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Improving The Sport of Wrestling

Over the past thirteen years of wrestling, I have had many values instilled in my everyday behavior including discipline, dedication, and respect, as well as lessons learned along my wrestling journey. The sport has not only influenced me, but has become a way of life for me and has been the foundation of who I am in respects of mentally, physically, and spiritually. Since the age of 5, I was taught the essence of what hard work, perseverance and belief in oneself could accomplish. Wrestlers are a different breed. Wrestlers are athletes that do not have time outs, substitutions, half times, or excuses. Subsequently, there are opportunities to improve the sport of wrestling including better promotion of the sport at the high school and collegiate levels, incorporate positive psychological preparation in wrestling programs, and lastly highlight nutrition education in order for wrestlers to safely maintain a specific weight during the season.

Starting with better promotion of the sport at the high school level, this can spark public's interest and increase fan base support. There is sparse media coverage of classic tournaments such as The PowerAde Tournament, The Virginia Beach Duals or Dapper Dan Tournament. These tournaments remain largely obscured from the public eye. When compared to media coverage of high school football or basketball, there is a great divide from coverage of wrestling. More effort needs put into marketing the sport of wrestling by alerting multiple media modes throughout the wrestling season including matches, duals, tournaments, and other important events prior to occurring. Moving on to the collegiate level, another aspect of improving the wrestling sport is promoting elite wrestlers such as Seth Gross, Yianni Diakomihalis, and Jason Nolf. Promotion of these successful college wrestlers through media exposure will help the sport gain popularity in

different target audiences. In addition to these male wrestlers, female wrestlers are increasing in number on both high school and college levels. Reaching out to this target audience will also increase the fan base and increase support from a wider range of ages of both men and women. A concerted effort of campaigning the sport of wrestling needs executed to foster the success moving forward.

Secondly, in order to prepare for obtaining my athletic goals, the mental aspect of focusing on the positive aspects of my wrestling is crucial. Although this is not a physical challenge, the psychological perspective is a critical element of a wrestlers performance on the mat. The need to be centered while blocking out any negative thoughts that were on the periphery is almost as important as the physical aspects of the sport. This is evident when an opponent can psych the other out crushing the ability to win. A wrestler has to be able to center one's attention and mind to be hardy and outperform the opponent facing one on the mat. The two wrestlers facing off on the mat have at varsity level two, three-minute periods for a total of six minutes. This does not sound like a huge chunk of time, however expending full physical exertion against your opponent, who at the same time is trying to rip your head off is definitely a challenge one must mentally prepared for. The psychological component either gives a wrestler an advantage or disadvantage depending on what is going through the mind at the time of the match. The technique I use is silencing my mind by listening to music while emphasizing my confidence in my skills by repeating the mantra: I am good enough; I am strong enough to beat anyone in my path. This works but having a known, successful process for positive psychological preparation would be more helpful. Developing a positive, tested mindset program that

could be incorporated into the wrestling schedule is a beneficial tool that would improve the sport.

Lastly, a focus on nutrition would benefit the sport, which would provide wrestlers with ability to make healthy choices for balanced meal eating. The nutrition education would not need to be a formal class, although having some direction of what foods are better than others, best times to eat, and frequency of meals would improve the difficulties of maintaining a specific weight for the season. Staying healthy without having to do the “yo-yo” effect of one’s weight would maintain wrestlers’ stamina and prevent the more intense calorie limitation prior to weigh-ins. Wrestlers typically believe they know everything about how to maintain or “make weight”, however this is not the case. Being able to have healthy meal plans along with nutritional education would be beneficial and result in better outcomes for wrestling season.

In conclusion, the sport of wrestling has truly transformed my life and I would not be the person today or have the opportunities I have if it were not for the sport. I love the sport and the inspiration wrestling has given me in my life. This sport has set me on a path I am grateful to be on. Yes, the journey has included hard work, perseverance, and deep soul commitment but also taught me many life long lessons that will make me successful in anything I pursue in the future. Further examining the sport, I am obliged to see there are opportunities for those involved in the sport to shine more brightly. Improving the marketing of wrestling on the levels of high school and collegiate competition through multi-media modes; looking at the holistic person, body and mind; and the inclusion of nutritional education, will inevitably lead to higher participation in the sport and also increase the sports popularity.