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**NATIONAL WRESTLING COACHES ASSOCIATION (NWCA)
COACHES CLINIC (COSPONSORED BY THE UNITED STATES
MARINE CORPS) -- ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI**

*Remarks as Delivered by Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz of the Department of Defense: "Wrestling with Discipline: Life Lessons in Leadership,"
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Coach Moyer, Coach Gable, Coach Baughman, Coach Barnett, other distinguished wrestling coaches, and future Dan Gables.

On second thought, I am not sure if there will be another Dan Gable in my lifetime . . . so I'll just amend that and acknowledge the future wrestling champions out there.

There is a story about a famous leader in history I would like to share with you.

Frederick the Great of Prussia was walking on the outskirts of Berlin one day, when he encountered a very old man proceeding in the opposite direction.

"Who are you?" asked Frederick.

"I am a king," replied the old man.

"A king!" laughed Frederick. "Over what kingdom do you reign?"

"Over myself," came the proud reply.

There is a lesson in that exchange, and one that applies, I would argue, to what you do as coaches of young athletes, and what those athletes learn from the experience.

Reigning over oneself requires personal discipline.

And not everyone has it.

Certainly, we know of many people who, for many reasons, do not reign over themselves.

Some are addicted to drugs or alcohol.

Some fall prey to other personal weaknesses—again and again and again—and they make a mess of their lives because they do not learn from their mistakes.

In most if not all of these instances, lack of personal discipline is the major culprit.

Before I go on, I wish to state that while I am here officially as the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, some of the views I express today are my own, and do not necessarily reflect official Department of Defense views or policies.

All of you associated with the ancient sport of wrestling know that success in this sport comes most to those with personal discipline—and lots of it.

In fact, few sports demand it more.

Wrestling is a sport that demands total dedication and commitment.

Top wrestlers also know the role that teamwork plays in what is sometimes misunderstood as only an individual sport.

The hours of training on the mat behind each wrestling match are spent with one's teammates, and no champion makes it to the top without plenty of teamwork, as all good coaches know.

An athlete who aspires to be the very best in wrestling has a fanatical devotion to the sport that verges on what non-wrestlers might consider a mental disorder, or at least an obsession.

Yes, it's true.

There is something profoundly abnormal and unnatural about 170 pound young men starving themselves for a season in order to weigh 150 pounds.

I share the sentiments—and pride—of all the many former wrestlers among you today in thinking, “wow, I don't know how I did it—that sure was crazy!”

But putting aside the days of when I was a much younger, lighter man . . . today I would like to consider the question of whether self-discipline—reigning over yourself—in sports translates into personal discipline in other aspects of one's life.

And perhaps the United States Marine Corps, co-sponsors of this event and always on the lookout for “a few good men” who have the discipline to be Marines, would also like to know more about the relationship between self-discipline in sports and personal self-discipline.

My initial reaction to this complex question is, well, yes, and no—or, as George Washington’s Inspector General, Baron Frederick Wilhelm von Steuben, might have said, “Jein.”

Some people show amazing discipline on the football field or the basketball court, but are completely unmotivated in the classroom, or lack self-discipline in other areas of their lives.

The list of professional athletes whose careers and lives have been ruined by drugs or lack of discipline in other ways is significant—and tragic.

This phenomenon applies to coaches as well.

Consider the case of the great basketball coach Bobby Knight.

He demands total, complete dedication and discipline from his players—on the court and even in the classroom.

But most refs can tell you first-hand that as far as anger management goes, well, personal discipline is not one of his strengths.

And Ohio State legend Woody Hayes is another coach who probably falls in that category.

The question, I submit, is whether or not these examples are exceptions to the rule?

Stated differently, is it less or more often the case that years of hard training and personal discipline do translate into self-discipline in other areas of our lives?

Not an easy question.

And I think the answer is far from obvious; we do have countless instances of good examples, suggesting that perhaps there is some relationship between the habits acquired in sports and those we demonstrate in the other parts of our lives.

As it happens, a number of great leaders past and present were wrestlers in their younger days.

The entire life story of our 26th President, Theodore Roosevelt, is an inspiring tale of extraordinary self-discipline and will.

He was a sickly child, dreadfully skinny, and chronically stricken by various afflictions, including a weak heart, violent headaches, and bad eyes.

On top of that, he was asthmatic.

His health was so fragile that he skirted death countless times, and his biographers estimate that he was never well for more than ten days at a time through much of his formative years.

One day when young Teddy was twelve, his father approached him and said, [quote] “you have the mind but you have not the body, and without the help of the body the mind cannot go as far as it should. You must *make* your body. It is hard drudgery to make one’s body, but I know you will do it.” [unquote]

Young Teddy jerked his head back and, through clenched teeth, promised: “I’ll make my body!”

He then began a daily training regimen that has rarely been seen before, spending hours a day in the gym, alone, exercising his tiny body.

After two years of such punishment, he met up with a bully at school.

He discovered that despite all his training, he was still a weakling, and he was humiliated in a fight.

Right then and there he decided to join what he would later call “the fellowship of the doers.”

The “fellowship of the doers”—it’s a sublime expression of action over words.

And so Teddy Roosevelt took up boxing and wrestling, and determined to work twice as hard at developing his body.

As a college student at Harvard, one of his biographers noted, [quote] “iron self-discipline had become a habit with him.” [unquote]

Teddy Roosevelt believed in the strenuous life as the only life worth living.

His philosophy of life can be summed up in his famous speech given at Paris in April 1910, words that still inspire us today:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

Discipline, intelligent risk-taking, and determination—those are the qualities of anyone who aspires to greatness, according to Theodore Roosevelt—and his entire life is testament to those ideals.

In our present day, we have at least two other good examples of public service and great leaders who, like Teddy Roosevelt, come from a wrestling background.

Dennis Hastert is a name that, according to at least one poll, less than 50 percent of Americans even recognize.

Yet Dennis Hastert is Speaker of the House of Representatives, and second in line to the presidency of the United States.

He was also a star wrestler in high school and college.

Not only that, he was a wrestling coach at Yorkville High School in Yorktown, Illinois, from 1964 to 1980.

Within Congress today, Dennis Hastert is still known as “Coach Hastert.”

There are many areas of life where discipline is the key factor in success.

In politics, verbal and emotional discipline are crucial—staying on message, controlling your emotions, self-mastery in public—for much of a public servant’s life is on stage.

Those who watch politics closely consider “the Coach” in the Speaker’s chair to be a wrestler with supreme self-discipline.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld—my boss—is another former wrestler.

He was famous for his grit and discipline on the mat.

People still tell stories about the time when Don Rumsfeld dislocated his shoulder during a wrestling match.

He was behind on points but he refused to quit.

With one arm, he managed to take down his opponent—three more times—and emerge victorious from the contest.

Secretary Rumsfeld’s iron discipline is legendary within the five walls of the Pentagon.

He never allows distractions, changing public opinion, or wishful thinking to mar his focus.

He is so totally focused at the task at hand that he leaves others in awe at how much he can achieve on a given day.

This former wrestler too, it can be said, reigns over himself.

Reigning over ourselves--and answering only to God--is the key to living a virtuous, honorable, and purpose-driven life.

As Inspector General, I am charged by law with responsibilities that go beyond inspecting, investigating, and overseeing ethical lapses throughout the Department of Defense.

I am also duty-bound to cooperate with the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Inspectors General, who by tradition are in the business of “training and discipline,” readiness, and improving the welfare of those who serve in our Armed Forces.

Indeed, this responsibility has a long tradition, dating back to the very birth of our nation.

Baron Frederick Wilhelm von Steuben, whom I mentioned earlier, was a non-English speaking officer from Prussia and General George Washington’s first effective Inspector General.

In 1777 Benjamin Franklin recruited the Baron from a small Prussian principality in what is now Southern Germany; and in 1778 Baron von Steuben joined the Continental Army at Valley Forge.

A soldier like his father before him, von Steuben had been trained in the harsh discipline of the Prussian army ruled by Frederick the Great.

His contributions to the American revolutionary cause were extraordinary, and today a monument in Lafayette Park across from the White House in Washington D.C. pays tribute to this nation's first effective Inspector General: [quote] "He gave military training and discipline to the citizen soldiers who achieved the independence of the United States." [unquote]

It is my personal belief that training and discipline are essential ingredients in character development, and that training and discipline can—and should—translate into self-discipline in other areas of our lives, most importantly in the areas of character development and military leadership.

I am not alone in such thinking.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger recently explained to me:

[quote] "The successes I have achieved, in business, politics and in the world of entertainment, are attributable to the discipline I learned through my physical training and any effort to instill such discipline will lead to increased success of mission throughout the Department of Defense." [unquote]

Aristotle held similar views.

Writing in the 4th century BC, Aristotle asserted that "moral virtue comes about as a result of habit."

And it takes self-discipline to maintain good habits.

Coach Wayne Baughman, a 16-time national champion, author, and now the head wrestling coach at the United States Air Force Academy, is also a believer in the idea that discipline developed in wrestling confers benefits that extend beyond the athletic arena.

Coach Baughman writes in his book, *WRESTLING ON AND OFF THE MAT*: [quote] "Every time we exercise discipline in one aspect of our lives, the easier it will be to maintain discipline in other areas." [unquote]

As coaches, you know that the young athletes in your charge look up to you.

In today's world even more than in years past, many of you serve as the main father figure to kids who lack a wholesome family environment.

They listen to you, watch you, imitate you, and, in many cases, try to emulate you in living up to the standards you set.

It is a heavy burden to bear.

The aspirational standards you set as coaches are not limited to those imposed by your training sessions.

The standards of conduct expected of college wrestlers extends to their behavior in the classroom, on the road, on campus, and in their private lives.

You have the opportunity to teach them the value of discipline—on and off the mat.

Reigning over oneself is not an easy task.

Just think of the countless areas of our lives where failures in discipline can lead to trouble—financial discipline, controlling our weight, fidelity in our relationships, controlling our emotions, resisting overindulgence of alcohol, meeting our commitments—any area where we are tempted to do something that gives us short-term pleasure at the expense of long-term regret.

But wrestlers have chosen a hard sport.

They are used to the demands of discipline, and striving over a long period of time in pursuit of a goal.

They are men in the arena who have chosen, at least during this stage of their lives, the strenuous life.

I would like to leave you with a personal anecdote about a very special wrestler who has taught me some things about the value of discipline—and just how much can be overcome by discipline and determination.

That wrestler is a young man named Nick, who was born in a small city on the North Sea coast of Germany.

Nick's parents brought him to America when he was just a baby. He grew up, for all practical purposes, just like any other red-blooded American boy.

Nick took up gymnastics even before pre-school. Once in school, he took up wrestling. By the time he was 10, Nick was training 20 hours during the week with his gym team, and on weekends wrestling with the Viking Mat Club.

But trouble started for Nick when he was about 12. The nuns at his local Catholic school, who had no patience for a boy who finished his tests in half the time and then, being both bored and mischievous, persisted on distracting his classmates.

Three school changes and three years later, Nick's gym team had disbanded and Nick focused his passion on wrestling. As a new transfer student, he challenged the team captain and state champion for the starting spot at Nick's weight class.

Halfway through the wrestle-off, with Nick starting on top, Bubbu picked his head up too fast and pushed Nick's nose halfway to his right ear.

Nick had to have his face reconstructed. His wrestling season was over.

By the time the head bandages were removed a month later, Nick confided in his father that he had lost any interest in completing his junior year of high school. "Can't I just get a job?" Nick pleaded.

His father replied, "Son, you're 17 years old -- old enough to be a Marine."

"You're not serious, are you?" answered Nick.

"www.marines.com," his father replied. Check it out yourself.

About a week later, Sergeant Ashley invited Nick's father to the local recruiting station.

"Sir," started the Sergeant (who in his spare time played tail-back for a semi-pro football team), the Marine Corps does not allow us to recruit non-high school graduates except for on rare occasions, and even then we are extremely selective."

"Our first clue that we MIGHT be interested in your son was when he cranked out 26 perfect chin-ups, looked down at me and asked, 'Is that enough?'" The Sergeant continued, "But sir, in my eight and a half years in the Marines I have never even heard of a recruit acing the basic intelligence test. Your son had a perfect score. Do you think Nick could be a Marine?"

“If Nick wants to be a Marine,” his father answered, “he can do it. It's all up to him.”

Six weeks later, Nick boarded a bus for Paris Island, South Carolina.

He did OK in boot camp, after which he never looked back. Within a year, the Marines had promoted Nick three times, twice meritoriously.

The Marines also recommended Nick for a fleet appointment to the United States Naval Academy, but the Academy rejected the package because Nick had never finished high school.

On his own, Nick promptly signed up, took, and passed the GED high school equivalency test. The Marines resubmitted his Naval Academy package. This time, the Academy invited Nick to attend its one-year Naval Academy Prep School in Newport, Rhode Island.

Nick completed the Prep School and was inducted into the Naval Academy Class of 2006 in the Summer of 2002.

In September, Nick walked onto the Naval Academy Division I Men's Gymnastics team.

Two months later, Nick's father received a call from the Anne Arundel Hospital Emergency Room. “Hey Dad, it's Nick. I had a little accident.”

“You sound OK,” his father replied, “what happened?”

“I can't talk now, they have to operate right away,” answered Nick.

“What happened?” his father pressed.

“Long story short, I missed the edge of the mat on floor exercises and my right foot is half-way up my leg to the knee.”

“Do you want me to come to the hospital?” his father asked.

“No, I'll be OK,” said Nick. “They're taking me in for surgery now.”

Four hours later, the Navy Surgeon entered the waiting room and asked, “Are you Nick's parents?”

His parents identified themselves.

“You have one hell of a son,” the Surgeon started. “He just came out of three and a half hours under a general anesthesia, and his first words were, “Can I still be a Marine officer?”

“And?” replied his father, “the answer is?”

“We think so,” the Surgeon replied.

I suppose I could stop there, but I can't resist sharing with you the rest of the story.

Over Christmas break, leg in cast and on crutches, Nick surprised his parents by asking for a ride back to the Academy for gymnastics practice.

In the ensuing weeks, Nick mastered for the first time in his life both the Iron Cross and the Maltese Cross, two of the most difficult rings maneuvers for a gymnast.

Then, on the last night of Christmas break, at the family dinner table, Nick casually announced to his father, “Oh, yeh, Dad. I forgot to tell you. My coach pulled me aside last week to tell me that I got a 4.0 for the first semester. I'm Number One in my Class.”

He subsequently earned a perfect 4.0 for his second semester. And Nick just told me last month that he did it again for his third semester, still Number One in his Class.

The question I will leave you with today is directly related to Nick's story: How do we inspire into those placed under our tutelage, whether we be wrestling coaches or military leaders, the same type of passionate commitment that Nick exhibits towards his academic challenges and towards his Marine Corps?

I am not aware of a better answer than through virtuous and honorable leaders utilizing “training and discipline” as a tool to develop both champion athletes and leaders of character for this great nation we call “the land of the free and the home of the brave.” May God continue to bless America.

Thank you very much.