



Planning for Practice

Part 2

FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility is another trait that needs to be worked on. Most people appreciate the need for power in wrestlers, but flexibility is often overlooked. Many very successful wrestlers over the years could contribute part of their success to their excellent flexibility, even if it hasn't been very apparent. Nick Gallo, former NCAA champion and picked outstanding wrestler at the tournament in the late '70s, used his flexibility and smoothness to great benefit.

Two-time Olympic champion John Smith was able to revolutionize some attack techniques with the help of his body's exceptional flexibility. More recently, two of Iowa's greats have definitely used flexibility to help them win NCAA titles—Lincoln McClravy and Jeff McGinness.

Using one's flexibility to get into certain positions normally not attacked makes a wrestler feel very powerful. From the bottom position defensively in freestyle, good flexibility can be of great advantage. Being flexible and powerful is a bonus to any wrestler.

Besides attacking through offensive maneuvers, flexible wrestlers can be much more effective in counter wrestling and make it very difficult for an opponent to score.

STRETCHING

As one gets older, most everyone will finally realize the importance of muscle and joint flexibility. This is one area that is often overlooked in life and especially in sports. Interestingly, flexibility rates right alongside the necessary ingredients needed for being successful in wrestling. Often, the hardest wrestlers to score on are the ones with great flexibility. Finishing a takedown or turning an opponent can be extremely difficult with a highly skilled and flexible opponent. Stretching is an integral part of warming up and cooling down after practice. It is also something that can be continually used after competitive athletics simply for health reasons.

The following stretches are good ones for use with the sport of wrestling. They are best performed after spending several minutes doing an aerobic-type

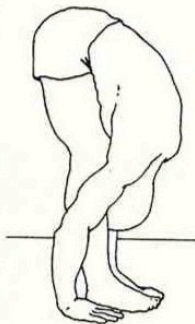
warm-up. Those can include, but are not limited to, running, biking, rope skipping, and calisthenics.

Letting the body completely hang loose and letting gravity take over will help lengthen and loosen tight areas. A strong chinning bar or other devices that are sufficiently stable will aid this exercise. Light twisting of the trunk and torso is good here, as well as doing knee-to-chest raises while hanging. Circular rotation of most bodyjoints will aid in the warm-up process for wrestlers. Remember to circle both ways. Self partner massage is another technique that is helpful.

Other specific stretches that are good for wrestling follow. The final three partner stretches are good for after practice.

After stretching, do some jogging and complete your workout with a sauna and/or massage and hot shower. For best recuperative results and therapy, finish with a warm or cool shower and ice anything that is hurting or something you want to keep working to the maximum.

NEXT ISSUE: NUTRITION



Standing hamstring stretch

Exhale when you bend forward. Exhale and bend your knees or round your torso when returning to the upright position.

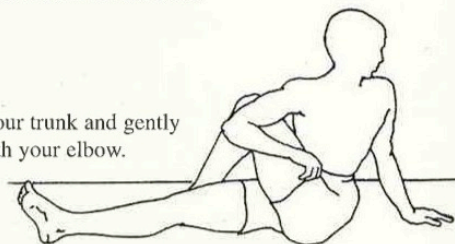


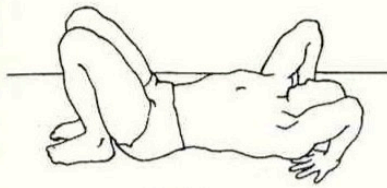
Seated side stretch

Exhale as you extend your upper torso and grasp your foot. Concentrate on keeping your lower back and legs extended and your heels on the floor.

Spinal twist

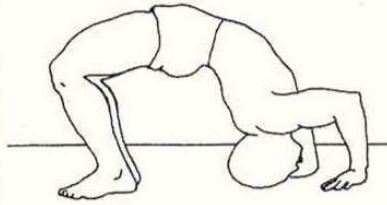
Exhale as you turn your trunk and gently push on your knee with your elbow.





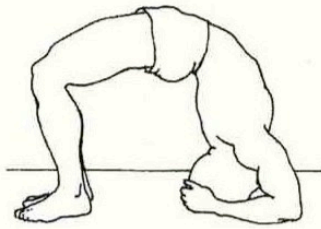
Head bridge

Inhale as you raise your trunk and rest your forehead on the floor.



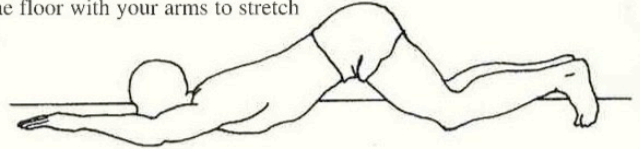
Elbow-head bridge

Inhale, raise your trunk, and rest your forehead on the floor. Then raise one arm at a time and place your forearms on the floor.



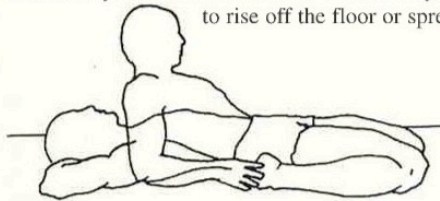
Dog stretch

Exhale as you extend your shoulders and press on the floor with your arms to stretch your back.



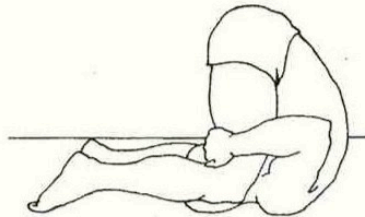
Reclining hero

Exhale as you continue to lean backward until you are flat on your back. Do not arch your back. Instead, contract your gluteals and rotate your pelvis backward. Do not allow your feet to flare out to the side or your knees to rise off the floor or spread apart.



Modified plough

Exhale as you put your hands behind your knees and pull your thighs to your chest.



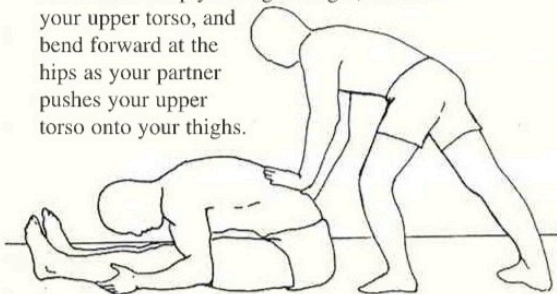
Lying butterfly with partner

Exhale as your partner pushes your legs to the floor. Be sure to communicate with your partner.



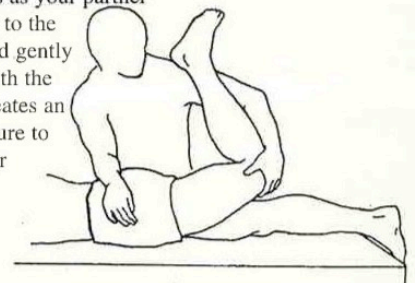
Boston crab partner stretch

Contract your gluteals as your partner anchors your abdomen to the floor with one hand and gently lifts your leg higher with the other. This exercise creates an intense stretch, so be sure to communicate with your partner.



Sitting hamstring stretch with partner

Exhale and keep your legs straight, extend your upper torso, and bend forward at the hips as your partner pushes your upper torso onto your thighs.



Dan Gable stands as one of the United States' greatest collegiate and Olympic champions. As head wrestling coach at the University of Iowa from 1977 to 1997, Gable won the Big 10 Conference Championship in each of his 21 seasons. He also won an unprecedented 15 NCAA Wrestling Championships, including nine straight from 1978 to 1986.

As coach of the 1984 Olympic wrestling team, Gable led the United States to seven gold medals and two silvers and was named "best coach." An Olympic wrestler himself in 1972, Gable dominated the field, going unscored upon in six matches to take the gold.

Now serving as assistant to the athletic director at the University of Iowa, Gable has been inducted into both the Olympic Hall of Fame and the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, and in 1996 he was listed as one of the top 100 U.S. Olympians of all time.

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