

Building Your Team

By

Olympic Champion Ben Peterson & Two time Olympian Jim Gruenwald

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As a coach I have worked with many quality team players. These men not only worked hard to win themselves but they also inspired others along with them. Jim Gruenwald is one of these men I had the privilege of being his coach. As a college freshman Jim was the clear leader/captain of the team by the semester break and his leadership continued to improve all 4 years. Jim spent 12 years at the Colorado Springs Olympic Training Center. His coaches, Mike Houck and Steve Fraiser, complimented him significantly for his positive leadership mentality.

I have asked Jim if I could include a major portion of a recent article he wrote on this subject. He graciously agreed. Jim calls it THE LONE WOLF. Note the 'snares' Jim tells us to avoid.

There is a saying, "The lone wolf dies, but the pack survives." I have no idea of the origin of the expression, but I do know the principle is found in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:

Two are better than one, in that their cooperative efforts yield this advantage: if one of them falls, the other will help his partner up - woe to him who is alone when he falls and has no one to help him up... Moreover, an attacker may defeat someone who is alone, but two can resist him; and a three-stranded cord is not easily broken.

John Donne, an English Poet and Christian, wrote, "No man is an island." The idea conveyed, as with Ecclesiastes, is that we are better with others. In fact, this concept is demonstrated with God's creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:18). Study the New Testament and you will find it riddled with verses on the benefits of fellowship.

Yet, how does a person become isolated? I recall a very successful Turkish wrestler by the name of Seref Eroglu, a 1997 World Champion and 2004 Olympic Silver Medalist. He was successful, yet disliked by his teammates because of his attitude. He was ostracized by those who should have been his closest supporters. His pride separated him from his teammates. Not only does it hurt an athlete's coach-ability but also taints the atmosphere in a wrestling room or any other athletic setting.

Other than the pitfalls of pride, here are the other snares that will create strife in an athletic venue:

- Anger – Proverbs 15:18 Hot-tempered people stir up strife, but patient people quiet quarrels.
- Jealousy - Proverbs 27:4 Fury is cruel and anger overwhelming, but who can stand up to jealousy?
- Hatred - Proverbs 10:12 Hate stirs up disputes, but love covers all kinds of transgressions.
- Disrespect – Proverbs 13:10 Insolence produces only strife, but wisdom is found with those who take advice.
- Backbiter - Proverbs 16:28 A deceitful person stirs up strife, and a slanderer can separate even close friends.

The question is: Do you display any or all of the aforementioned characteristics? Are you that person? Or are you the one who creates an ideal training environment? The bottom line is that you need coaches and you need training partners. Create strife and you undermine your own efforts to become a champion.

*We need the opposite qualities from the negative points Jim encourages us to avoid. Turn these 'snares' around and you have **patience, forgiveness, love, respect and honesty** – characteristics we all appreciate in others and that will build a team.*

Thank you Jim for working as hard as any man I have known to be a winner on the mat! But also thank you for bringing many others along with you. You are in good company. I also had the privilege of personally watching Dan Gable working so hard in his own training and then bringing others with him. Thank you Dan for allowing my brother John and me to be 2 of those men you welcomed along with you!

*Check out other articles by Jim Gruenwald at a new website at: www.thecompetitor.org
At this site you will regularly find new challenges that will stretch your thinking on many of the topics that strengthen wrestlers and coaches.*

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