

Feb 1, 2007 Coaches Corner

So you want to get better at wrestling? What is the answer to the age old question; "Coach, what can I do to get better?"

There are a few things you can do day to day that will help you now. You can eat better and not just the day of the match or night before but all the time. You can get a good nights sleep and not just the night before a match but all the time. After all, you are participating in a very demanding sport. Few outside of wrestling understand the demands of a hard fought 6 minute match. You can lift weights and workout hard and improve your conditioning. Less body fat and more muscle = a tougher wrestler.

But there is one thing you can do above all else and that is ... wrestle better wrestlers. In basketball you can make the same shot 100 times and you should get better. Not so in wrestling. Do you think you gain much in a match when you pin your opponent in, say, 20 seconds? Fact is neither you nor he benefited from that. If at practice you constantly find yourself wrestling lighter, less experienced wrestlers because this makes for an easier practice do you think that helps you much? No, it helps the other wrestler! He had to work harder, so he got better. You wasted a day. If you are one of the younger freshman on the team and are starting your wrestling career and you wonder how the better 5 or 6 wrestlers on the team got that way well the answer is simple... they wrestled a lot, and they were never afraid to "wrestle up". In fact all of the great wrestlers in the sport have a common trait. Not only were they not afraid to wrestle someone better than they but they actually sought out the tougher competition. Good wrestlers love the "fight" in the sport and seek it out. They seek out the toughest opponents and do not shy away from them. They like to challenge themselves to see how good they are. When you wrestle a tougher opponent it forces you to work much harder than you would otherwise and by doing so you get better. If you practice with someone you can pin quickly then, quite frankly, you might as well play X-Box live for all the good it will do you. Think of it this way... when you have a match and you have the one opponent on the team who is a district champ, regional champ or has been to AC do you say; "Oh no, not me!" or do you like it! If you like it you are destined to be a good wrestler yourself.

At practice it's not always possible to do that of course, everyone has to wrestle and sometimes you are the "tougher" opponent. But you don't have to do it all the time. Seek out tougher wrestlers and give it a shot. Test yourself. Many wrestlers on the team started as young as first grade and I'm betting Dustin, who had older brothers that wrestled, started in kindergarten! These boys have 8 years of experience prior to 9th grade! I know for a fact these boys went to outside tournaments where no consideration for skill level was given and wrestled. That is why they are at where they are now.

So test yourself, wrestle up in skill, and wrestle up in weight. You don't have to overdue it and I wouldn't go up more than a weight class or two. More than that may be unsafe. Try it. And if you do and you find yourself getting your butt kicked for a few days and then you go out and win a tough match because the toughness of it was not new to you... then go back and thank that tougher teammate for making you a better wrestler. Good teams make this a habit.