WE DEFER...only if the kid is tremendous on top will we defer. Otherwise, we pick bottom in the second. Good news is that our opponent's will always defer to us so chances are, we get to go on bottom about 100% of the time in the 2nd period.

EX: I get the takedown and he escapes. End of 1st period is 2-1. Second period I defer and he goes down...gets escape point. End of 2nd period is 2-2. I am on bottom and there is pressure on both wrestlers. However, if I took bottom in the 2nd and get away, I am now going into the 3rd period with a 3-1 lead. Sure, he is on bottom but ALL the pressure is on him. If I am a leg-rider on top, I am in the drivers seat. This is the GAMEPLAN FOR WINNING BIG MATCHES that Purler Wrestling Academy enforces. It works. Don't defer.

6. If you find yourself down in the 3rd and needing to make a comeback, feel challenged...not scared. If you feel scared and panic because you are losing, then you will never be any good. If you feel challenged and step up, you will be State and National Champion. You will have to come from behind to win big tournaments. I guarantee it. Plan for it NOW so that when it does happen, you will react appropriately.

Game plans:

The bottom line is that we attack the problem. For example, if I am nervous about my opponent's quickness, my game plan will be to tie him up and stay in a low stance while he is outside since I know quick kids can score from the outside position. I may decide to work from a head tie or under hook position this

match. A key to controlling your nerves and self-doubt is to attack the problems that have you concerned. Don't ignore your concerns; these are red flags that will lead you to success. Develop a game plan and DEAL with your concerns about your opponent. This is a vital part of pre-match preparation. If you don't know your opponent, then simply size him up. Develop a game plan based on what he looks like. For example, a real tall kid may be a leg rider or cradle man...many are. Or, you may like to hit low singles on short, stocky kids. Seeing this type of kid may give you the idea to try to score from outside at first. Again, it is only a starting point and sometimes you can't develop much of a game plan since you have never seen the kid wrestle before or have never gone against him. So you do what you can do and 'size him up' and try to develop a strategy or 'plan-of-attack' based on what his body type is.

Body language is important. We all can tell when someone is sad because they have a sad look on their face and have sad body language. They look at the ground, slump in their chair, etc. Well, it is scientifically proven that the reverse is also true. No matter how you feel inside, if you put a confident look on your face, hold your head up, maintain a calm and confident expression and keep your chest out, your body chemistry will actually change and reflect that of a confident person. This is fact and common knowledge to highly successful athletes. How else do you think actors make themselves cry? Steve Frasier wrote an article on this years ago that really opened my eyes. It was call something like "The best athletes are often the best actors" and was a good article. Confidence is a learned behavior...you are not born that way...at least most of us are not. Practice being calm and confident and everyday life such as while at school, etc. I know many of your Freshman enter high school and it can be very intimidating. This is a good time to put on a confident body language and learn to look confident. Don't act like a whipping boy...that is the bottom line. *"Even if you are not confident, act like you are. No one can tell the difference."*

Focus on what you CAN do. It is said that successful people spend 90% of their time focusing on the solution and only 10% of their time focusing on the problem. Unsuccessful people spend 90% of their time focusing on the problem and only 10% of their time focusing on the solution. Pick the ONE thing you need to do in order to improve and give yourself 2 weeks to correct that. That alone can put you from being a State qualifier to a State Champion or a non-qualifier to a place-winner.

Keep some perspective. Remember, we are in one of the only countries where kids and adults can even pursue sports, hobbies, or interests. In just about every other country, they are dodging bullets or waiting in bread lines. As important as it may seem to you now, wrestling is a game. I know it is important to you but you have to maintain some perspective.

What I have written above is probably some of the best advice I can give you. It comes from someone who has performed at a very high level and beaten some of the best...and who has also had bouts of low-performance and disappointing losses...just as all athletes have. I, myself have had bouts of highs and lows in wrestling and have learned a lot over the years through these highs and lows as well as from experiences I've been through over the 25+ years in wrestling. I have been a part of what many still consider to be the best high school team Missouri has ever had as well as a college program that won 3 NCAA titles (Oklahoma State) while I was there and that has won over 30 to date. I do know a thing or two about team performance and what a winning program looks like and feels like...as well as what winners look and act like. I hope this helps you to deal with the most important part of our sport, the mental preparedness side of wrestling

-Nick

ps: Put this on your wall so you can see it every day.

*"Your desire to win **MUST BE** greater than your fear of losing"*

"Don't let the PRESSURES of competition to be greater than the PLEASURES of competition."

Winning the mental game - Part 2

Dealing with pressure: Put it on. Take it off.

Some of us do best when the pressure is on and some of us better with the pressure off. No need to say that in a big match, the pressure is on. How we DEAL with this pressure is more important than how many miles you ran this month, how many hours you drilled your techniques, or how much weight you lifted. Those things are 'preparation' for the time of competition and matter ONLY if you compete your best. If you choke, then all that work is wasted and you may as well just sat home on the couch because you get the same results.

Not choking:

How to cope???

1. **Put pressure on.** Those of you that love the crowds and like to see the top kid on your weight class will definitely fit into this category. In my experience this is only about 10% of the kids I coach...at the very most. These are the 'confrontational' kids...the ones who always like to mix it up and simply don't care who they have.
2. **Take pressure off.** This is simply 'coping' and putting things into perspective. The athlete with this type of personality will perform best if he reminds himself of several things:
 - The sun will still come up tomorrow whether I win or lose this match. And when it comes right down to it, the only one who REALLY cares about the outcome of this match is me. I will wrestle smart and be stubborn and fight on the mat...and if I win...great. If not, then I can live with it. I am prepared for any outcome. I will only do my best and wrestle to win the match.

Now, YOU need to decide which one you are. Don't pick the type of athlete you WISH you were...that doesn't matter.

Bottom line is that we all have pressure in sports...or anything else where there is something to be lost. DEALING with it is what puts us into a 'position' to win. I say 'position' to win because there are no guarantees that you will win. Realizing this is key. If you are looking for a guarantee, then I can GUARANTEE you that there are none! Don't let this 'uncertainty of outcome' spook you.

There will be ups and downs and sadly enough, you will experience some downs. Wrestle to win the match and let the chips fall where they may.

I don't care IF you lose...I care HOW you lose. If you do go down, go down swingin' and fighting your butt off to win the match...even as the clock is ticking and it seems hopeless. If your opponent beats you, it doesn't mean he has to WHIP you! There is a difference between getting beat and getting beat up. Don't let anyone beat you up.

Facts about winning:

1. The ONLY way to win is one point at a time. I don't care if the kid is great, average or terrible. You still have to beat him one point at a time. Little by little, wear-and-tear. By wear-and-tear I mean that you have to keep bangin' and slowly the points will happen. Have faith. It is like chopping down a tree. The first 100 times you hit the tree with an axe, very little will happen. However, if you keep a good, physical pace and stay after it, eventually each swing of the axe cause more damage. Once you get the first chips to fly, every hit results in chips flying. Seeing this progress re-energizes you into staying after it while just minutes ago you felt like you were wasting your time and wanted to quit. Yes, winning matches is like chopping wood. WEAR AND TEAR and stay diligent and it will happen for you.
2. To further my example and prove another point about winning wrestling matches, you must also realize that you need to stay 'focused'. Tight position, focused attacks and staying in control is vital. Mistake-free wrestling wins. You DO have to take risks! You can't just stand there and expect the guy to fall down for you. However, take focused, smart risks. What I am talking about is wrestling SMART...not just hard. If I am chopping down the tree and I am only working hard, my axe will hit the tree in a different spot each time. I may swing the axe 10,000 times in an hour and NOT make the tree fall. With the smart, focused approach, I can possibly knock the tree down in 20 minutes with 200-300 swings of the axe because I hit the tree in the same spot each time. Wrestle smart and hard...not just hard.
3. The best man DOESN'T win. The best tennis players lose every week and the best football teams lose every weekend. The same is true for wrestlers. Now, if you are going against someone who is better than you, it does not mean you can't beat them. With a one point at a time approach...you can beat anyone. Getting the first takedown helps A LOT! Getting a timely stalemate or forcing your opponent out of bounds for a stall call also helps. Riding him for at least a minute can go a long way towards beating this better opponent. It all matters, not just scoring

more points than him. Not getting scored on is just as important as scoring points...maybe even more so. Don't give up easy stuff. If you get beat, then fine. If you beat yourself, that is your fault.

4. Winners think about winning. Losers think about losing. If you find yourself thinking about losing, REPLACE these thoughts with thoughts of winning.

Winning doesn't happen. Winning is a PROCESS. This is where "our one-point-at-a-time, wear-and-tear" approach to wrestling comes into play. If you don't realize that winning is a process, you won't become a great wrestler. Once you do, then you can win before you become a great wrestler. The process starts here with our game plan: A) Get the first takedown and (B) Get the 2nd period escape point.

5. Winners make a decision to win. I often tell the story about when I was a kid. My dad would pull into the parking lot, turn off the car, turn around and ask: "Okay boys, we didn't come here to lose did we?" This was so good because I sit right up and say NOPE. It focused my mind and gave me an OBJECTIVE. The objective of our sport is to win...not to try hard. If you step on the mat to win, then you will be able to accept the outcome even if it doesn't go your way.

- Nick

Winning...how it's done

Tell the kids:

Game plan for winning matches. 1st takedown / 2nd period pick down and escape (SELDOMLY SHOULD YOU DEFER!) Once you get ahead 3-0 or 3-1 going into the final seconds of the 2nd period, it is mathematically almost impossible to lose. If you do get the 1st TD and he escapes it is 2-1. You defer and he goes down and escapes...it is TIED 2-2. Best to be winning 3-1...don't you think.

For freestyle, first td is still the key. ONE TURN PER MATCH WINS NAT'L TITLES. Bottom line. Each turn is worth 2 tds. The first TD builds momentum and relaxes you...which is nice. And it also plants seeds of doubt into the opponent.

I know that getting the first TD isn't easy. But, if you focus on getting it, not only does it give your son to focus on and calms him down a bit, but more often than not your son will get it since he is FOCUSING so much on it. Getting the first takedown isn't vital, but it sure makes life easy. This is how you win matches. No matter if the kid is great or terrible.

Game plan for winning tournament:

You want to win your first 2 matches. Winning the first 2 rounds makes for a HUGE light at the end of the tunnel. Realizing this makes you wrestle harder and you will win the first two matches MANY times just because you realize the importance and set that as your goal. Pressure relieves itself once you do this. Momentum is key. From here, it is just one point at a time wrestling. If you do lose a match and it comes in the quarters or semis, then you have far less wrestle-back matches to win in order to place by getting the first two wins under your belt.

Wrestle SMART. Don't wrestle hard. Smart wins. Buckle down and prepare for close ones. In boxing, top competitors are taught to EXPECT to get hit...this way it doesn't phase them. Expect close matches...tough matches. Don't fear close matches. If you expect them they won't bother you.

"THE SCARIEST GUY IN THE TOURNAMENT IS THE GUY THAT ISN'T AFRAID TO LOSE"

"DON'T SHOW DOUBT ON YOUR FACE" When your opponent looks your way, he should be looking at 'cool'...looking at confidence. ACT LIKE YOU ARE BETTER THAN YOUR COMPETITION...IT IS WORTH 2 POINTS A MATCH.

It is OK to doubt yourself. Don't feel like it is a weakness. Everyone does. Your reaction to these thoughts separates the men from the boys.

MISC:

Advice:

1. Drill with physical hands. Sometimes you drill soft. This is a habit. The move doesn't work unless you do it NOW and quick. Sort of like swinging a baseball bat. You have to hit the ball hard. Don't over do it and try to kill it because you'll screw up...but you do have to knock the hell out of it or the ball isn't going anywhere!! Same for wrestling.

2. During live wrestling, BATTLE. Quit trying to do moves on the opponent. Fight him and let the moves happen.

3. You score 90% of your points with a 'struggle'...by being hard-headed...by fighting and just plain old being tough. Sure, you may win the biggest match of your life with a 'move' but how did you get to the biggest match of your life?

Answer: By fighting and struggling and battling.

That's how it's done. Do this and you'll win.

-Nick

Mastering your emotions

Master your emotions; don't let your emotions master you. Mastering your emotions is about CONTAINING them. Being excited and nervous is normal. That is how God made us. A bit of nerves and anxiety is good. Stress makes us wrestle and perform better. Nerves are good....if you don't let them eat you up. Contain them, and they can help you. God gave us nerves to help us, not hurt us.

Before a match you must be in control of your emotions and in control of yourself. Being in an individual sports is very emotionally draining and is the #1 reason wrestling is not a popular sport.

Be CALM... not relaxed:

You should not be relaxed before a match but MUST be calm. You need to practice being calm if you want to be calm in a match situation just as you practice your techniques. When in practice and paired up with a tougher opponent, practice being calm. When at school on the first day, practice walking the halls and entering the classroom for the first time in a confident manner. You should have your head up, your face relaxed, shoulders laid back, and force yourself to move more slowly than usual. Nervous energy is a dead giveaway and you need to contain this behavior. If you act confident, you will feel confident, when you feel confident you will wrestle well and win more matches...this makes you more confident. Confident kids are confident because they win...they win because they are confident. Confidence is a learned behavior.

ONCE YOU QUIT BEING SCARED OF YOUR NERVOUSNESS, YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY.

Practice acting confident during your daily life as well as in practices and you will have it under control.

Before you look at your bracket, prepare yourself as you may have a very tough opponent on it. Think about how you will react when you see 'his' name on the bracket. You should act cool at all times....EVEN before the tournament begins.

Here is what you should do:

At a tournament, at weigh-ins, and before a match, you act super cool and super calm. Don't move around a lot, don't pace, and don't fidget. Keep your shoulders laid back, chin up (DON'T EVER STARE AT THE FLOOR!). NEVER stare at your opponent before a match...this shows weakness and gives him

confidence. Basically, always act better than the your opponents. They are never as good as you think they are anyway.

As for a game plan if you are spooked and feeling uneasy about the match, you should SPEND THE FIRST PERIOD FEELING THE KID OUT. Don't try to score. Wrestle about 51% defense and 49% offense for the first period. Feeling the kid out will help you to get settled and as I have preached for years...."The light bulbs will begin to flash in your head and you'll see openings and ways of scoring on the opponent." Many top baseball players will often 'take the first pitch' when at the plate. Wrestling is no different. If you are uneasy, then you are in no mental state of mind to try to score so feel him out first.

-Nick

Act like a winner

1. Don't stare at your opponent during weigh-ins or before the match. This makes you look scared.
2. Keep your head up and shoulders relaxed. This is confident body language and you should practice this. Always remain aware of how you appear. If you are NOT confident, but you walk and act like you are, you will BECOME confident. It is a proven fact. Actors do this for a living...think about it
3. Act cool. "Even if you are not confident, ALWAYS act like you are...no one can tell the difference." If you act like you are better than your opponent, you will compete like never before and he may be the one who gets spooked.
4. Practice being confident. At school, wrestling practice, the weight room, etc. You will find that confidence is a learned behavior.
5. At weigh-ins. Never complain about weight cutting. No whining. Before weigh-ins, do not lay around acting sick or tired. For those that are cutting weight, you must not show your team mates or opponents that you are hurting. Also, never run over to a water jug or Gatorade bottle immediately after weigh-ins. After weigh-ins, you should re-hydrate away from you opponents. Don't look desperate or show that you are hurting. Get off the scale, get dressed, leave the room or building and get some liquids away from the scale. Coaches should never let their kids take their water jugs to the scale. Don't look like you are dying. Act like it doesn't bother you.
6. Never pace around before a match. Get ready, but don't pace around since that show signs of severe nervousness and self-doubt. Most kids act like they are scared. Confidence scares your opponents.
7. While on the mat, once you are ahead and know that you have the match wrapped up and under control, you MUST cut him and take him down. The ONLY way to break him mentally is through takedowns. If you cut him easy and just let him up, he will never break...or it will take 6-7 takedowns. If you cut him hard, in just 2 takedowns he will break mentally. By cutting him hard I mean to keep your hands on him all the way up.
8. Always jog back to the middle. You should do this in practice ALWAYS. This is where you develop the habit of the PACE. You will wrestle the way

- you practice. This makes your opponent know that you are a fighter. If you crawl back to the middle on your knees, he will take you for what you appear to be WEAK. Never crawl. Get up and jog. NEVER sprint, you will look nervous. Jog in a confident manner onto and off-of the mat.
9. Get re-dressed after the match away from the mat. Don't stand around the mat. After the match, whether you win or lose, you jog off the mat and grab your clothes under your arm and jog to the locker room or under the bleachers. This is key for you high school kids. Don't wander back to the bench and re-dress there.
 10. Get in your stance and THEN shake hands with the opponent. Ready...always ready.
 11. Don't stand on or near the line before the match. Once the official enters the middle of the mat, then you jog to the middle for the mat. Standing there or getting in your stance way before the match shows nervousness. Stand near your corner like a boxer does. They do this for a reason...so should we. Coaches, keep your wrestler by you until the referee enters the middle of the mat. Then, shake his hand and let him go.
 12. If your opponent backs to the edge of the mat, be careful about shooting since you will usually end up out of bounds. It is important to NEVER back up and let him into the middle of the mat...even if the official says to. You get your hands on him and take him out of bounds. If he tries to circle in, cut him off. He circles to his right; you move left and stay directly in front of him. Once you get him close, you run him out of bounds. If he wants to play the edge, don't let him or it is YOUR fault if you lose close takedowns. Run him off the mat and he will get hit for stalling and begin to feel swarmed by you. IMMEDIATELY after you take him out, turn and jog back to the middle of the mat. He only sees your back. He knows you are in charge of the mat.

** If he really pushes back hard, you snap him down and go behind him...or maybe hit a leg attack...only if he is really trying to stay in. He must push directly into you. Remember, he can't circle in because you aren't letting him. ps: I am not saying push him into the bleachers, just take him out of bounds since that is where he keeps backing up to. Same as a boxer getting his enemy into a corner. It is all the same.*
 13. Never lay your head or elbows on the mat while on bottom. This shows quitting. Remember, we are not only trying to beat the kid on the mat with you, but ALL THE OTHERS watching. These are the kids that need to

know about you. Make every match an example to everyone watching.
There is a difference between getting beat and beat up.

**You must remember that planting seeds of self-doubt is how you become a great wrestler. If you leave the match strictly up to who is better in wrestling, you will lose matches. If you are a total wrestler and always work your opponent over mentally before, during, and after the match, you will win many titles. You must practice this with everything you do.*

Hope this helps.

-Nick

The sport of wrestling explained: Breaking down doors.

Wrestling is a much easier sport once you understand exactly what is going on out there. It is best explained by using a metaphor.

First of all, we all joined wrestling so we could scrap and fight. For many of us, our first few days of wrestling were great. We had no idea what we were doing and it was much more of a fight. Then, our coaches showed us moves and screwed us all up! Now, instead of getting after it, we are trying to 'do moves' on our opponent and he tries to 'do his moves' on me. Wrestling just became VERY complicated and frustrating.

Now, before matches, we get very bottled up and tight and often times go on the mat and just stand there...frustrated. You need to break through that door and learn to scrap again. I see some coaches at meets and they will literally yell out 8-10 moves in a matter of 10 seconds. Then, I'll look the next match over and see a wrestling mom...yelling her head off! She says things like such as this: "Throw him down Johnny...THROW HIM DOWN!"

"Roll him over!"

"Get up!"

Some will laugh at her...but not me. In many ways, she is the best coach in the building.

Story time:

Once at the Missouri AAU state meet, I had a wrestler tell me that he was very nervous and scared about this match. He had several close bouts against this boy and had beaten him once and been beaten once. He wanted some advice. So, I took him aside and said that I was going to tell him EXACTLY how to approach the match and how to win. He smiled and seemed very relieved. I said this: "If you want to win this match, I can tell you how it's done...here's what you do: 'When you are on your feet, throw him down. When on top...roll him over. And, when you are on bottom...GET UP!' He grinned like all the pressure in the world was lifted off of his shoulders!

He won 10-1!

That is what I am talking about when I speak of the door. Many of us have this wall up and it blocks us from scrapping. This wall...or door, is there because we are afraid to lose. Once again, make a decision that you are going to get after him and be stubborn...always stubborn. That is the very definition of toughness.

Remember, it is HOW you lose...not IF you lose. It is HOW you win...not IF you win. Define success the way I am telling you to and you won't have the door or barrier in your way.

The second door: The opponent

The way I explain winning matches is simple. You simply have to 'wear and tear' on him. You stay in his face and stay after him. DON'T GO CRAZY. Remember, in the sport of wrestling you are on offense and defense at the same time! This is not football. You have to be under control. It must be a controlled-attack, not an out-of-control attack. Your opponent is way too good for you to expect to score 10 points a minute. Calm down.

By wear-and-tear, I refer again to the door. If the door in the room is locked and you don't have a key to get in...you must break through. It won't be easy...but it has to be done. You will begin to ram your shoulder into the door repeatedly and at first, nothing will happen to the door but your shoulder may begin to feel it! You begin to doubt that you can knock through the door...you doubt yourself. You may think that there is no way you can bust through that door and may even think about quitting. But, you are tough and stubborn so you keep hitting it. At first you hit it many times...very quickly. But soon find that you are getting tired. So you adjust your pace a bit by slowing down and hitting it in the same spot and at a good pace. Then, just as you feel nothing is happening, you hear a crack or a pop in the door jam and all of your doubts and fatigue go away! You are now re-energized and feeling good so you pick up the pace (just a bit) but begin to put more into it and hit it harder. Within no time, you bust through.

And so it goes for beating a great opponent in the sport of wrestling. Once you bust through that door guys...there are a lot of points over there!

"Don't fear close matches. Winning close matches is what makes you a wrestler"

"Shake your fear of losing! Losing is part of winning and losing doesn't make you a loser. It is HOW you win or HOW you lose that counts!"

Hope this helps!

- Nick

Warm up

Pressure on / Pressure off

Coaches will often say "Are you ready?" or "Go get ready!" to their wrestler during a competition. Being ready and getting ready is something that may need explaining. Below are some ideas.

Physically warming up:

1. First, let's look at the physical warm up.
This is key to getting your body ready. Many kids don't like to warm up hard because they want to save their energy for the match. If you watch high-level wrestling, those guys will lose about 2 pounds during their morning warm up and about 1 pound of sweat during their pre-match warm up. Now, certainly some young kids won't lose this much but you should certainly break a very good sweat and get your BODY ready. Your blood vessels should be dilated so they can deliver maximum amount of oxygenated blood to your muscles. Kids will sometimes tell me that they got light-headed during the first period of the match. This is because your body was not ready to deliver the blood to the body and is called OXYGEN DEBT. A great warm up includes jogging, TONS of sprints until your lungs feel completely stretched out, pushups, squats, stretching, and tons of hard, old-fashioned drilling. The morning warm up should take about 30 minutes of constant working and include some live wrestling. As a coach, I make my kids wrestle a 9 minute match before the tournament begins. This way, we get our first match out of our system before the meet begins. Some kids don't have a good first match so this solves that problem as Round 1 is actually Purler Wrestling Academy's Round 2.
2. Nerves. The best way to deal with nerves is exercise. We all know that. So, it only stands to reason that a great warm up in the morning will slightly fatigue and relax the muscles and calm your nerves. From a mental standpoint...which is where nerves originate...the warm up will make you feel confident and drilling all your stuff hard for 20 minutes and getting the blood flowing and preparing for battle will make you feel good about yourself. This increased confidence will help to buffer the nerves and self-doubt from the get-go.

If your kid gets lazy, MAKE him warm up! You are the parent / coach. You take charge and set the standards. I tell my kids: "Hey, we're gonna do this my way...or we're gonna do this my way!" ha ha

Mentally getting ready (MOST IMPORTANT)

1. Pressure on or pressure off: What I mean here is that in my experience, only about 10% of the kids I coach do better by thinking about the big match, tough kid, how important this match is. They like to feel tons of pressure and place importance on the match since they thrive on it. This is pressure on preparation. Only a very few kids do better with this.

2. Pressure off: This involves most human beings whether they are getting ready for a wrestling match or a job interview. I was once told by a 4X World Champion / 2X Olympic Champion to 'DOWN PLAY EVERYTHING' about wrestling. If you have a bad practice, down play it...it doesn't matter since every practice won't be perfect. If your weight is too high, down play it in your mind since you are going to make weight any way so it doesn't matter all that much. You'll just have to work a bit harder...no big deal. It won't be fun, but it's not the end of the world either. It is important to down play all the negatives you feel about the sport. Also, you should PLAY UP all positives. If you finally take down a top kid in practice, think about it a lot. If you win a big match and look good, think about this match and your accomplishment a lot and enjoy the feelings of success. Watch this match 5X a day for a week! Feel proud of yourself and focus on your accomplishments. Focus on what you did right and play down what you should have done better. You are human and not perfect and always could have done better. It is often said that the most successful athletes are also the most unhappy athletes. This is because they haven't follow the advice of the Olympic Champ listed above.
 - Another part of pressure-Off is keeping a perspective on things. The most important thing in your life is NOT a dumb wrestling match. It is just a game. Believe it or not, no one really cares about whether you won or lost your stupid match but you. I know you think everyone is staring at you when you lose, but no one really gives a damn to be quite honest.

Hope this helps.

Nick

Weapons:

You can't just be a jack-of-all-trades. You need some weapons!

Each wrestler needs some weapons.

One leg attack (single, low single, high crotch, double, fireman's)

* 2 setups and 2 finishes that you become great with

Two secondary attacks.

* One will be a fast hands go-behind (this is the best takedown in wrestling)

* Other will be a pass by, PA, duck under, ankle pick, drag, throw by, something from a 2 on 1, inside trip, scoring from a football grip, etc. The stinger is what makes a wasp dangerous. Each wrestler needs a stinger or two. One must be a leg-attack, the other a secondary attack.

Have the kids take time to evaluate their offense. WHAT AM I GREAT AT...WHAT DO I NEED TO DEVELOP?

In our room, we focus on a lot of areas. What one kids likes, others do not. I can't focus a lot of time in just a few areas of offense because only about 20% of the kids will like it and use it. We all have different styles. So, for that reason, we move forward and spend between 2-5 weeks in each area and move forward so everyone gets something out of it.

For this reason, you can get very good in a wrestling room with a coach but only can get GREAT on your own. This is advice I received from a 3X Olympic Coach. Some of the best advice I ever recieved. I began to realize I needed to work on ME and not just do what the coach has lined for the entire team of 50 kids or more. This is when I began getting competitive in wrestling.

* You get great in your spare time. Get to practice 20 minutes early and develop your weapons. This easily amounts to 1 hour a week focusing on just your main stuff...not that all the other stuff isn't important...but this is what you become GREAT at and become known for. All top wrestlers have something that they are known for. Get a WEAPON.

Weapons training:

My brother, Tony Purler (NCAA Champion, 2X US Open National Champion, 2X US World Team Member), and I hold a 4-day training camp that we call the TAKEDOWN MACHINE training camp here in Northern Missouri. We rent out a beautiful Missouri State Park and basically drill the tar out of the kids. We only allow about 35 kids a week at our camp (camps of 200-500 kids are a complete and total waste of time and money in my opinion) and we cover a few worthwhile setups and finishes to your leg attacks, about 7-8 secondary attacks, 2-3 front headlock techniques, 3 ways of getting out of a front-headlock, and hip pressure defense (from our Power Position) from when an opponent gets to our legs. Kids get 100s of reps in each week and the camp fills quickly as we only hold 5 weeks of these. No live wrestling, no running, no pushups, no messin' around. This is a drill-intensive camp and I believe one of the best camps and training opportunities in the Nation. Info below:

.....



Takedown Machine summer camp

In addition to in-season training and offering weekend training camps throughout the Midwest, we offer a SMALL-GROUP summer training camp held in a beautiful Missouri State Park. Last year's camp drew high school and youth wrestlers from as far away as NY, CA, OK, TX, GA, etc and begins to fill up in February. Unlike College-sponsored wrestling camps, which range in size from 400 – 600 kids per camp, we allow just 35 wrestlers per week! This maximizes the amount of wrestling your son gets accomplished and is just one of the many reasons our camp fills quickly each summer (and has for the past 3 years) by word-of-mouth advertising.

www.purlerwrestling.com

.....

Weight loss strategies

The diet:

Just like anything else, knowing what to do and actually doing it are two entirely different things. Most of us understand how to lose weight and may even know a great deal about nutrition and exercise, however, putting this into action and actually losing the weight is the hard part. In theory it is easy, in practice it is one of the hardest things there is to do. Be prepared and don't attempt it unless you are totally committed.

Now, understand that I do not advocate weight loss and think it is way over done in the high school and even youth ages. Much of the time is it the coach that requires their athletes to lose huge amounts of weight. Usually, it is because this is how THEY did it. I can tell you for certain that the main reason kids quit wrestling is because of weight loss. However, once we get to become coaches, we seem to forget why we quit and then force our athletes into the same behavior. I can't even tell you how many parents and kids have told me that their high school coaches have asked them to cut down 15-20 pounds. Having said that, I do realize that for many, weight loss is a part of it and I want you to have the tools necessary to do it right and to stay healthy.

Random advice and ideas:

Make sure you eat the same times each day. Your body does not like to be tricked and your metabolism will burn more efficiently if you eat at the same times each day. I would not eat 1-2 large meals as some suggest, but instead eat 4 small meals a day. For example, your breakfast will consist of a bagel, 16 oz of milk and a banana. Lunch will be a turkey sandwich with fat free cheese and fat free mayonnaise and a diet coke. Dinner will be a can of tuna, a small dinner salad with 3 egg whites mixed in, and fat free dressing, a baked potato with fat free cheese melted on it, milk, and two cooked vegetables. The trick is to eat as much food as you can for as little calories as possible. Oatmeal, potatoes, cooked vegetables, etc are very filling and extremely low calorie. However, I would not count calories. Just eat very small meals and have a small snack if needed. A snack can be a PBJ sandwich. If you get to a point where you are not losing the weight, then cut your meals down smaller, don't skip meals because you will end up eating more in the long run since your metabolism will crash and you go over-board once you break mentally and raid the food pantry. Don't let your metabolism crash on you.

There is no such thing as bad food. If you want to have a candy bar, then have one. These 200 calories are NOT going to keep you from making weight. In fact, it may help you to make it. If you constantly deprive yourself, you will feel

like wrestling has become a job and won't enjoy it. If you have a piece of pizza during the week after a meet and a day or two before your next event, that is fine. Use this as motivation to work even harder in practice! Don't try to be perfect all the time.

As you eat at the same times each day, remember to never eat past 7:00 or 7:30 pm. This way, when you eat breakfast in the morning at 7:00 am, you have been on a 12-hour fast since your last meal. This is vital because you have not stored any of your dinner as fat, nor have the calories stored and caused water gain.

Drink as much water as possible. Tons of water is key as it helps keep your metabolism going.

What about high protein, low-carb diets?

Realize that we are athletes and we need carbs. But do get plenty of protein in your diet and a little fat as well. Again, 3-4 VERY SMALL meals is key. You don't want to even know you are dieting. Don't starve. However, the day before or day of weigh-ins will require you to cut way back, this is common sense.

How about starving. Does it work? There is no doubt that you can lose weight by starving. However, you will lose more if you don't! If you starve, your metabolism will shut down, you will become light headed and your body will go into 'survival' mode, which is a 'fat conservation' mode. Your body will shift to burning muscle. This is a fact and is the main reason why extreme dieters often times have a very low percentage of muscle but a high percentage of fat storage even though they look thin. This is called body composition. You can fit into your jeans but have 30% body fat which is not good. Starving makes you lose muscle first. Do not skip meals. Even if you splurge the night before, don't try to make up for it by skipping breakfast the next morning. Eat at least something! If you starve, you will get so hungry and be light headed before lunch that you will crave junk food and overeat AGAIN. Now, you are riding the emotional roller-coaster.

Why do you get light-headed at school?

Your body can run on energy (carbs) that have been pulled from your muscles where carbs are stored...but your brain can not. Your brain needs to have what is called 'blood-born glucose' (sugar / carbs)...or carbs that are circulating in the blood that have NOT been pulled from muscle supplies. When you get light-headed, you feel like crap, your grades drop, and wrestling is no fun anymore. Don't starve since your brain needs the food!

Be a robot. Don't be emotional or dream about being a normal kid and able to eat everything they do. Instead, realize that you are a disciplined kid and that

most kids could never do what you do. Instead of feeling sorry for yourself, feel proud and disciplined because you are developing the skills necessary to be very successful someday no matter what it is that you choose to do. Being emotional is a weakness and being an unemotional robot about your dieting is the key to mental toughness. It is that simple.

For more info on educating yourself on nutrition, you can find tons of stuff on-line regarding the nutrients required for living. Carbs, protein, fat, water, vitamins and minerals are all essential as well as meal plans, etc.

I'd take a quality vitamin. Minerals must also be present since many vitamins will not absorb without the presence of minerals.

Do not start too soon. Especially in high school, we often decide to go to a certain weight class but instead of staying up one until the last part of season, we are so excited about season and don't realize how long season is that we go down right off the bat. Also, many inexperienced freshman and sophomores will be close to weight weeks before their first competition. Problem is, many coaches will compliment them on their discipline and encourage this behavior. We must realize that we are humans, not machines. I ask all my high school kids to wait until after Christmas to get down to their fighting weight. This way, you are close to getting your 2 pound growth allowance (we do here in Missouri) and also you have gone about 8-10 weeks (2 ½ months) WITHOUT HAVING TO WORRY ABOUT YOUR WEIGHT. Once state rolls around, your opponents will all be hating wrestling since they started getting their weight down a month before season began and have been fighting this battle since October while you have been doing nothing but training and getting better. You don't need to worry about making your weight class until after Christmas break. That is the bottom line.

I'd say that 80% of all weight cutters fade the last part of season and begin to lose matches because they have lost their fire. They don't care about wrestling anymore. I have done this before. Even in college, I was sucking down to 118 and I absolutely hated wrestling. I was so weak from starving myself and so unmotivated that I did not place in NAAs even though I'd beaten 4 of the 8 that did place that year even though I had beaten them early in season. You constantly see freshman in high school and freshman in college wrestling make this mistake. I am speaking from experience here.

I know from experience, that we need to pace ourselves and keep our emotions in check. I know you are fired up and want to set the wrestling world on fire once November approaches...I was the same way. But wait till the right time and use that motivation for your drilling intensity. State is a long way off and you don't want to fade out by January like all the others will.

Don't panic:

If after a tournament, you find yourself way over weight and heavy, don't worry since it is all water gain. It takes 3,500 calories to equal 1 pound of fat gain. If I am used to very little calories a day but stuff myself all weekend after a tournament, all these carbs will store as glycogen in my muscles. One part carb will hold 4 parts water. I have been as much as 20 pounds over 2 days after a tournament. This would equal something like 70,000 calories if all of my gain was fat. It is calories that I am not used to holding that have soaked up liquids and store in my system. I will sweat it out in practice without even trying. Don't panic! Just get back on track and make sure you get a good sweat in after practice spend about 45 minutes shedding the excess water.

The final cut down:

Once it is time to sweat off the last bit of weight, here is how to do it. First of all, you must remember that the WEIGHT OF THE FOOD is what counts a day or two from official weigh-ins and calories don't really count now. Especially, I have already began sweating off weight, I don't want to put on water weight in form of empty calories since I have to work out still in order to shed my last bit of weight and also will have school, etc to take care of. Now, some guys who are over will begin earlier and lost 5...put 2 1/2 back. The next morning, they will lose 4 and put 2 back. This way, your body adjusts. This is usually only necessary if you find yourself way over and need to start the process earlier than normal. Kids like to cut...starve...and sleep. Cut, starve, sleep. This is stupid. Cut, put some back, cut again. Sure, you'll have to make 1 extra cut, but you'll feel GREAT and won't mind doing it. Wonder why kids quit because they hate weight cutting? I don't. I know why. It is because they don't do it right and they don't put some back and they are miserable.

When putting back some after your begin your last minute sweating ritual, be smart. Instead of putting back weight in form of grapefruit, oranges, Gatorade, or something which will offer NO complex carbs, you are better off putting back pasta or oatmeal or something like that. Something that is water based (very important) that you can swallow with a dry mouth and also get you back a bit of your water which is important.

Tricks of the trade:

My trick is to make weight or at least come very close the night before weigh-ins, then put back 2 pounds of weight and pack in as calories as I can. I want to get the most calories in my system that I can for the least amount of weight! If I have to make 130, I will cut down to 130 or so the night before, then go home and take 16 oz of milk (1 pound of weight gain) and a HUGE bowl of cereal. I would take a cup and crush up this cereal (cornflakes) into the bowl so I could get about 1/2 of box in the bowl, put some sugar in and pour on the milk. Now, I have about 2,500 calories or more in one meal and I have a full stomach. Most

importantly, I have some calories in my body for the next day and only weigh about 132 or so... at the most. I go to bed 3 pounds over but will drift off 1 pound while asleep. I get up only 2 over and feel great...except for the thirst which will never go away until I COMPLETELY REHYDRATE. I will not drink or eat much on the day of weigh-ins except maybe a granola bar for breakfast and lunch. These don't weigh hardly anything! By the time school is over with, I will be within striking distance and only about 1 pound over, I will have had a decent day of school and won't be light headed, miserable, and feeling sorry for myself like everyone else. I will have energy to work off my weight and energy for my match. Make weight the night before, put 2-3 pounds back, and you'll be ahead of about 99% of the kids in the nation who starve themselves and hate wrestling because of it.

Don't over do it:

It makes no sense to lift all summer and in the off-season, then cut all that off during your high school season. This happens way too often. I have noticed that those that don't over do it seem to maintain their zip on the mat as well as enjoy themselves during the entire year. Also, they are able to take advantage of all those kids that burn out and beat them all in February.

Traps to avoid:

The worse thing you can do is take sips of water at school or at home throughout the day. Sips won't quench thirst but can add up to about 2-3 pounds over the course of the day. It is scary how fast you UNKNOWINGLY put on 1-2 pounds and give yourself a nice little 1 ½ job to do (workout session) just hours before a big match. Don't sip...it won't help anyway.

Putting it back on:

Get some good complex carb drink from the GNC and drink that after weigh-ins. You should dilute it with some water so it absorbs quick. It should not be real cold but rather at room temperature will absorb fastest. No Gatorade...which is nothing more than an un-carbonated soft-drink.

If you decide to cut a bit of weight, the above info tells you how to do it. I can honestly recommend that you lift hard and cut very little if anything. As I am writing this, I have two wrestlers that have sign scholarships to compete in College wrestling. One will be headed to Mizzou and the other earned a full-ride to a nice NAIA school here in St. Charles, MO. One has not cut weight since his freshman season where he entered the state meet undefeated only to finish a disappointing 4th after getting 7 pounds over weight before the semis and the other is a 2X finalist who will win it this year...last year he cut 1 pound! There you go.

Tricks of the trade:

Coaches, parents, kids...don't look at the scale when it comes down to the wire and you have been struggling to get your weight off. Many people will cut you some slack and let you have it if you are close. But, if you are staring at the scale, they CAN'T cut you any slack. This is for those that have been on the scale several times and are about out of time to make weigh-ins. In the beginning, no one will cut you slack but when time is about out and you have been on the scale several times and working diligently to make it, they just may...if you let them. -Nick

High school kids don't fade out on me!

I had a conversation with one of our parents yesterday and I decided to pass along the same response that I gave him. Basically, what you will find is that as kids get older, ALL they want to do is wrestle live. They do less and less drilling and avoid learning at practices because they get lazy about learning and have been conditioned by coaches, etc to work hard!! Well, this is when the improvement STOPS. I can absolutely guarantee you that NOT ONE high school kid fails to place or win the state title due to not working hard or being in shape. And certainly, NOT ONE high school wrestler fails to place at Junior Nationals due to not working hard. EVERYONE works hard. ALL coaches do a great job of working the boys HARD.

The top kids in the nation have the skills and the technique to take a state medalist or state champion and make him look bad...real bad. The state champ (who has worked HARD) will look like he's been through a 15 minute match where often times, the national-caliber wrestler who beat him by 6-10 points won't even have his hair messed up. He is technically superior to his hard-working opponent.

Bottom line:

You have to drill and drill new things, new tricks, try new things during your drilling. As you enter high school and have been very successful and know 80% of the CORE techniques and have developed the skills necessary to score points and defend yourself, you need to develop a few weapons. You need to have ONE great leg attack with 2 setups and 2-3 finishes. You need ONE great secondary attack and ONE great ride (legs is best) as well as the skills of getting off bottom. All NFL Superbowl Championship teams have a playbook that is many inches thick...but all score relentlessly with a few CORE plays that they have mastered.

What have you mastered?

So, if you want to compete at a college level or want to place in high school Nationals or win some state titles, then you have to become a student of the sport. Spend some time on YOU and don't get into the rut of thinking your coach can make you great just by doing what he has planned for practice. Spend some time on YOU. Master something.

You have to be a student of the sport and quit working hard all the time. You do this in our room as we learn tricks and techniques, you keep a notebook at home of all techniques you learn and everything you learn from me and others and you PUT TIME IN ON YOUR OWN before practices on your select techniques that you want to make into a weapon. As I've said before, the only difference between a fly and a bee is that a bee has a stinger and can hurt you. The kids

you read about in magazines have taken the time to develop a stinger or weapon...something they can score with.

When you HAVE to score...can you?

Hope this helps.

- Nick

Coaching mat side: by Greg Lester

Nick,

It is funny you sent out an email on this topic because I had a draft email on this topic in my outbox for about a week to send to you. You said many of the things I was going to say to you but here are a few more:

1. One of the best ways you can help an elite wrestler win a match is to watch the clock and the scoring. I have noticed far more mistakes there than I have seen in the actual refereeing of matches. Table workers can and do frequently make mistakes, which can cost your son the match. If a coach is constantly yelling he will never notice this.
 - 1a. You should also watch the refereeing of the match. Mistakes such as raising the wrong scoring hand, etc. can be reversed if caught quickly. If you are yelling a lot how can you concentrate on the refereeing (and the table workers?).
2. The twins taught me this next one. They told me about a year ago that they are glad I do not yell that much because they listen to what the other coach is yelling. If they hear him constantly yelling "Single Leg" or "Cradle" or "Switch" or whatever guess what they are preparing for?
3. Elite kids react faster than you can yell instructions and have a better feel for the match than you do in the corner. I think about once every ten matches I see something that they don't. Usually I can get a quick one word command out like "Cradle" but most of the time I wait for them to look at me and do it via hand signals or I mouth the words.
4. If you constantly yell directions you put your son in the position of trying to listen to your voice instead of wrestle. Also, depending on the kid, it can put the additional pressure on them if they are the type of kid who really likes pleasing their dad or are very respectful of their dad's opinion.
5. Over time I think many kids get sick of being yelled at (even if the yelling is not abusive) and it diminishes their joy of the sport and ultimately their desire to do it.
6. If yelling constant directions is the best way to coach, why don't the better high school and college coaches do it that way? Kids need to get used to wrestling without having constant directions because that is the way they are going to be coached in high school.

7. By constantly yelling you are signaling to your wrestler that you do not trust them out there. How can they be true champions if you can't trust them on the mat?

8. Let a kid wrestle the style that best fits him. As I found out the hard way, you can't make brawler a shooter. Wrestling styles are like personalities, every kid has his own. By yelling directions, which do not fit his style, you are being counterproductive.

9. If you are going to yell, you might as well mentally draw a line across the mat halving it and not yelling when they are in the far half because they cannot hear you (unless your name is Rob Banning LOL). Sometimes if it is really loud they can't hear you unless they are right next to you.

10. A corollary to my # 2 is that sometimes it is not a bad idea to watch the other coaching corner because you can steal signals from them and use it for your son's competitive advantage. Most of the time you can't, but every once and awhile you can catch something this way.

-Greg

College recruiting info:

This is what you need to do:

1. Have all personal info typed up. Age, wt, address, coaches / school info / counselor's info / all ph #'s etc.
2. Copy of transcripts
3. List of wrestling accomplishments.
4. List of top kids you've beaten...if any. Don't mention in state kids unless they are known on the Nat'l level. Mostly Nat'l level kids if you've beaten on.
EX: I had a wrestler who never placed in Fargo but did beat a top kid from CA in the Junior Duals. This is how he got noticed. Then, at Junior Nationals, coaches made a point to watch his matches. If not for beating a top kid, they would not have made a point to watch him and he would not be competing in Division I wrestling now. This is why traveling and hitting ALL Nat'l events is so vital for kids...especially HS kids.
5. Off - season habits...freestyle club you compete for, etc
6. Visit your counselor and make sure you have passed the 'clearinghouse'. This is a criteria-based program that shows college recruiters that you are qualified to be recruited. This way, they don't waste their time on a kid that hasn't taken his ACTs, has poor grades, doesn't have all Math credits, etc. Your counselor will know what this is. Ask her.
7. Get a scouting tape together. Put about 10 matches on it. Don't put matches you've lost if those kids are still out there and being recruited...UNLESS they are top kids that are very well known around the nation and you went close with them. I know a kid that earned a scholarship to Stanford that got noticed when another dad sent out a tape of his son losing a close match to him. They tracked this OTHER kid down and got him! If the kid you went with is already noticed on the Nat'l level, put him on there. **HOW YOU WRESTLE IS WHAT GETS YOU NOTICED.** And if you are a leg-attacker, you have an advantage. Make as many copies as you want to send out.
8. Get all this together and make packets with your return address on it. Then, go to www.coaches-directory.com and get the labels to all college coaches. Peel the labels you want and stick them on there. These have Division I, II, III, and Junior College. Remember that Division III can not give college scholarships and

don't forget local NAIA schools. Do a search for them...there are only about 25 or so that have wrestling. NAIA can give as much \$ as they want as they are NOT a part of the NCAA and don't fall under regulations. I have kids that have earned huge scholarship \$ with NAIA.

Miscellaneous info:

Not all our kids will be Div I, etc. However, you don't have to be a star to go Div I. Don't sell yourself short. Also, there is very little \$ out there. Don't expect full-rides or even close to it. College teams only get 9.9 scholarships for the whole team of 30+ guys. Full-rides go to Junior Nat'l Champs and that's about it! MOST Div I teams only have between 2-4 scholarships to divide up so there is even LESS \$ on that side of it! These programs are NOT fully funded. Don't get caught too much in the \$ aspect of it as this is not football. A decent football player can get 100 opportunities since every school has a team...not so with wrestling. There is a lot of competition out there and college coaches know that they don't need to give you much to get you. All scholarship \$ shows they are taking a chance on you and want you as part of their program...so getting an offer does mean a lot. But, their hands are often tied and you don't wrestle for \$...especially since most programs don't have it! You don't wrestle for \$ and those days of booster clubs buying cars for athletes, etc are over! Find a place you can make the team, be successful, is in an area you will be happy with (city vs. rural, etc) has a coach you CAN GET ALONG WITH, has a nice campus that offers a degree you may want to pursue, has good guys on the team, has a nice facility, is close enough to home if that matters, has a course load you can handle, has good assistant coaches you like, has a good schedule vs. top teams and enters top meets, etc. This is why you are there. Don't let a little more or less \$ sway you too much. There is VERY LITTLE \$ out there in our sport! Also, out of state scholarships are 3X as expensive as in-state. Keep this in mind. If you get a scholarship to an out of state program, you are expensive as it is.

In addition, if you don't have the grades, the coach can't help you. He is an employee of the University and you must meet their standards...not the coaches. The University doesn't give a damn about your medals or how good your single leg is. You need to get AT LEAST a 3.25 and the higher the better. The coach can not open a wrestling fund safe and extract \$ out of it for you...he is under the watchful eye of the NCAA and must not to over the 9.9 total scholarship limit...if the school is fully funded. However, he can go to the ACADEMIC scholarship safe and pull all sorts of \$ out of that one!

If go on a recruiting trip, don't go wild. If you haul off and party it up with the rest of the guys, they will give a report back to the coach. Have fun, but don't be stupid.

Young guys, begin taking ACTs early and take the SATs if you plan to go East of Indiana. - Nick

A note about winning:

Kids, here is more info as you head into the State Championships for upsets and victories.

I forgot to mention an article in WIN Magazine (I'd recommend this magazine to everyone - Bobby Conn and Peter Miller are ranked top 15 in the nation)

I also saw an article on Mark Perry. He is a freshman from Iowa University. Mark's dad was one of my college coaches and his uncle is John Smith. He decided not to go to OSU as all his family members did but instead head to Iowa University. I have known Mark since he was 7 and used to babysit him...also coached him at a the youth Oklahoma State wrestling championships in which he won easily. Needless to say, I was interested in the article on Mark.

He is in a position to win the NCAA title this year as a Freshman. What Iowa's coach Zalesky says about Mark is simply that:

HE IS A COMPETITOR...MARK SHOWS UP TO MATCHES TO WIN.

There is an unbelievable amount of energy that you tap into when you step on the mat to win. Plus, you will no longer get nervous before matches when you show up to the match with an absolute focus on winning. Your mind is no longer able to drift and bounce from thought to thought. It is focused on winning.

Winning. Winning. Winning.

All that ***"close your eyes and do this relaxation exercise before your match"*** garbage is a whole bunch of BS that you read about in the 'self-help' aisle of the bookstore. Most of it is written by people with too much education and not enough time in the real world. There isn't a damn one of them that wouldn't crap their pants if they had to step onto a wrestling mat in the state championships...or leave the secluded comforts of their college research labs... or make their own paycheck verses cashing in the gov't grant research check. Don't listen to it.

People that win make a decision to win. That is all there is to it. When I go to the HS State meet, I want to see people getting their asses kicked. That's all. You guys have earned it.

Even if you haven't earned it...then win anyway because life isn't fair.

- Nick

Pulling the trigger

I understand that many have a hard time 'shooting' in matches or hitting their stuff.

Basically, it is a lot like jumping off the high dive. You will stand there and stare at the water below...but hesitate and freeze every time you think you are ready to jump.

But, once you do finally jump...it gets easier and easier. After about 3 jumps, you are now jumping off without ANY hesitation.

Do this:

In practice, FORCE yourself to hit your offense. Don't wait for a PERFECT time to shoot, there won't be. It is called scrapping and you have to get to a leg and make the best of it. Then, once you get over the hump, it is all down hill from there and you will be hitting in matches too!

Same goes for facing top kids in practice. Many of your are afraid to grab a great opponent since you are afraid to lose. GRAB THEM! It gets easier and before you know it, you will be competing with them and beating them. And, once you get into a meet and have a top opponent on your bracket, you won't freeze up.

- Nick

Nutrition

Here are some nutrition Diets that I found on the web.If you have a better one let me know .

Sport requirements: Wrestling requires speed, strength and agility. The primary energy source is the anaerobic energy system. The aerobic system also is used.

Tips : To keep your speed and power throughout a match, you need to keep your fuel reserves high. Drinking a carbohydrate fluid-replacement drink will help you achieve this goal. Eating consistent meals will help you avoid weight cutting by maintaining your weight. You should be drinking 1/2 your body weight in ounces

Breakfast: Don't skip breakfast, or you'll start your day at a deficit. You will feel sluggish most of the day, which may affect your practice. Breakfast will boost your metabolism and fuel you throughout the day. Several small meals during the day will help keep your metabolism up. Hey guys and girls you want a fast metabolism.....

Pre-competition: For pre-competition snacks and meals, choose primarily carbohydrates. A little fat and protein are fine, but high-fat meals do not digest quickly or easily and can leave you feeling sluggish. If you are eating a carbohydrate meal, allow three to five hours for a large meal to digest and two to three hours for a smaller meal to digest. Try to eat three to four servings of foods that each containing approximately 15 grams of carbohydrates. Eat foods that will digest easily. Nerves may make it more difficult to digest pre-competition meals. Try these foods before practice before eating them prior to competition.

Competition: Drink a carbohydrate fluid-replacement drink between matches to keep your energy levels up. In an all-day tournament, try to have snacks or small meals around to keep yourself fueled for the entire day. Try to eat within two hours after competition. This will allow you to refuel your energy sources quickly. (potassium can be your friend and caffeine will hurt you. but it comes in handy on competition days).

Post-competition and practice: To recover from practice every day, you need to refuel your reserves. Eating high-carbohydrate foods within two hours after practice is the best refueling tactic. Try to eat 0.3 to 0.5 grams (get yourself a scale if you have concerns) of carbohydrates for each pound of your body **weight**. This will keep you fueled and ready to go on competition days.

Sample Diet's (experiment with these)

I suggest you get into the habit of cooking for yourself, try to avoid pre-packaged foods. Learn to cook. Guys, girls love a good cook. If you play around with spices you may surprise yourself.

2000 Calorie:

Breakfast:
2 eggs
1 slice of toast
1 muffin

3000 Calorie

Breakfast:
1 cup oatmeal
1 cup skim milk
1 egg

2 tsp jelly
1 banana

Snack:
6 Fig Newtons

Lunch:
1 ½ cups spaghetti
3 oz mozzarella cheese
½ cup mixed vegetables
1 apple

Snack:
½ cup mixed fruit
2 squares graham crackers

Dinner:
1 hamburger (4 oz ground round, 1 bun,
catsup or mustard)
1 small baked potato
1 cup green beans
1 cup skim milk

1 slice toast
2 tsp margarine
1 banana

Snack:
1 cup grapes
1 bagel

Lunch:
1 cup rice
2 oz turkey
2 slices bread
1 pear
1 cup milk
½ cup carrots

Snack:
Granola Bar
5 crackers
½ cup applesauce
2 oz cheese

Dinner:
3 oz chicken
1 baked potato
2 slices bread
1 tsp butter
1 cup broccoli
1 cup strawberries
1 cup milk

4000 Calories

Breakfast:
3 pancakes
1 blueberry muffin
1 banana
2 eggs
1 cup milk
1 cup yogurt

Snack:
½ cup raisins
1 cup chocolate milk
1 bran muffin

5000 Calories

Breakfast:
1 cup apple juice
1 cup cream of wheat
1 cup milk
1 egg
1 English muffin
2 tsp strawberry jelly

Snack:
1 peanut butter
sandwich
1 apple

2 oz cheese

Lunch:

2 ½ cups macaroni with tomato sauce

1 slice French bread

1 cup carrots

2 oz ground beef

1 cup skim milk

Snack:

1 bagel

1 Tbsp peanut butter

1 orange

Dinner:

2 cups rice

1 cup corn

3 oz beef tenderloin

1 cup yogurt

½ cup applesauce

1/3 cup raisins

Lunch:

2 cups mashed potatoes

4 oz roast beef

1 cup mixed vegetables

2 rolls

½ cup fruit cocktail

1 cup milk

Tossed salad with dressing

Snack:

2 oz of cheese

8 crackers

1 cup yogurt

Dinner:

4 oz turkey breast

1 large baked potato

2 slices whole wheat bread

2 tsp butter

1 cup peas

1 apple

1 cup milk

1 cup ice cream

Drink up: Drinking fluids is important for wrestling. The fast movement of the match will cause you to sweat a great deal. If you do not drink enough, you will lose speed and coordination.

Do not wait until you are thirsty to begin drinking. If you only drink when you are thirsty you will replace just 50 percent to 70 of your body's needs. Remember 1/2 your body weight in ounces is very healthy. Try to drink 4 to 6 ounces of fluids every 15 minutes during exercise to stay well-hydrated. For every pound of body weight lost when exercising, drink 2 cups of fluids.

Avoid beverages containing caffeine -- they may have a diuretic effect, which can lead to dehydration.

Fluid requirements: Basketball players (**I know your wrestlers , but the example works**) should drink 1 milliliter of fluid per calorie consumed to maintain average fluid levels. For example, with a 3000 calorie diet, drink 3000 milliliters of fluids (30 milliliters = 1 ounce). To calculate into ounces: Divide 3000 milliliters by 30 = 100 ounces of fluids. **Parents and high schoolers did you remember your chemistry?**

What should I eat before exercising?

This is probably the question I have been asked most often by athletes. Although an important consideration, I usually encourage athletes to look not only at what they are eating before exercise but what they eat afterwards, to promote recovery and what they eat all the time to support their training.

In most sports, what is consumed immediately before exercise is not going to be a major source of energy for the exercise session. More important goals for the pre-exercise meal are preventing hunger before and during the event, topping up muscle (a little) and liver (mostly) glycogen or energy stores, ensuring an adequate blood sugar level, supplying food that is quickly and easily digested and maximizing fluid levels, especially if dehydration risk is high during exercise.

Pre-exercise meals should have a high carbohydrate content. Roughly 65 to 70 percent of the calories in the meal should come from carbohydrate foods like vegetables, fruit, bread, cereals, rice or other grain products. The meal should contain a small amount of protein (no more than 15 percent of calories) and little or no fat. **Fat takes longer to digest and uses more energy** in the process. If time is of the essence, pre-exercise meals should also be reasonably low in fibre so they can be digested more readily.

If high-sugar foods are to be consumed, they should either be eaten within about five to ten minutes of the exercise session or forty-five minutes or longer before. Otherwise an undesirable rise in insulin levels followed by a drop in blood sugar and energy can occur.

Eating something familiar is a critical issue before an important competition. This is not the time to experiment with a new energy bar or spicy bean burritos if these are not items you normally eat and are used to digesting.

The most important issue in pre-exercise eating is how much time you have between your meal and the start of your exercise session. It takes about three to four hours for a large meal (about 1,000-1,500 calories) to be digested. This is why a hockey (I know your a wrestler not a hockey player, but hockey like basketball are great aerobic sports) were player would eat his or her dinner by about 4 p.m. for a 7 p.m. game start. A smaller meal like lunch, about 600 calories, takes about two to three hours to be digested and turned into energy. One hour is adequate for a liquid meal or snack under about 300 calories. The hockey player mentioned above may choose to have a snack at about 6 p.m. to top up energy.

I've given you some examples of pre-exercise meals broken down by time frame. If you have one hour or less:

- A shake made of soft tofu, fruit and juice
- A shake made of yogurt, fruit and juice
- Yogurt and a bagel or piece of bread
- Fruit or juice
- An energy bar
- Small piece of vegetable-based pizza

If you have two to three hours or more:

- Cereal, milk and a piece of fruit
- Pasta, vegetables and a lean meat sauce
- Vegetables, rice and fish or chicken
- A turkey and vegetable sandwich

Vegetable-bean soup, crackers and milk

If one of the goals of your exercise program is to maximize fat loss, aim to allow at least one hour between eating and the start of your exercise session. If you are working out first thing in the morning and can't eat a whole meal, have a small snack like a piece of fruit, yogurt or juice and eat your breakfast meal after the session.

The Bottom Line

Almost more important than what you eat before exercising is how much time you have. Experiment with different foods and the timing of eating before exercise to determine what works best for you.

Action Tip

A light, easy-to-digest carbohydrate snack is the best pre-exercise option. Great idea moms and dads buy a juicer, blend some veggies and fruit for taste. Take advantage of the enzymes.