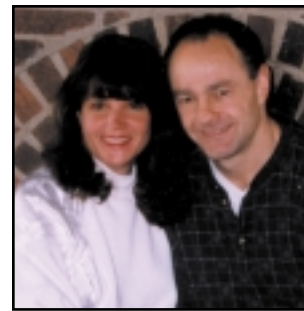


## What Motivates You?

By Carol and Patrick Milkovich

2x NCAA Champion and  
Distinguished Member of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame



**W**restling is a hard sport. The season is long. The tournaments are grueling. Throw in having to make weight two times each week, and many people would naturally wonder, "What keeps wrestlers motivated, what keeps them going?" People have asked me many times how I managed to accomplish my goals in wrestling. It's never an easy question to answer because in my life, I was motivated by a variety of things.

When I was younger, I used to look at someone who was at the top of his game and wonder what motivated him to want to be so good. I would study his face, his eyes, his physique, his walk, his talk, his clothes, his preparation for competition, and it would always make me think about being that good. Would there ever be a day when someone else would study me and wonder the same thing? No matter what the sport or what his talent was, that athlete made everything look so easy. I wanted to do things that easily. The respect and admiration I had for that person was immense, and most of the time I didn't even know him personally.

I envied the feeling of accomplishing something no one thought you could do or

maybe you didn't think you could do. I used to look at the state championship board in our gym. Shaped like the state of Ohio, it had the name of every state wrestling champion from our school since 1949. I wanted to be on that board with all the other greats. That is one of the things that motivated me.

I also wanted to prove others wrong. Growing up in a wrestling family certainly was an advantage in many ways, but it wasn't always easy. No one ever told me I was any good. I always heard people talk about how good my three older brothers were, but not much was ever said about me. (Maybe that had something to do with the fact that I was very honest about my dislike of wrestling. Had I been able to make the choice, I would have been a figure skater.) I never liked being compared to my brothers; others who have older sibling can understand my feelings. I didn't like the comparison mainly because I didn't thrive on wrestling the way that they did, and I wasn't naturally as good as they were either. I had to work very hard to equal their accomplishments and to meet my family's expectations.

I used training as one of my motivators. I hated running with a passion. My

wife has summed up her own dislike of it pretty well when she tells people, "I hate running so much that I only run when someone is chasing me, and then it depends on who it is!" To develop my stamina and mental toughness early in the season, I would get up at six in the morning and run for 45 minutes to an hour, and every second I was thinking, "Someone is going to pay for all this pain." When I was cutting weight, I would envy the heavyweights and think, "When season's over, I'm going to eat like a pig and someone's going to pay for this sacrifice." Peak season practices included one hour of take-downs, 30 minutes of escapes and 2 matches, after-practice cal's of 50's (push-ups, sit-ups, squat thrust, and leglifts), 6 forty yard hallway sprints, 5 rope climbs nonstop. After all that, I would sit down against the wall too tired to even go to the showers just yet and think, "I wish I was in a different sport and someone's going to pay for this agony." To put all this time, effort, sacrifice, pain and suffering into something, I had to win, I deserve to win, and someone, my opponent, would have to pay for this. I wasn't doing all that to lose!

Not being recruited for a scholarship my freshman year of college provided its own incentive. As the only son out of four not to garner a full scholarship, my dad said he would only pay for my first year of college out of state. If I couldn't cut it, I would have to come home and go to school in state or get a job. Neither choice appealed to me. Grady Peninger, my coach at Michigan State, had told all the walk-ons that if they could prove themselves and do well, he would consider them for scholarship money. I not only wanted that money, I needed it to continue my education there, and I loved being a Spartan and wearing that uniform.

MSU had a very rich and successful tradition in wrestling. I would look at the




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Michigan's 135 lb. Bill Trudell, Dundee, wins by a major decision, 12-0, over Dan Ryan, Carson City Crystal, in the consolation finals of the Division IV Individual State Finals. Trudell had a 4.0 GPA and is attending Princeton University. Photo by David Schankin.

pictures of the NCAA Champions in the main hallway of the IM Building, where we practiced and where thousands of people would have to line up for registration, and study their stances, look at their faces, their uniforms, and wonder, "What must it be like to say you are the best at what you do out of everyone who does what you do?" They had done it. I wanted to be a part of that history too. You get one chance every year to be the best at what you do out of everyone who does what you do, and if something goes wrong, you have to wait another whole year.

In college, I was also greatly motivated by Dan Gable and Iowa wrestling. They were notorious for beating national champions. I would read an article on how a Hawkeye beat this NCAA Champ and that NCAA Champ. I was confident in my technical abilities, but my biggest concern was conditioning. I don't care how well conditioned you were, you needed to be in even better shape to beat them. My observation was they beat you into submission because of superior conditioning. I witnessed many matches where Iowa wrestlers were down 4-5 points going into the third period, only to tire their opponents out so badly, that they became defenseless—and many ended up getting pinned. I did not want to be one of those statistics.

Crowds, the bigger the better, also motivated me. People who rooted against me were another of my motivators as well as the people who rooted for me. Away meets always inspired me to wrestle my best because I always wanted the opposing crowd to wish I were on their team. I never looked at away meets as a handicap to me as a competitor. Whether we were at my place or yours, someone was going to pay.

Losing motivated me because I don't like to lose. It hurts my feelings. I understand it's a part of life, nonetheless, it still hurts my feelings. (These days I compare it to missing a 2 foot putt for par. My wife says it's the "Milkovich" in me.) When I was competing, I used a loss as my "wake-up call." It never failed to refocus me, and it made me work harder to achieve my goals. I would challenge the best wrestlers in practice and I would keep taking whatever they could dish out until I could take them down and score.

Different people derive motivation from different sources. Maybe it's from your family or someone who is a very special inspiration. It could be the intrinsic benefits you derive from the lessons learned from work ethic, discipline, commitment, and integrity. People treat you differently when you become more successful, and that is very motivating. Or it could be the new opportunities that present themselves to you. Perhaps it's the

strong development of self-esteem, pride, and sense of accomplishment from seeing your name in the paper or scholarship offers. It might be doing something that very few people can do and knowing that no one can ever take that away from you. It doesn't really matter where your motivation comes from. You and only you hold the key to finding it, to building on it, and to sustaining it until the dreams you have are a reality.

The authors, Carol and Patrick Milkovich, have developed and implemented their

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