

Wrestling's Five Styles

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The Styles

There are currently five styles of amateur wrestling practiced in the United States, each with separate rules, techniques, and emphasis. Wrestlers with a strong background in only one style, and little experience in the others, sometimes have difficulty adjusting to an opponent who uses the stronger techniques from a different style to attack. For this reason, most successful coaches stress that their wrestlers learn as many styles as they can to develop their own unique techniques. This becomes particularly important if the wrestler plans to compete at the college level or in national competitions.

Below is a short description of each style as practiced in the U.S. There are many flavors of each of these styles. A wrestler interested in learning the various styles should affiliate with one of the various open clubs that actively train in more than one styles.

Folkstyle

Folkstyle (scholastic) is the style common to high school and college competition in the United States. As the name implies, the style was developed in the US, and is not used in international competition. Folkstyle concentrates on control, with points awarded for controlling an opponent for lengths of time longer than when under control. The wrestler on top must constantly work towards a pin while the wrestler on the bottom must continually try to escape or reverse. Folkstyle is similar to Freestyle in that for some of the time both wrestlers are on their feet and attempting to take each other to the mat in order to gain control. Obviously, knowing Folkstyle enables the wrestler to understand how to control an opponent.

Freestyle

Freestyle wrestling concentrates on attacking the entire body of the opponent. Wrestlers start on their feet, and points are accumulated by taking the opponent to the mat and exposing his back. Knowing freestyle helps the wrestler learn how to keep from exposing his back, plus it forces the wrestler to keep their hips down and back straight when attempting takedowns. It also teaches how to prevent being turned and how to counter.

Since the emphasis in Freestyle is on attack and exposure, just controlling the opponent from on top with no continuous back exposure is considered a stalemate, and both

wrestlers are brought to their feet after a short time in order for the bout to continue. Also, since back exposure is emphasized, a wrestler can easily score points or pin himself by exposing his own back unless he is very careful how he performs his movements.

One more very important point about both Freestyle and Greco-Roman is that there is no penalty for failed moves. If a wrestler attempts a takedown and ends up being taken down by his opponent, his opponent does not score points.

Greco-Roman

Greco-Roman is the oldest wrestling style, and very popular in some parts of the world. Like Freestyle, Greco-Roman concentrates on taking your opponent to the mat and exposing his back, but without using or attacking the legs. Points for takedowns and exposures are nearly identical between Freestyle and Greco-Roman, so long as legs are not used. Both Freestyle

Learning Greco-Roman enables the wrestler to perfect his upper body attack as well as proper hip placement and footwork. Many wrestlers become one dimensional and have a very difficult time when faced with an opponent that can switch continuously between upper and lower attacks. Freestyle and Greco-Roman, in addition to Judo, are recognized Olympic sports.

Judo

Judo, meaning soft sport, is an oriental style of wrestling which concentrates on throwing your opponent off his feet and into a position of back control or submission. Wrestling consists of one five minute period, with both wrestlers starting on their feet. If one wrestler is taken down or thrown, wrestling continues for a short time to see if a pin can be achieved. Unlike karate, which also requires the wrestler to wear white pants and a jacket but no shoes, blows are not allowed, nor are choke holds for wrestlers younger than 13 years old. Colored belts are awarded to wrestlers who reach various levels of excellence.

The primary advantage in learning Judo is that it teaches the wrestler how to control their falls plus it enables the wrestler to master both trips and footwork. It also teaches how to avoid being tripped or thrown.

Sambo

Sambo is a style developed in Russia which combines the stronger aspects of Judo, Greco-Roman, and Freestyle. A jacket and standard wrestling singlet or shorts is worn, including shoes in competition. Like Judo, SAMBO concentrates on taking your opponent off his feet and into a position of submission. However, unlike Judo and all other wrestling styles, there are no pins, and back points can be scored only once. Points are accumulated as in Freestyle, or, like Judo, a total victory throw can be recorded. Also, like Judo, both men and women compete in separate classes. There are no choke holds in

SOMBO, but submission holds are allowed in the cadet and above age groups. Like Judo, colored belts are awarded to wrestlers who reach various levels of excellence.

The primary advantage to learning Sombo is learning how to get out of holds. A Sombo wrestler is constantly subjected to not only the throws and grappling techniques used in traditional wrestling and Judo, but they are continuously put into submission holds. Learning the proper way to get out of a hold by rolling over, standing up, fighting hands, and moving prior to the hold being applied serves very well when competing in other styles.

Professional Wrestling

As a final note, the wrestling commonly seen on television bears little resemblance to sport wrestling. This form of wrestling is known as catch-as-catch-can, and is both dangerous and theatrical in nature. While modern traditional wrestling is professional in some parts of the world, it is not as glamorous or dangerous as that seen on television. In all traditional styles, wrestlers compete in age and weight categories, so each boy has an equal chance regardless of size. Sport wrestling is safer than football (according to insurance companies), with scholastic wrestling currently ranked as the third most popular sport among high school boys in the U.S.

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