

## World Cup Technique Notes

Wrestling events are a great opportunity for family fun, and major tournaments are a great opportunity to learn from the best. I brought my family to the World Cup and made a "vacation" out of it. My parents drove up from West Virginia. My father and I watched every match together, while my wife, mom, and children attended 2 of the 4 sessions. When not at the wrestling arena, the women and kids went to the Children's Science Museum and took in some of the site of Baltimore.

Throughout the weekend my kids got to meet many people from throughout the world. We visited with Olympic Champion, Ali Reza Dabir, from Iran. He autographed my son's shirt and my 5-year old daughter got a wink out of him. Alex also grabbed a tight, high single leg on Olympic Champion, Kendall Cross, in the hotel lobby. Alex had Kendall's personally autographed poster in his room and has met him at my camp. He thinks he can attack at will. Alex was unable to finish, but he is only three years old, so give him a few years.

Alex has only 3 posters in his bedroom — his fathers, Kendall's, and Bruce Baumgartner's. Ironically, we also bumped into Bruce at the hotel. We rode up the elevator with the big man. My kids met Bruce before, but they have never truly recognized the magnitude of his size until our elevator ride. My children are fortunate to have the chance to meet the legends of our sport frequently at my camps and at tournaments. I wish more coaches and parents would get their kids out to these events. There were too few youngsters in the stands at the World Cup.

The Day after the World Cup our family went to Baltimore's beautiful Inner Harbor and toured their famous aquarium. We had a nice time. We saw the Iranians and Russians taking in the sites of America too.

Wrestling is a great family sport! It is neat to see how close knit the families of my students and campers are. Wrestling results in many road trips and quality time together. I look forward to many more vacations to wrestling events with my family during the years to come.

The World Cup brought together many of the best wrestlers in the world for two days packed with great wrestling. It was an exciting weekend of action. The competition was particularly exciting for me. While I was at Penn State I had the opportunity to coach Cary Kolat and Kerry McCoy, two of the eight World Cup team members. I have been able to keep in touch with Kerry and Cary through my camps. It has been exciting to see their development and success over the past decade. I will share some random observations from the Word Cup with you below. I hope my thoughts will help many coaches and athletes prepare for your freestyle and Greco competitions this summer.

The Americans need to spend more time on top and bottom. I believe at training camps ample time is spent on par terre training. Perhaps there should be even more emphasis on ground wrestling. Many of our best athletes are in college wrestling rooms all winter and have focused on takedowns much of their lives. The biggest room for improvement is on the mat. The wrestlers who make our U.S. World Team next month in Cincinnati will have to be effective in all 3 positions. To win individual and team world championships, our U.S. wrestlers will need to continue making progress on par terre wrestling this summer.

The Americans let opponents lock gut wrenches too quickly and easily. Cary Kolat was taken down and gut wrenched by the Dabir in the first thirty seconds. That proved to be the difference in the match. Dabir was warned for passivity numerous times as the match wore on, so Cary got some cracks on top but struggled to turn him. Cary got aggressive on top towards the end of the match and turned Dabir, but also gave up two points himself in the process.

Kerry McCoy defeated Aydin Polatci, a Junior World Champion from Turkey. He had to overcome two gut wrenches to win a hard fought match. Kerry knows he could not give up many or any gut wrenches if he wanted to win the World Championship.

If you are going to take the time to compete in freestyle, make sure you have an awesome gut wrench. Strive to develop a gut wrench to both sides. Part of the reason that a gut wrench is so effective is that you can threaten to turn your opponent in either direction. Make sure you also spend plenty of time working on defending the gut wrench. You do not have to just lay on the mat motionless. Work hard to keep your opponent from getting his lock for as long as you can. When he gets the lock, make adjustments and use your legs and hips to defend. It is a little more complicated than this, but you get the idea.

The gut wrench is the most effective turn in freestyle & Greco wrestling, and the Ankle Lace is the #2 turn in freestyle wrestling. There are many ways to get a good ankle lace locked up. Make sure you know a few different ways to get into your ankle lace series. Note that Kerry McCoy used the ankle lace to get into an arm turk and secure PIN against the Iranian. This secured the World Cup Victory for the U.S.

Regardless of which specific ankle lace technique you use, the key points are to keep pressure forward and pull knees together. These are the two things Dave Schultz emphasized to me when I was perfecting the ankle lace. Dave ankle laced everyone and his biceps were nothing special. Good technique and persistence make for a good ankle lace.

Our athletes need to work on additional turning techniques and combinations in addition to the gut wrench and ankle lace. There are many other unique turning and countering techniques and too few are being tried. The reverse bow & arrow and reverse front headlock are two of my personal favorites.

The arm throw and arm spin are effective techniques that Europeans use much better than Americans. You must be able to defend against the arm throw. Charles Burton got arm thrown multiple times in the World Cup. In the 2000 Olympics, Charles was winning 2-1 with little time to go in overtime and was defeated with an arm throw.

Arm spin and arm throw techniques were even more popular when I competed. If you missed it, a "slip" was called. With today's rules if you slip you have to stay down, even though no takedown point is awarded. I consistently used the arm spin to score against elite competition. In the 1988 & 1992 Olympic Trials I was able to use the arm spin to defeat three of the greatest leg attackers ever, Barry Davis, Joe Gonzales, and Jack Cuvo. In the 1990 World Team Trials I was able to beat Olympic Champion, Kendall Cross, with my arm spin. Many in the wrestling community call Kendall "Gumby" as he was one of most flexible and unorthodox Olympic Champions ever. Just like any good move, the arm spin can work on anyone if you take the time to drill it to perfect the set-ups, timing, and finishes.

I converted my 1-point arm spins into turns against all four of those outstanding opponents. Often when you come out the back door on the arm spin, you can quickly get a trapped arm gut wrench. Learn to convert all your takedowns into turning techniques on top. For example, every time you finish a head inside single you should look for an ankle lace. If your opponent drives up to his base defend his ankles. This should create opportunity to gut wrench your opponent. It is called chain wrestling. Even our elite American wrestlers often pause after getting a takedown instead of looking immediately for a turn. Our foreign opponents do a better job of chain wrestling on top. (Note this chain wrestling analogy comparing folkstyle bottom wrestling to freestyle top wrestling. If you want to get away from a tough opponent, you often have to put two or more moves together in succession. If you want to turn a tough opponent, chain wrestling is often essential.) The bottom line is that great wrestlers chain wrestle effectively.

I believe many of the U.S. Wrestlers would be better served to close the gap. Do more hand fighting and to work the head more. This would open up more scoring opportunities and wear our opponents down. We would consistently win the close matches at the end when needed. We are typically in much better shape than our foreign opponents. Of course, our athletes must not give up arm throws or leg attacks in the process of moving their opponent.

All this great World Cup action has me fired up to see the World Team Trials and World Championships! I encourage you to make plans to attend these events!