

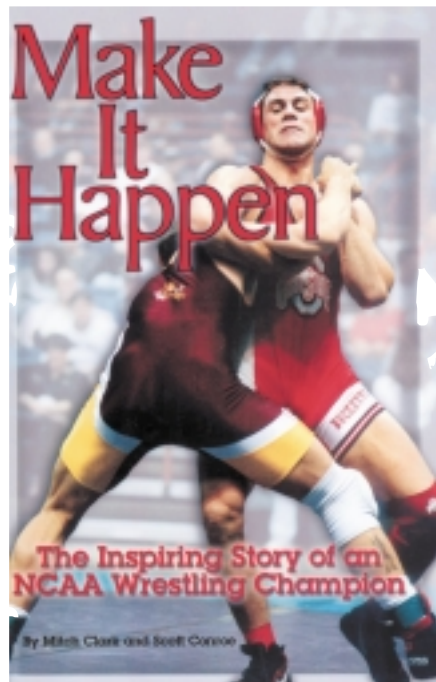
# THE ZONE

By Mitch Clark and Scott Conroe

I've talked a little about being in "The Zone" when I wrestle. I guess the way to express it is, you just get into a frame of mind where your body takes over with what it's been conditioned to do, what you've been trained to do by those years of practice.

You don't think about moves, really. If you think, "I'm going to go for this move now," you're not in The Zone. You have to be in a state where you know what you're going to do two moves before you do it. You just get on a roll, you absorb what's going on around you without being fully aware of it and you start trusting in yourself. You get in tune with your ability.

It's almost as if you want to be the center of attention, you want everyone to watch you. In the parade of finalists before the NCAA championship matches, for example, I felt it: "Watch me, see what I'm going to do."



I focus so hard, I rarely hear anything beyond the mat during a bout. Once in a while, I can hear the announcer listing my accomplishments. But that's it.

I've been asked if everything slows down around me. The answer is no, but it's as if I watch myself wrestle. This sounds silly, but it's almost an out of body experience.

I was in The Zone throughout my junior season at Ohio State, until the NCAA final against Barry Weldon of Iowa State. I wasn't in it when I faced him, I was too distracted by the crowd and the photographers and the atmosphere.

But it's tough to get into The Zone for 42 matches out of the year anyway.

As I've said, I can't remember a thing about the 1998 NCAA title bout. It's kind of too bad, because it was the best feeling of my life, but I don't recall a single thing. The only memories I have are from what I see on the videotape. I believe I got into The Zone and then remained in it after the match ended, because I was geared to go three periods and it finished after only one. Even an hour later, while I was on the medal stand, I was looking down at that woman reporter's shoes, totally oblivious to the fact that I'm on top of the awards stand and 13,000 people are staring at me. Not even close to thinking about that.

To young wrestlers, I would say don't try to get in The Zone for every match, because you'll wear yourself out. You have to know what matches to get "up" for. You'll spread yourself thin. It'll be too much for you. You've got to be one of those people who, when the light's on and the time's right, you'll know when to do it.

To order the book *Make It Happen*, by Mitch Clark and Scott Conroe, call 1-800-261-6292, credit card or send check or money order to 395 Old State Road, Dekalb Jct., NY 13630. The cost \$14.99.

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