

## Championship Dreams

Do you dream about becoming a State Champion? An NCAA Champion? An Olympic Gold Medalist? If you are willing to make a commitment to achieving your loftiest goals and dreams, you should not fear having championship aspirations. "Without the risk of failure, there can be no challenge."

When I was an eighth grader, the State High School Tournament was in my hometown of Huntington, West Virginia. I went to watch and can vividly remember viewing every match with great interest and intensity, imagining I was out there battling for a State Championship myself. When I came home from the State Finals, I quickly put on my sweats, cap and gloves and went for a run. While running, I pictured myself winning the State Championship over and over again in my head. When I finished running I shadow drilled outside on the cold, hard grass, picturing myself hitting my moves perfectly in the heat of battle. I was dreaming about becoming a State Champion before I was even any good. I had just completed my second season of wrestling and was only an average junior high wrestler, but I had already made up my mind that I wanted to become a State Champion. It is never too early to start dreaming and setting goals. Three years later, after over 1,000 days of training, I won my first State Championship. It was one of the most intensely satisfying experiences of my life, a memory that I will cherish forever.

Following my 10th grade season I attended two other major events that had a major impact on my wrestling career: the NCAA Tournament and the Junior Nationals.

First I traveled 16 hours across the country to attend the NCAA Tournament in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. A father of one of my teammates was a former college wrestler, and he was taking his sons to watch the tournament. Fortunately he invited me on the trip. It was the most exciting sporting event that I had ever seen. My eyes were glued to the mats for three consecutive days. I was intrigued by all the intense battles taking place. I returned home more focused than ever and I had a new goal—to earn a college scholarship.

Later that year I competed in the Junior National Championships in Iowa City, Iowa. I went with lofty expectations but returned home terribly disappointed. I just finished my sophomore year of high school during which I placed 2nd in the State. I believed I was ready to make my mark at the national level, but boy was I wrong. I entered both the Greco and freestyle competitions and returned home with a 0-4 record. I was depressed and embarrassed for a few weeks, but after a month of soul searching I had a new goal—to win Junior Nationals.

From this point on, I was totally focused on winning Junior Nationals and earning a college scholarship. For the next two years my life revolved around my training and schoolwork. I set some extremely challenging goals and was determined to achieve them. Following my senior year of high school, I won the Junior Nationals in both freestyle and Greco Roman, winning 21 matches and the freestyle OW award during the 5 days of competition. I went from going 0-4 as a sophomore to dominating my opponents as a senior. I also earned a scholarship to Penn State University. My dreams had come true.

As a youngster growing up I was very ambitious. I set lofty goals for myself while my peers thought I was crazy for even dreaming about these types of accomplishments. West Virginia wrestlers rarely compete outside of the State, let alone earn college scholarships and win National Championships. Nevertheless, I was determined to excel and did not care that many of the friends I grew up with were busy drinking beer and getting into trouble. I was focused on what I wanted to achieve and had my priorities straight.

If you are going to set high, challenging goals for yourself, there will always be a chance that you will not achieve them. If you only set easily obtainable goals that have a minimal risk of failure, you will never reach your highest levels of achievement. Do not be scared to strive to live your dreams. Too many people are scared to set high goals because there is no guarantee of succeeding. Do not work to succeed while fearing failure at the same time. This puts you in a psychological tug-of-war with yourself. You must have the guts to set challenging goals for yourself and strive with 100% effort to achieve them. There is no crime in not reaching your goal but only in failing to set one.

*Editor's Note: To learn more about Coach Chertow's Gold Medal Training Camp System and Instructional DVDs, visit [www.kenchertow.com](http://www.kenchertow.com), call 814-466-3466, or e-mail [camps@kenchertow.com](mailto:camps@kenchertow.com).*