

Wrestling Match Preparation & Opponent Scouting

Prepare With Purpose. Compete With Confidence.

Championship matches are rarely won by the wrestler who simply knows the most techniques.

More often, they're won by the wrestler who is the best prepared.

Preparation creates confidence. Confidence allows athletes to wrestle aggressively. Aggressive wrestlers dictate the pace of the match instead of reacting to it.

Great wrestlers don't simply show up and hope everything goes well.

They prepare.

They study.

They develop a plan.

Then they trust their preparation.

This guide outlines a systematic approach to preparing for competition, scouting opponents, and building match strategies that maximize the probability of success.

Every Match Begins Before the Whistle

The outcome of many matches is determined long before the opening whistle.

Preparation includes:

- Quality training
- Proper recovery
- Nutrition
- Mental preparation
- Opponent scouting
- Developing a match strategy

Athletes who prepare consistently rarely panic under pressure because they've already rehearsed success.

Understand Wrestling Is a Game of Probabilities

One of the greatest mistakes wrestlers make is assuming every match should be wrestled the same way.

Elite wrestlers understand probabilities.

They identify:

What their opponent does well.

What their opponent struggles with.

Which positions favor them.

Which positions should be avoided.

The goal isn't to wrestle harder.

The goal is to wrestle smarter.

Step 1 — Scout the Opponent

If video is available, watch at least two or three matches.

Never watch only highlights.

Highlights only show success.

Complete matches reveal habits.

Watch objectively.

Avoid becoming intimidated by wins or impressed by medals.

Study tendencies instead.

What To Look For

Neutral Position

What stance does the opponent prefer?

Square?

Staggered?

Left leg forward?

Right leg forward?

Do they move well?

Or stand flat-footed?

First Contact

How do they establish ties?

Collar tie?

Inside tie?

Underhook?

Two-on-one?

Russian tie?

Do they reach?

Do they allow inside control?

Preferred Attacks

Every wrestler has favorite attacks.

Identify:

Single Leg

Sweep Single

Double Leg

High Crotch

Duck Under

Snap Go Behind

Fireman's Carry

Throw

An athlete who knows what's coming has already gained an advantage.

Setups

Great wrestlers don't attack randomly.

Study what creates their offense.

Do they:

Snap first?

Pull the head?

Fake often?

Club repeatedly?

Clear wrists?

Move opponents first?

Understanding the setup is often more valuable than understanding the finish.

Finishes

Do they...

Run the pipe?

Shelf the leg?

Double off?

Crack down?

Trip?

Every attack eventually reaches a finish.

Study it.

Defense

How do they defend?

Heavy hips?

Whizzer?

Chest wrap?

Shin whizzer?

Front headlock?

Circle?

Sprawl?

Great scouting identifies defensive habits just as much as offensive ones.

Bottom Position

How do they escape?

Stand-up?

Switch?

Sit-out?

Granby?

Do they panic underneath?

Can they be ridden?

How long do they typically stay on bottom?

Top Position

Do they ride tough?

Or simply try to turn immediately?

Preferred rides?

Leg ride?

Spiral ride?

Tight waist?

Cross wrist?

Half Nelson?

Bar Arm?

Cradle?

Crossface?

Every rider has favorites.

Conditioning

This is often overlooked.

Do they:

Fade late?

Slow down?

Continue attacking?

Become defensive?

The third period often tells the real story.

Mental Tendencies

Perhaps the most valuable observation.

How do they respond when:

They give up the first takedown?

They get warned for stalling?

They fall behind?

They get taken down late?

Do they remain composed?

Or become emotional?

Pressure affects everyone differently.

Step 2 — Build the Match Plan

A scouting report is useless without a strategy.

Every match plan should answer five questions.

How will first contact be established?

Never allow the opponent's favorite tie.

Fight for preferred ties immediately.

What attacks will be emphasized?

Limit yourself.

Two or three attacks.

Know exactly where they will come from.

What positions should be avoided?

Perhaps an opponent has:

Excellent front headlock.

Elite underhook.

Dangerous cradle.

Avoid unnecessary risk.

Where are the scoring opportunities?

Examples:

Opponent stands too tall.

Poor head position.

Weak lead leg.

Slow recovery.

Poor motion.

Always attack weaknesses.

What happens if the first attack fails?

Elite wrestlers chain wrestle.

Never stop after one attack.

Know:

Attack One

Attack Two

Attack Three

Reattack

Go Behind

Scramble

Always have another answer.

The Warm-Up

Never arrive on the mat cold.

Recommended warm-up:

5 minutes movement

Dynamic stretching

Penetration steps

Motion drills

Hand fighting

Short live exchanges

Sweat lightly.

Feel explosive.

Do not exhaust yourself.

During the Match

Think in small pieces.

Win first contact.

Win the hand fight.

Score first.

Stay disciplined.

Never chase points recklessly.

Stick to the plan.

Adjust only if necessary.

Between Periods

Focus on one adjustment.

Not ten.

Examples:

Circle left.

Hands lower.

Clear ties first.

Move feet.

Continue attacking.

Simple adjustments produce better execution.

Between Matches

Immediately:

Hydrate.

Refuel.

Cool down.

Review mistakes.

Forget emotions.

Begin preparing for the next opponent.

After the Tournament

The tournament isn't over until lessons have been learned.

Watch film.

Evaluate honestly.

Ask:

What worked?

What failed?

What positions appeared repeatedly?

What must improve before the next tournament?

Growth begins after competition.

Printable Opponent Scouting Worksheet

Opponent

Weight Class

Record (if known)

Neutral

Preferred Stance

Favorite Tie

Best Attack

Favorite Setup

Preferred Finish

Bottom

Primary Escape

Weaknesses

Top

Preferred Ride

Favorite Turn

Weaknesses

Conditioning

Strong ☐

Average ☐

Poor ☐

Notes

Mental Notes

Responds well to adversity?

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Gets frustrated?

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Stalls with a lead?

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Panics underneath?

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Match Plan

First Contact

Primary Attack

Secondary Attack

Positions to Avoid

Biggest Weakness to Exploit

Final Thoughts

Scouting should never create fear.

It should create confidence.

The purpose of scouting isn't to become obsessed with an opponent's strengths. It's to identify opportunities, eliminate surprises, and develop a plan that allows an athlete to wrestle with purpose instead of emotion.

The best competitors don't simply react to what happens during a match.

They anticipate it.

Preparation creates confidence.

Confidence creates aggression.

Aggression creates opportunities.

And opportunities win wrestling matches.

Remember this:

The wrestler with the best game plan doesn't always win.

But the wrestler with no game plan rarely does.