

Strategies for Being Successful on the Mat

A. Thank you

1. Thank you for the opportunity to share some of my thoughts. If just one thing comes out of this presentation that resonates with you, then it is all worth it.
2. Did I have success? I guess some would say that; however, I could introduce you to some coaches that might not agree.

B. Background

1. Some of you may have first thoughts that Dave Frisch had the inside track to getting into the big-time tournaments. I did not.
2. Why am I telling you this? I came from no special background, in fact the quite the opposite.
3. Hopefully you can relate to this. I came from the middle of nowhere and I was still able to get to the D-1 tournament. You do not have to have this great background to make it.
4. I came from a very rural area of MN where a town of 50,000 was at least a 2-hour drive. I grew up on a farm and we were kind of poor, especially when looking at today's standards.
5. I probably should not share this as it dates me. I started my first 2-years of school in a one room school house. There were 8-kids until one was killed in a tractor accident and then there were 7 of us and 4 were from my family. The school closed.

6. I made extra money working for the neighbors doing all kinds of jobs like pitching manure, baling hay, walking beans and, farming in general.
7. Our little farm town of St. James had great wrestling so I started wrestling in 7th grade. We ended up being state champions my senior year of HS in a 1-class system, i.e., we wrestled against the big MSP schools who had no idea our little town existed.
8. After HS I wrestled 2-years in Junior College and then I went on to SCSU where I wrestled again for my final two years.
9. I never went to a wrestling camp or did anything outside of seasonal competition.
10. **MY POINT:** You have all the opportunities and tools you need to make it to the D-1 Tournament.

C. Officiating – My Start

1. I was married during my junior year of college. Immediately following my competition years, I started officiating to make a little extra money. My goal was not to officiate a state tournament much less a national tournament.
2. My first officiating was a college JV match at SCSU. I was helping coach my 5th year and thought I would help.
3. My 2nd match was a HS Varsity match where a couple of times I lost track of who was in control in a couple of the matches and

had to go straighten it out at the scorers table. I got booed for the poor job I did and confronted by the coaches. I did not like being treated like that so I decided I needed to get better. Do not get discouraged, I started out POORLY!

D. What did I focus on? This applies to all levels and for anytime in your career. All the following is what applied for me. It may not fit for you. This is not a definitive list; however, maybe it will help.

1. YOU HAVE GOT TO KNOW THE RULES. It is a given that a coach will take you to the bench and challenge you. You do not get the luxury of going to the rule book prior to answering them.
2. The goal is to call the match exactly right in a way that is fair to the wrestlers. Who cares about the coaches and the fans, it is about the competitors.
3. ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS be in position on the mat. That means you must HUSTLE, HUSTLE, HUSTLE on the mat
4. Do any of you remember getting, what you termed to be screwed in a match? I do and, I remember the names of the three officials to this day. I hope no one remembers my name.
5. What did this mean to me personally? I needed to establish some guidelines for myself. Keep in mind that I did not have these from Day 1 nor did I have these written down somewhere.

E. Core Values for Myself (Seven Items)

1. **Look like you belong on the mat:** Uniform; Gear; Physical Appearance; Good whistle. On 01-01-1983 I was laid off from my job. I had a wife, 2 kids and a third on the way. How would we survive? I went after and got so many matches and tournaments that I drew no unemployment in Jan and Feb and only around \$350 for the month of March. **I bought new uniforms and I truly became a professional at officiating.** That year I was asked to work the D-2 nationals and was the #1 ranked official in D-2. I had done a lot of officiating and was right at home on the mat, **I belonged there.** That qualified me for the D-1 tournament in 1984, this was my first shot, and I had to make the best of it.
2. **Honor your contracts and commitments:** What do I mean by that? Do not give up one match/tournament to take a better one. I can say I never did that. Example: I had committed to work a small school HS tournament hosted by the Colorado Springs School for the Deaf and Blind. The head official for the Las Vegas Open called requesting I come there. I turned them down as I was already committed to the small local tournament.
Only once did I cancel out of numerous contracts. In January of 1991 my wife was diagnosed with cancer. I cancelled out of everything including the NAIA National Tournament, the Big 10 Tournament and the D-1 National Championships for that year. REMEMBER: Family is more important than officiating.

3. **Believe you are the best:** Believe you are the best, they selected you to do this match or tournament. You are most likely much better at this than you think. I worked the JUCO's and D-2's in 1979. They host institution contracted the officials. They brought in some big-name officials and regional officials so they could keep their costs down. This was the beginning for me, even though I DID NOT BELIEVE I SHOULD BE THERE. **Shame on me**, for NOT believing I should be there. You being a part of this right now, is indication you are preparing to be there.
4. **Control your emotions, you are the professional:** The coaches and fans are emotional and get caught up in the drama; you are the neutral party and the true professional in this. Call it like you see it, do not have outside influences, like which coach yells loudest or how much the crowd boos. Just know I have been booed by over 10,000 fans at one time!
5. **Admit when you are wrong:** If that means changing a call, change the call! Within the last couple of years, I had a coach tell me that you are one of the only officials I know that ever changed a call when you know you screwed up. EXAMPLE: Ken Ritchie, as my assistant confirmed I made a bad call. I changed the call before God and country because it was the correct thing to do at the NCAA Division 1 finals. This was before video challenges
6. **Help Others get better:** Take them with you; get them into tournaments; **groom the next generation**. Since I am talking about Kenny Ritchie, I got to work with Kenny when he

officiated his very first Big 12 Tournament. I was acting as the head official for the tournament. The first round we had a protest which I had to attend on behalf of the officials. I spoke with Kenny about it after the protest meeting and explained why we arrived at the outcome we did. He accepted it all and grew from there. We grew together as officials and friends.

7. Be a Part of a Team: Do not complain about the other officials; when I started at the D-1 tournament in 1984, and for a couple of years following, they cut officials at the end of each day. You were now on your own to get home and/or pay for your room if you stayed. Officials would stab each other in the back in an effort to stay. There was NO TEAM about this at all. I did not know any better being the newbie and I did not know which matches to dodge, which was done frequently. I had to do my very best job to make sure I did not get cut. I could not afford to get myself home. Pat McCormick got that changed a few years later so no one got cut until the finals and the 10 that did not make the finals got to assist in the finals. Pat brought in a core group of officials and built a team around them. If you were to have access to the officials for the period of years extending from the 80's, 90's and into the 2000's, you would see that core group of officials each year. He slowly added to or deleted from the group each year to build the best team possible. These guys were not just great officials, they were friends that supported each other. The thing I miss the most about officiating is seeing some of my friends. **Who is your team?**

QUESTIONS:

The next phase of my presentation focuses on Mechanics, or those things I could do to make me the best that I could be, my trademarks. Stalling is also important; however, I think the rules committee has implemented some changes, the count and the out of bounds, that helps make all officials more consistent. Everyone knows what to expect in certain stalling type situations. I want to focus the remainder of our time on Mechanics.

MECHANICS – Twelve (12) Trademarks: It starts before the match starts. Pre-match responsibilities. Contrary to the other list of my Core Values, I did have these things written down and I tried to follow them.

1. **Establish Expectations for the Team (1):** I always met with the team or team captains before the match to give them my expectations. In that presentation, I asked the captains to monitor the team. There was no joking with them, same speech to both teams and the coach was invited. THAT is the only communication I attempted to have with coach and team. Anything further discussion once the match started was a penalty.
2. **Expectations for myself, my Trademarks**
 - a. **Never look at the coach after the first whistle (2),** and that is for the entire rest of the match. He will rarely, if ever, give you a thumbs up or tell you good job
 - b. **Lock your eyes on the wrestlers (3)** unless you must look at the table for something or your assistant official. One of my premier trademarks was total concentration on wrestling, literally boring holes through the wrestlers, from start to finish.

c. **ANTICIPATE ACTION (4)** where IS ACTION GOING NEXT SO I CAN BE THERE. Work to be in that correct position, especially on the out of bounds. BE ON THE LINE. Attempting to be on the line when the wrestlers arrived was one of my goals.

i. Reference the video clip sent out on 11/15 from Mike McC through RefQ for a good position of the officials on the line. In the video it is a bit hard to tell if the butt is still in the cylinder but the officials on the line could tell. Great position!

ii. Don't be concerned about catching anyone going out of bounds. The wrestlers know where they are at. The example I used on my Mechanics video was about my son being on an aircraft carrier. They played football on the carrier deck and no one ever went out of bounds.

d. **HUSTLE (5)**: Be the fastest guy on the mat in your movement. Know how you are circling. If the wrestlers are CIRCLING one way, you CIRCLE the other. Be efficient with your movement. Some guys are masters at this.

e. **SELL YOUR CALL (6)**: Be verbal and visual using the official signals. Shove them up in the air for all to see and yell them out so the fans in the back row know you mean business and so will the coach. Takedown – Three! Reversal Two! Act and sound like you are absolutely convinced of your call.

- f. **BE THE FIRST TO THE CENTER OF THE MAT (7)**: Be there when the wrestlers come on to the mat and, be the first back to the center on the return from the out of bounds. Never take your eyes off them during the whole process. This does a couple of things:
 - i. Your hustle back sets the tempo of the match
 - ii. it shows who is sucking air
 - iii. Never usher someone back or walk with the straggler
- g. **End of Match (8)**: Make sure they shake hands properly and make sure you are ready to step between them, if necessary, every single time.
- h. **Raise the hand of the champion (9)**: You never know what that will mean to someone. I got to raise Cael Sanderson's hand, undefeated for four years. That same year I also raised a HS wrestlers' hand; the picture was the same pose and he had just won his first HS varsity match. Make sure to raise the hand of the champion.
- i. **My Conditioning (10)**: I worked out daily. I wanted to make sure I was in better condition than anyone. I succeeded in that until some punks came in, like Mike Hagerty and some others, who worked out more than me!

- j. **Stay hydrated (11)**: During all-day tournaments I always had water with me and I drank a lot. Whenever I got a break, it was a sprint to the bathroom. IMO, Dehydration causes some loss of focus. I could see it in other officials, even at the D-1 level when they began to wear down, stay hydrated.
- k. **Have a Mentor and Be a Mentor (12)**: In 1979, at my first Junior College National Tournament, I met Darrold Henry. He set the bar for me and showed me what a great official looks like. He was my mentor for many years. He was the top ranked official in the nation for many years until finally I was one and he was two. I would not have been the official I was without Darrold's mentoring. I think Darrold finished by officiating (31) D-1 National Championships. He was the greatest of all officials, the GOAT of officiating, in my opinion.

QUESTIONS: