

Wrestling Lays a Foundation for Other Sports

by Ben Peterson w/Ethan Bosch

Each fall, many young athletes debate whether or not to go out for wrestling. Football and soccer players have had a full fall season of practices and games. Some are excited about their prospects for the next season in that sport, so they think that lifting specifically for that sport would help them the most. Others are anticipating a spring sport, like baseball. If either of these is your case, let me urge you to consider the following benefits of wrestling for your other sport(s):

1) Wrestling is built on position. A good stance is vital to most any sports activity. Football's "hit" position and a baseball player's stance are both similar to a good wrestling stance. Quality training for wrestling will include repeated drilling of a good stance, moving in that stance, and moving quickly from that stance. Wrestling keeps a person alert to his own body position and balance, as well as that of others he comes into contact with. These skills apply well in football and in soccer, as players fight for position. (Anyone who has played soccer knows that it's a contact sport.) Wrestling will help develop those contact positioning skills.

Many have found that these several team sports (like football, soccer, and baseball) emphasize the positioning of all the players on the field, with little training for their individual body skills. Wrestling training majors on these skills. When an athlete steps on the field already having body position, balance, and awareness, he increases his effectiveness for his team and increases his chances to be selected by coaches to play.

2) Wrestling teaches good work habits. It is no secret that wrestling is a sport that demands a lot of work. Regularly I hear wrestlers and non-wrestlers comment on how wrestling training exceeds that of every other sport. Anyone involved in wrestling training for any length of time will work extensively on repeated drills, strength improvement, conditioning, and mental toughness. Wrestling requires a lot of work – most coaches demand it, and success relies on it. Wrestling work habits have helped many of us in the classroom, in the home, in the workplace, and in other sports. To quote my Olympic teammate and wrestling legend, Dan Gable: "Once you have wrestled, everything else in life is easy."

3) Core strength and conditioning are basic to wrestling. By "core strength," I am referring to the strength of the large muscle groups of the hips, thighs, and lower torso. Core conditioning is referring to the lungs and heart.

Wrestling is constantly working on the strength, flexibility and balancing of the hips. Muscle power from lifting dead weights is good. But lifting an opponent that is fighting back is much more valuable to the dynamics of most sport activity, especially football. Core strength is important in hitting a

baseball, too (all wrestlers know the maxim that "power comes from the hips"). And anyone who has wrestled very long knows his lung and heart conditioning improves greatly, which is especially valuable in soccer.

4) Learn personal confidence by wrestling. Many of us have to fight through major amounts of fear and timidity. When you accept the challenge to wrestle, you take great strides to overcome those fears. This was one of wrestling's major benefits to me. I was very shy and sought to hide my performance and my limitations in a team. After wrestling for three years, I learned to take responsibility for my performance like never before. Only then did I become a real asset to my high school football team. My confidence and determination soared.

As the coach of a small college (Maranatha Baptist Bible College, of Watertown, Wisconsin) for 27 _ seasons, I had wrestlers playing other sports every year. Several times I watched them go out for football when they had never played it before. Several of them became starters, and often they earned conference honors. My upper weights were linemen and linebackers, while the lightweights have been safeties. They quickly adjust to football, and are complimented by coach Terry Price because they know how to keep strong position, they work hard, they have good core strength, condition and personal confidence.

My son Andy enjoyed playing for Coach Price, whose three sons all wrestled. Today, Andy is 24 and is seeking to play football on a professional level. Because of his limited size, he has converted from a college linebacker to safety in the National Indoor Football League. He's been playing two years with the St. Louis River City Rage. I tell him he is still wrestling – only now it is at a full sprint, and often leaping in the air. He will tell you that his high school and college wrestling have been invaluable to him in all his football. We regularly talk about the ability God has given him and how to maximize it. Andy and I do not think he would have come this far in football, nor could he fully reach his God-given potential, without wrestling. He is still seeking to live out Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might: for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going." Wrestling has been a vital part of Andy's football pursuits.

What are your goals in life? Are you doing everything you can do to fulfill your potential? Wrestling can help! I urge you to take on the wrestling challenge, and to convince others to do the same. To reach your full potential, you will need to wrestle. Wrestling will help you excel in a thousand other things!