

# Why Wrestle?

by Dan Gable

The sport of wrestling is a very natural thing for kids to do at a young age. Kids are always wrestling around in the yard or on the carpet in the house. Organized wrestling can bring in an element of safety and has a lot of other benefits as well.

Wrestling is a great sport because anybody can do it. Because you wrestle people of your same weight, size is not an issue as it may be in a sport like football or basketball. There are now a lot of opportunities to get involved. All but maybe a couple of states have sanctioned high school state wrestling championships. California, Texas and Hawaii have both a boys and girls high school state wrestling championships. Over the past ten years, the number of girls involved in the sport of wrestling in this country has gone from 300 to 3,700 so it is a sport that is on the rise for young females.

One reason wrestling is beneficial to people at a young age is from a self-defense point of view. Kids need to protect themselves from bullies or someone who may jump them on the street. You may be asking, "What are the odds?" Well, pick up a newspaper. You see kids getting kidnapped far too often. First and foremost kids need to be taught about who you can and cannot talk to and where they can be with who, but it's also nice to have a little bit of a fight attitude from the point of view of protection. I have daughters and a lot of people ask me if my daughters wrestle. I tell them I teach them just enough for protection purposes.

The sport of wrestling also helps young people develop important qualities such as self-esteem, sportsmanship, work ethic and leadership skills. It also helps by instilling a competitive edge. A competitive edge is a real key. You really learn how to compete in wrestling because it is a unique one on one sport. Team sports are great, don't get me wrong, but there are some unique aspects of wrestling that make it stand out. For one, in wrestling you compete at all times. You are playing the game the whole time you are out there. Matches may last 6, 7, up to 9 minutes, but for that short amount of time you are competing. You do not have to wait for a ball to come to you. There are very few breaks and it takes focus and concentration every second you are out there.

There are feelings that take place when you compete. There can be the feeling of not being successful, which can teach you how to overcome adversity and there is the feeling of winning. It only takes winning once to know the feeling and you'll want to strive for it again and again. It doesn't even have to be the feeling of winning an actual match. Sometimes you get a feeling of winning after completing a good hard practice because you pushed yourself and got through it.

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Dan Gable is one of the most famous wrestlers in the world. He won an Olympic gold medal in the 1972 Summer Olympics and was the head coach of the 1988 US Olympic Freestyle Wrestling Team.

As a wrestler, he was undefeated in high school and 118-1 in college (losing only the final match of his college career... his third NCAA finals). But his most famous accomplishments were as the head coach of the University of Iowa winning 9 straight NCAA team titles (1978-86) and 15 overall in 21 years.

He is generally regarded as one of the sport's greatest ambassadors.