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Why Wrestle Greco-Roman and Freestyle in Spring & Summer?

By Steve Fraser

Wrestling Greco-Roman and freestyle in the spring and summer is where I made my biggest improvements in the sport of wrestling. It was in between my tenth and eleventh grade high school seasons. Masaaki Hatta, who is a world silver medalist for Japan and NCAA Champion for Oklahoma State University was my summer wrestling coach back in Hazel Park, Michigan. Masaaki took me to my first Greco tournament. After this we competed in both Greco and freestyle tournaments throughout the summer.

Masaaki also ran a freestyle and Greco practice twice per week throughout the summertime. This twice per week practice was relaxed, fun and very productive. No worries about cutting weight. No pressure from the team. No demands from coaches that were outside my own demands. Masaaki just taught whoever came to the practice, one or two new techniques each session, along with his intense exercises, etc. This spring and summer experience was the absolute key to me becoming a successful wrestler.

Spring is the time when most wrestlers start wrapping it up for the year. Most wrestlers take this time off and wait until fall to resume their wrestling career. Why? Unless you are playing in another sport like baseball or track & field why not keep playing in wrestling? And even if you are playing another sport why not wrestle in a few tournaments? You might practice twice a week in a local wrestling room and keep playing with the sport so you can keep improving your skills.

These days there are more and more opportunities to wrestle folkstyle in the spring and summer months. However, I would suggest very strongly that you consider wrestling Greco and freestyle instead of wrestling folkstyle during your middle or high school off season. There are many reasons why.

The Olympic Games only offer Greco-Roman and freestyle internationally. If you have a dream to become world or Olympic Champion some day you must learn the nuances of the two Olympic styles of wrestling. Our country needs you! With more and more kids wrestling folkstyle all year round, the United States team risks falling behind our international competitors, like Russia, Cuba, Japan and Iran.

The good news is – even if you do not have any aspiration to wrestle at the Olympic level - wrestling and learning Greco (and freestyle) will greatly improve your folkstyle skills and results. Just ask some of our latest NCAA Champions like Kyle Dake (Cornell), David Taylor (Penn State) and Logan Stieber (Ohio State) to name just a few guys that have all had Greco-Roman experience and success.

If you think you can be the best in the country and NOT know anything about upper body wrestling skills, you have another thing coming. Great wrestling requires knowledge, training and experience in ALL areas. Upper body or lower body attacks all come into play at the top level.

There are many freestyle and Greco-Roman tournaments held in the spring and summer months. In many of these tournaments participants may wrestle 5-7 matches in a day. This many matches alone afford a wrestler much experience and a great opportunity to identify and improve one's skills.

Wrestling in these kinds of tournaments offer many benefits:

- Wrestling is wrestling. Wrestling freestyle or Greco will enhance an individual's folkstyle wrestling technique. Even though different techniques are involved and the rules differ slightly, the extra experience greatly improves one's skills.
- Wrestling throughout the year will keep you in wrestling shape.
- Practicing your competition skills and competing 1-on-1 with another individual on a regular basis trains you to be less nervous in future matches.
- Wrestling and learning Greco will greatly improve your pummeling and fighting skills.
- A wrestler can wrestle at whatever weight he/she is at - NO CUTTING WEIGHT. This allows the wrestler to focus on skills and the competition itself.

- There should be no team pressure. You are there with a friend or two and the atmosphere is much more relaxed. You can focus on individual skills and experiment with different things.

Even though the rules are different, again, wrestling is wrestling. The skills necessary to be successful in freestyle and Greco are the same skills needed in folkstyle wrestling. The same physical conditioning component that it takes to be successful will be enhanced by wrestling in the spring and summer. The psychological aspects of wrestling are all the same and those areas will be developed also.

I remember the first Greco-Roman tournament that Masaaki took me to when I was fifteen years old. I wrestled six matches in one day and the intensity (six matches in one day) yet relaxed atmosphere (just two buddies and I) was one of the most important developmental experiences of my career. I went from being a mediocre tenth grade wrestler, to beating two high school state place winners in this particular tournament. This tournament was the catalyst that ignited my hunger for the sport.

Do it! Wrestle folkstyle during the school year and freestyle and Greco-Roman in the spring and summer and we will see you at the top!