

“Train with Your Head –
Then Pour Your Heart Into It!”

By

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The above title is a phrase I often use. I love working with young athletes who possess drive and intensity. But without thinking through positions and directions their hard explosions often end up in disaster.

There is a time to major on aggressive explosiveness. But first, position and control are needed. There will come a time when we must put all the emotion and heart we can into our competition. But we better think through a few things while we prepare for intense competition.

The Apostle Paul says it like this:

“Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty.

Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection.” I Corinthians 9: 26 & 27

I. The Early Season

Early season is the time to major on *position* and *control*. An athlete in any sport must be patient and consistent in working through balanced and strong positions. The coach and athlete who will discipline themselves this way early in the season will find many benefits later on.

Football players are well known for their ability to explode or even charge through tough situations. But as they begin the wrestling season, if they don't slow down and think through the new and different position and direction they are using, they will experience:

- 1) Undue fatigue,
- 2) Poor position that can easily be used against them
- 3) And very likely injury.

As a high school athlete I remember experiencing these each November. As a coach, I regularly remind football players to relax, slow down and think about their position. Football usually teaches us to explode, but early in the wrestling season we must take time to study our position and the direction of explosions.

Impulsive reactions are often thought to be all bad. Yes, they can bring great disappointment. However, being impulsive can be guided for good, just like the explosiveness of football players can be helpful when directed and controlled. If you are impulsive you react quickly and with intensity. **Temper and impulse** can both be controlled and their energy directed in a profitable way.

People often say John and I are controlled and mild mannered. In actuality we can be very impulsive. Early on this did and still does get us in trouble when we have not thought through how we react. We watched our Dad react in anger and great intensity. But we also watched him work to control that anger. I watched my Dad lose his temper and then with God's help gain victory over it. He didn't excuse it but worked to control it. For years I have said Dad was a great reminder to me that I better control my explosiveness or I will cause disappointment in my family and in my wrestling competition.

We want energy and will use a lot of it early in the season, but it is a good idea to let explosiveness rest some and regain strength while we major on doing the right thing. Mobility on the feet and on the mat is vital. Be patient in the early weeks. Think through and automatically maintain proper position after each adjustment. I recommend using 1 to 2 mile

runs for conditioning at this point. Major on doing these runs hard. A few controlled explosive sprints are good also.

II. Midseason

The middle weeks of the season require balance between the mind and heart. Now the mind should be thinking ahead for setting up our moves and countering our opponents. If position was established in the first weeks of the season it will be easy to expand into new areas. If not, we will constantly find ourselves trying to catch up and reposition.

Now that we have learned body position we can major on changing directions and getting angles. We can anticipate what our opponent is doing and sharpen our own adjustments. This is also the time to establish a game plan for matches. Planning our pace and approach to each period is important. Planning setups, counters and finishes are all important now.

Controlled explosive training should also be worked during this time. One mile or less runs and 5 explosive (20 to 50 yard) sprints are now needed. These sprints can be done 3 to 5 times per week. Keep them away from competition because they will fatigue you. Doing all 3-5 sets of running and sprinting in 1 or 2 days is a good idea. It will simulate a tournament. Practice urgency in the sprints. And keep hopeful and positive thought that they are helping you prepare for the toughest opponents.

III. Late Season & Tournaments

Now is the time to refine position and choice of technique. By now you should have some idea of who are key matches for you. Think them through keeping your hope alive and strong no matter what happened in the past. As we think positively our emotions will follow in a positive, hopeful way.

Confirm and adjust your plan of attack at this time. Remember to stay coachable! You will need a coach's perspective extra at this time. Don't be too hasty to brush aside the comments of a Dad, uncle, former coach, wrestler or teacher. Remember they want you to win also. Keep them on your team. Work with them to stay hopeful.

Continue to practice your explosions now by *sprinting* and other means. Do them early in the week before the weekend tournaments. Some like doing them right after a tournament while they are still tired and adrenaline is high. We should use the greatest urgency on these sprints. Keep your impulsiveness for the right places, thinking of running your opponent through a wall he has never passed, but you are.

In Conclusion

If you have read this at the beginning of the season, take note of reading it in a month and then a month later. God has given us both mind and emotion. Repeatedly work to balance them.

Start everything using your head and think through what position and what movement is best. Then with your head, pick the times to use your heart and your emotion and watch the results improve both on and off the mat.

You can find other articles by Ben, John & Andy at their web site. Today The Petersons 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