

Why Wrestle Freestyle & Greco-Roman

I am a firm believer that if you want a chance at becoming a State Champion and truly want to be prepared to wrestle in college you must wrestle Freestyle and Greco-Roman in the off-season.

Should I wrestle Freestyle and Greco-Roman during the off-season? Yes!!

I have been either competing or coaching in wrestling for the past 30+ years and the path to being a state champion

has always been off-season training in Freestyle and/or Greco-Roman wrestling. I grew up in Iowa following this path and when I moved to Virginia in 2000, nothing was different. I have been head coach since 2007 and we have had roughly 45 State Champions. EVERY one of those State Champions wrestled Freestyle or Greco-Roman during the spring season at a minimum, and many trained all summer to compete in Fargo, N.D. at the largest Freestyle/Greco-Roman tournament of the year.

There are plenty of opportunities in most states to wrestle in local, state, and regional events throughout the spring. In Virginia, the best place to find Freestyle (FS) and Greco-Roman (GR) tournaments is VirginiaWrestling.com. Most states have a website dedicated to USA Events in that state or region. The best place to find regional and national events for FS & GR is TheMat.com. Below I have put together a sample schedule that our club has used for over the past decade and is, no doubt, a huge reason we have won the past 14 straight State Championships.

Top 3 Reasons to Wrestle Freestyle and Greco-Roman

1. Find the Best Competition

The information in this article is nothing new. Like I mentioned earlier, this is the path the best wrestlers have been on for decades. The best wrestlers and teams will be at off-season FS and GR tournaments and that is who you want to compete against if you desire a State Championship. This makes my point relevant everywhere. No matter what level your state is at if you are training to beat the best you are preparing to be a State Champion. If you are on the state, regional and national FS and GR circuit you will probably be separating yourself from the pack.

2. Sharpen Folkstyle Techniques

Most of the Folkstyle fundamentals needed to be a State Champion are very important in FS & GR. Striving to be successful in FS & GR will solidify the techniques and strategies that are essential in Folkstyle.

Top 5 Folkstyle Techniques and Strategies Sharpened in FS & GR

1. Finish shots quick and preferably on the feet.
2. Control opponent and learn to use edge of the mat.
3. Clearing out of Front Headlocks
4. How to use a Tight Waist effectively
5. Improve Hand Fighting Skills

And many more...

3. Master The Art of Winning Close Matches

Winning close matches, often comes down to focus and determination. The scoring pace in Freestyle and Greco-Roman can be high paced and points can go up quick. This forces wrestlers to stay focused and sharp in all positions. Learning to be alert and hustling in all positions is what it takes to win tough matches in any style and wrestling Freestyle and Greco-Roman is the perfect training ground to sharpen these skills.

Strategy to succeed in Freestyle Wrestling:

Below is a breakdown of the skills and progression a wrestler can use to quickly have success in FS & GR. Combine these skills with your Folkstyle skills and you will definitely hold your own and be on the State Champion's plan.

Neutral — Wrestlers can use the same scoring techniques they learn in Folkstyle to score in Freestyle. One thing that is different in Freestyle is the exposure rule. In Freestyle you don't need to get a count to get 2 back points. If you expose your opponent by breaking 90 degrees you will score 2 points. With this in mind, your shot finishes need to be extra sharp or you can get tilted off your shots. That means you need to tighten up your shot finishes. Also, with the exposure rules you can be tilted from a front headlock (fhl) position so you need to clear out of fhl's quickly. These are all things that coaches preach consistently to wrestlers during the high school season.

If you really want to have fun and learn how to score points quickly you should learn to tilt off your opponent's shots. This isn't a necessity but will give you more scoring opportunities from the feet and they are pretty fun to learn.



“The exposure rules impact our defense as well. We cannot roll through or fall/dive to our back and roll to defend without surrendering points. Defensive chest locks happen but it forces us to learn how to defend more often by stuffing head and sprawling which, obviously, translates to good defense in folk style, too. “

Bill Zadick – National Freestyle Developmental Coach

Top — Learning turns from the top position in Freestyle is gravy. As you gain experience and attend more competitive competitions, wrestlers will want to learn some maneuvers from the top position. I have witnessed wrestlers winning Freestyle & Greco-Roman National Titles with only one effective move from the top position. A Gut Wrench is a good one to learn because it can be used in both Freestyle and Greco-Roman. Forward pressure is a key to success in the top position in Folkstyle and the Olympic Styles. If you learn to turn opponents in Freestyle and Greco-Roman you will also develop your Folkstyle skills from the top position.

Bottom — The Gut Wrench Defense is the first technique a wrestler should learn. There are some simple strategies and techniques a wrestler can learn to defend the Gut Wrench. If you can stop this move you are going to be ready for your first FS & GR tournament.

Strategy to succeed in Greco Roman Wrestling:

Greco-Roman is not all throws! Most of the scoring in the neutral position are from 2-on-1's, Drags, Underhooks, Front Headlocks, Duck Unders and modified Double Legs (Hi-Dive). These are all techniques wrestlers are exposed to in Folkstyle.

Neutral — Like I mentioned above, most of the scoring in Greco-Roman is from basic Folkstyle holds. If you wrestle Greco-Roman you are forced to hand fight, get angles, use setups/tie-ups and work for front headlocks. These are all techniques teams work on during in Folkstyle.

Top — Learning some offense from the top position should be a goal of yours as you gain experience and challenge yourself with tougher competition, but it isn't a necessity. A Gut Wrench is the first offensive maneuver I would recommend learning to build your arsenal.

Bottom — The Gut Wrench and Reverse Body Lift should be the first moves you learn to defend from the bottom position. There are some simple strategies that a wrestler can learn quickly to defend the Gut Wrench, Reverse Body Lift and Russian Back Breaker. If you can stop these moves you are ready.

Sample Spring and Summer Schedule

Below is a typical spring/summer plan that I have used in Christiansburg since 2000. If you have any questions feel free to email me at daryl@attackstylewrestling.com and I hope to see you on the circuit this spring.

Spring

March

- Look for other clinics or clubs to attend. It's always more fun to train with like-minded individuals.
- Find a local tournament to get your spring season started.

April

- Get in 1-3 local Freestyle & Greco-Roman Tournaments.

May

- Maybe one more local tournament or join a club team and hit up a dual tournament.
- Attend the state tournament for your age division.
- Attend 1-2 Regional Tournaments.

Summer:

- You may want to switch gears back to Folkstyle and attend a camp or two during the summer. If you are doing well in Freestyle and Greco-Roman or are at the level where you want to challenge yourself against the best in the country, then there are more Freestyle and Greco-Roman opportunities to attend through [USA Wrestling](#).

June

- East Coast Duals
- Cadet National Duals
- Schoolboy/girl National Duals
- Kids Nationals

July

- Junior/Cadet National Championships



“From a developmental perspective the FILA Cadet National/Trials (Akron, OH) emphasizes another high level event where kids will see good competition and sharpen themselves. As you know, the winners go to Cadet Worlds and this gives them another opportunity, at the same time promotes the Olympic/World Championship dream and the skills needed to get there.”

Bill Zadick – National Freestyle Developmental Coach

I do believe you should at least be attending a camp/competition during the summer even if you are not on the summer Freestyle or Greco-Roman plan. This is a general plan that is focused on winning an individual state title. Obviously it isn't the only way, but it is a proven way.

Reasons Wrestlers Don't Wrestle Freestyle and Greco-Roman

“FS & GR is all throws and it doesn't help you in Folkstyle.”—This is just not correct. Wrestlers hone the most important Folkstyle skills by wrestling these international styles.

“I don't like it or Little Johnny just doesn't like it”—This reason goes against the core of my coaching philosophy, because it is always followed up with “Little Johnny tried it and he got whipped and he just doesn't like it now”. Well, where I come from, just because something is hard or you don't succeed IMMEDIATELY isn't a reason to quit. Hence, when this attitude is allowed or encouraged, the chances of winning a High School State Championship are greatly diminished. Because, in case you haven't noticed, those are pretty hard to capture too.