

Tie-ups That Make a Difference

By Ben Peterson Olympic Champion

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In late winter it is my privilege to attend several major high school and college tournaments. This year my viewing included the Wisconsin High School State Tournament, the Big 10 Championships, the NCAA DI Championships, the Wisconsin Wrestling Federation Grade School State and Regional, Sectional and Conference tournaments. I have enjoyed some great wrestling!

It is always my privilege to watch several of our summer Campers and Staff win honors at each of these levels. But also, at these meets, I see some new trends that guide some of my instruction at camps and clinics that I do throughout the year.

Please permit me to explain an area that I found woefully missing at even the highest levels of wrestling this year - an area that I believe needs to be taught more extensively to our many young talented athletes.

Angle tie-ups are noticeably lacking. We have done a great job of teaching our wrestlers to lift weights and condition. The Big 10 athletes across the board are noticeably hard-working physical specimens. They can hit takedowns hard and quick. But at times matches remind me of 2 mountain goats colliding over and over, and almost always straight ahead. Much of this attack is head and chest contact against the opponent's chest and body. Slamming contact is often and quick, but against a strong defense it often brings a stand-off and over time.

Occasionally, an athlete makes a change in elevation and with quickness attacks a low single. This change of elevation is very important in adjusting from the upper level mountain goat poundings. Some with daring and flexibility use this change of attack to great advantage. It is affective and it is exciting for fans as well. Changing elevations is a great way to get an angle and wrestlers are doing it very well today. But I personally believe we need to increase our angles on our feet as well.

May I suggest that at all levels of Folkstyle wrestling we are lacking in creating angles? We seem to have limited knowledge on how to get ourselves at an angle or how to make our opponent turn his body so we can attack from the side. Therefore we are lacking on keeping an angle for any period of time.

My high school coach, Jack Walsh, introduced us to underhooks and using it to get a significant angle. I must say we were crude and limited in our options, but I was taught how to create an angle position and a couple ways to attack from it. Simple head position and back step circling were helpful tactics we were exposed to.

By my sophomore year in college at Iowa State University Coaches Harold Nichols and Les Anderson and teammates Gable, Jean, Smith, Duschen and Martin had me saturated with underhooks and getting a definite angled position on opponents. Underhooks became a regular way to get set-ups for my best leg attacks. Underhooks and angles helped me stop most any serious attack to my legs and then put me in position to attack my opponents with some means of ease. Faking a leg shot is an easy way to get an underhook. A push and then backstep circle helped fully secure the underhook tie-up at an angle.

I especially recall learning the underhook from Dan Gable as he used it to keep me from attacking him with all my power when I was 40+ pounds heavier than him. By my senior year Chris Taylor, the 6'-5", 425 pound, "Gentle Giant", became my weekly workout partner. Chris was a 2-time NCAA Champion and an Olympic Bronze Medalist. After having Gable create an

angle on me so many times it was obvious I should do the same to Chris. It was the only way I could stay on the mat with Chris.

It should be noted that I observed two outstanding 2010 NCAA Champions noticeably using the underhooks to significant advantage. Andy Howe, 165# Champion from Wisconsin, in his first 2 college stellar seasons has proven he knows how to get the angle and then score. Two time 197# Champion Jake Varner of Iowa State University often uses it as well. In matches where these 2 successful wrestlers dominate they use it a lot. In closer matches they usually were limited in the angles they created.

I believe both Andy and Jake will be well served by the underhooks they are now perfecting when they pursue National Freestyle Team opportunities. My brother John and I sure were. As we continued international competition over a 9 year period, we also added two-on-one arm-ties. Two-on-one arm-ties can secure angles and control opponents extremely well. Russian athletes have been very successful with them for decades. For a long time John and I have felt Americans should be doing more two-on-ones. That is why we include it in much of our instruction.

I am biased, but the best use of underhooks and two-on-ones I have ever seen was John's 1976 Olympic Gold Medal performance. By that time, John had so mastered these 2 tie-ups that he literally ran away with the Olympics. Former World Champions from Russia and Germany and the Olympic finalist from Turkey stumbled and fell at his feet as they tried to defend themselves and attack. John is a great example of how dominating you can become by learning angled tie-ups.

Often I see a move that was common years ago but noticeably lacking today. Occasionally, I see that these moves could be of significant help to our young wrestlers today. I believe that is true for getting angles with underhooks. So coaches, if you agree with me bring it back again. Work angles with your team. Send your wrestlers to our camps whenever you can, or have me come to your school or club. I would love to work with your wrestlers and bring underhooks and angles back to a more prominent use in our sport.

I am reminded of the many facets of life and competitive wrestling. The incredible order that God has given to His creation amazes me every day. Noticing the angles and positions that make work easier are evident all around us. Deflecting power and getting angles to me are basic laws of wrestling as much as gravity is a basic law of the universe. Let's work to use these God given laws to be better at our wrestling and then study other laws/principles that will make life easier, our competitions more exciting and our successes greater.

Wrestlers, I encourage you to constantly look for and drill tie-ups that create and maintain angles. They will win for you!

You can find other articles by Ben, John & Andy Peterson at their web site. Today they run Camp of Champs Wrestling Camps. Contact them at: Camp of Champs, PO Box 222, Watertown, WI 53094; Phone: 800-505-5099; E-mail: info@campofchamps.org; Web: www.campofchamps.org