

*We hope you benefit from these tips shared by Coach Neil Turner.  
Coach Turner operates Turner Wrestling Training Program and directs the Mat-Town USA Club.*

## **Coaching Philosophy**

My goal in coaching is to create an attitude of excellence where the wrestler knows that, if he listens and applies the principles of training requested and designed for him, he will reach his potential. The athlete must trust me, realizing that I'm interested in him, not only as a wrestler, but as a total person: student, athlete and human being. I want what is best for him as much as, if not more than, he himself does. Wrestling will be a very important part of this total educational experience.

I'm always looking for the student-athlete who loves to wrestle and is not afraid of hard work. I tell him he will work harder than he ever did before, but in an atmosphere where he'll enjoy doing it. People need to reach beyond themselves. You must have a vision of what you want to accomplish and the inner drive and persistent dedication to pursue that vision. Then you must have the inner strength of character to follow through and not allow the ups and downs of your emotions control your daily training and preparation routine. The athlete must let trials and hardships strengthen his character, not complain or get discouraged, but press on with the full knowledge that wrestling is a sport where, more than any other, the participant controls his own destiny.

Wrestling is an art which encompasses both science and entertainment. The wrestler must work on the scientific aspects of his wrestling--technique, tactics, flexibility, stamina, strength, etc. He must develop all these areas and have a tremendous desire to test them over and over again on the mat--which is his "performing stage".

In developing the tangible aspects of his wrestling--technique, etc, the wrestler's character and personality on the mats will emerge, making him truly an artist in his own right in the sport of wrestling.

The objective goal is to win each bout, but true winning goes far beyond the short sighted point of view to the subjective, "Did I do as well as I possibly could have?". The latter concept deals with reaching your individual potential as an athlete. Until the wrestler performs up to his potential at the given point of development, he has not won. The most important point to grasp is that 100% effort applies to both preparation and competition. This effort must be expanded into three areas:

- (1) Physical, including strength, stamina, and flexibility.
- (2) Mental, including techniques and mat strategy.
- (3) Emotional, meaning the degree of concentration and intensity involved.

Performance and preparation are stressed and the scoreboard will take care of itself. When a young man grasps this concept of winning, there cannot be too much emphasis put on it. It will be "winning as a result of the development of the individual".

The enemies of success are fear of failure and complacency (a lack of concentration and intensity). The first, fear of failure, can be combated by developing your confidence level. Preparation is the key to confidence, and confidence is the key to success. Secondly, narrow the objective to not just winning but performing each skill in each situation. Wrestling is a sport of "attack" and "counter attack" in various positions. Keep it simple. There is freedom in this approach. The second enemy, complacency, is defeated if you are always striving to get better. When nearing one's goal, set another -- both in terms of championships and mastery of the art of wrestling. You can always improve. Learn to not only work harder, but smarter.

Last, but by no means least, the wrestler must have and continue to develop an inner quality of mental toughness to never give in to the cries of his body to quit. It's the concept, "I didn't really lose, I ran out of time". He must possess a quality of character that keeps his body going even when it wants to quit, knowing his opponent is at the same point and their strength of will power is being tested. This quality must also be developed in preparation so it can be tested and displayed on the stage of competition.

I will close by saying nothing you do will automatically guarantee outward success. However, the principles outlined, if

applied will give the inner satisfaction of one knowing he did his very best to reach within himself and develop his God-given potential. He will be a better person with a more realistic view of himself and the world around him for having made the climb and run the race.

### “Turner-isms”

Over the course of coaching, I have adopted many "coaching philosophies" and key phrases as my own. I'd like to share some of them with you and tell you what they mean to me as a coach and what I would like them to mean to you as an athlete. Attitude is reflected in action. This must be focused on in every training session. Training is rehearsal for competition.

**Just keep wrestling.** - It is very important no matter what the position to keep wrestling. A lot of students get in trouble because they take breaks after scoring or being scored upon. A competitor just cannot do this.

**Perfection is possible.** - This is intended for skill training in every workout. If the student doesn't learn how to strive for perfection in training, it will make it more difficult to be successful in competition. This requires a great sparring partner. If you want a great sparring partner, you need to know how to be a great sparring partner. A student not only needs to know how to perform a particular skill but why that skill works. I make the students memorize "no move works unless the conditions are present to make it work". I want the student to understand the art of wrestling. When a student understands the art of wrestling, practice will go faster and the student will enjoy it more.

**Score. Score.** - This is very closely related to never stop wrestling. When you are in the process of scoring or being scored upon, you are already mentally ready to score again. A nearfall should follow every takedown. If I get taken down, it should be followed by a reversal or escape. This must be stressed in training so there is non-stop pressured action. This is total wrestling.

**No one controls you.** - The emphasis here is I am either attacking, counterattacking or getting in position to do one or the other. If my opponent is controlling me, he is winning. I must fight with every fiber of my being to be the person in control. I cannot win when my opponent is controlling me.

**Make it happen.** - A wrestler has to know when to pull the trigger. This comes from perfect practice. This must reach the reaction stage so that I just feel when to go. This is especially important in situations where you have to score. Just do it.

**No pain. No gain.** - Scientifically, this is not true, but mentally it is. I must learn how to push myself through the discomfort that is encountered when you're training and competing. I must enjoy the fact that I've worked hard enough to bring this on. I want to get so comfortable with this feeling that I can break my opponent who has not learned how to deal with this condition. It's easy to score on a person who has surrendered to fatigue.

**I attack, I score. He attacks, I score.** - This attitude must be developed in training. I want the wrestler to put continued pressure on his opponent, so he either creates opportunities to attack or the opponent attacks and the wrestler is ready to counterattack very aggressively. I tell the wrestlers to be 50/50 with constant pressure.

**Always improving.** - This would be very closely related to striving for perfection. I do not want the wrestler to base his success on whether he won or lost. I want him to have a standard of performance that reflects the limits of his development at that point in time. The result will depend to a great degree on the ability of the person we are wrestling. There is no limit to how much an athlete can improve if they understand their physical capabilities and apply those to the various ways of approaching the art of wrestling. Remember, it is a wrestling match. I want every student to be driven to master the art in a way that will give them the greatest opportunity for success.

**Constant pressure.** - Make your opponent feel your determination, physically and psychologically. Always get up one more time or always score one more time. I want athletes who never lose, but they might run out of time. They are always pressing the action in an intelligent manner. This creates excitement and has a tendency to fatigue an opponent who doesn't understand this concept.

**Never go off the mat.** - I am convinced there are very few times when a wrestler has to go off the mat. The whole style that I want to see demands that we do not go off the mat. If you want to fatigue your opponent, you must make your opponent keep fighting. When you get near the edge, circle back in. Even in practice, I tell the athletes that the walls are in play. Do not stop wrestling. Fight off the wall.

**Non-stop action.** - There are a number of these that are inter-related because, remember, this is a total philosophy for training, competing and living. There are no breaks during training or competition. If there is a break in training, it is part of the training process.

**Never surrender.** - Physically there may be times when you are superior and there may be times when your opponent is superior. Here, I'm talking about my will. Your opponent can never defeat your will. You want to train your will in practice to never give in. If you learn to be strong in your will, this will give you a foundation for the development of the physical.

**Respect all. Fear none.** - This is a balanced attitude to prepare one for competing against any opponent in any situation. The enemies of success are fear of failure and complacency. This attitude of respect and focusing on competing at the highest level no matter what, in training and in competition, gives me the greatest chance of success.

**Don't let up.** - As I indicated before, there are a number of these that are inter-related. In training and competition, always perform at the highest possible level. Take no breaks unless they are part of the training process.

**Be a hammer, not an anvil.** - Wrestling is a contact sport and a combative sport. When you're scoring, you're the hammer. When you're getting scored on, you're the anvil. The secret is be the hammer as much as possible. And when you are the anvil, turn into a hammer as quick as possible. This is an attitude where even when you are the anvil your will never surrenders. This will assure that some day you will become the hammer.

**Believe and succeed.** - Confidence comes from previous success and preparation. It is very important to be realistic about your ability and possibilities but always strive to reach the next level and defeat someone who you weren't supposed to defeat. Learn to wrestle in your mind and see every technique being successful. Learn to dispel all negative thoughts. This goes along with "just keep wrestling". This is not an instant formula for success, but one intended to help you be successful to the limits of your God-given ability.

**No one can hold you down.** - At this point in history, the bottom position is the weakest position. We must work to change this. I want wrestlers who are not afraid to chose the down position. They are confident that they can break control and escape or reverse. This is all based on understanding how the top athlete is going to attack you. You must be able to maintain position and not give up control. There are no escapes or reversals from your back or your belly.

**Command respect.** - This would simply be building on the concept that I earn respect by the way I train and compete and by the way I treat others, especially teammates, coaches, officials, other wrestlers and fans. Actions speak far louder than words. I must train in a way that prepares me to compete in a way that earns respect.

**Whatever it takes.** - This is drawing attention to being willing to give up what isn't important to achieve what you have determined to be important. This is a 24-hour a day attitude. It applies to every aspect of my life.

**Attack. Attack. Attack.** - This is related to score, score and never stop wrestling. It might be better to say attack, counterattack, etc. It is simply the attitude of determination to never let up.

**Attitude is everything.** - The heart is the center of my will and my mind frames my thoughts. How I look at each opponent and/or each training session and competition is critical. I want the glass to always be half full. Frame all your thoughts in a positive way.

**Success does not rest.** - This is why it is so important to have a standard of evaluation that goes way beyond winning or losing. You have to have a standard where you are competing with yourself to reach the limits of your possibilities. When you get close to any goal, set another goal.