

# Benefits of the Olympic Styles of Wrestling

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BY MATT KRUMRIE | SEPT. 14, 2017, 10:43 A.M. (ET)

The most complete wrestlers take advantage of every opportunity to develop and learn. One way young wrestlers can do that is by participating in and practicing the Olympic styles of wrestling—freestyle and Greco-Roman.

“The more skills you master in any style of wrestling, the better wrestler you can become,” said Terry Brands, head assistant coach at the University of Iowa, and a two-time Freestyle World Champion and 2000 Olympic Bronze medalist. Brands made those comments in the *USA Wrestling* article Making the Transition from Folkstyle to Freestyle (<http://www.teamusa.org/usa-wrestling/features/2014/march/18/making-the-transition-from-folkstyle-to-freestyle>).

Brands elaborated in that article: “Training and competing in freestyle wrestling puts you in positions and in experiences you are not in during the folkstyle season. ... Freestyle is a great way to advance as a wrestler, become a more complete wrestler.”

Kyle Snyder recently won the 97kg freestyle Gold Medal at the 2017 World Wrestling Championships in Paris on August 26. That win helped the U.S. capture the World Team Title in men’s freestyle for first time since 1995. Snyder is an Olympic and World freestyle gold medalist, and an NCAA champion (folkstyle). But in the *USA Wrestling* article Benefits of Greco-Roman Wrestling for Folkstyle Wrestlers (<http://www.teamusa.org/usa-wrestling/features/2014/april/15/benefits-of-greco-roman-wrestling-for-folkstyle-wrestlers>), Snyder talked about how Greco-Roman helped him develop as a complete wrestler.

“If you can dominate somebody in any position in wrestling, especially if it’s with the upper body moves that you learn in Greco, then you are just going to be that much more dangerous,” Snyder says. “I’ve found that not a lot of people are comfortable wrestling with their upper body, which is what you learn in Greco. When I’ve attacked and engaged in that type of situation, I’ve found that my opponents will try to back out of it, or if we do lock up I can tell it’s awkward for them if they aren’t experienced wrestling Greco.”

Learning the intricacies of freestyle and Greco-Roman provides numerous new and challenging opportunities, and that’s what Josh Nolan emphasizes when training and coaching wrestlers at the Legends of Gold (LOG) Regional Training Center in Beresford, South Dakota. In fact, LOG was developed to promote International/Olympic styles of wrestling for student-athletes in grades 7 to 12.

“Exposing athletes to multiple styles of wrestling will allow them to develop at a much higher rate,” Nolan said. “The amount of mat time will be significantly increased and will provide them more opportunities to learn from different coaches and different athletes. Moreover, the exposure to multiple styles keeps wrestling fun and interesting and will help take away from an athlete feeling stagnant or bored.”

What are the specific benefits of learning freestyle and Greco-Roman? Nolan provides this analysis:

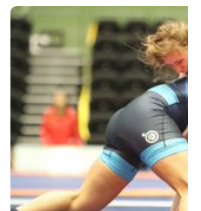
**Freestyle:** “Freestyle wrestling allows wrestlers to improve their folkstyle technique,” Nolan said. “Because a defensive wrestler can score on an offensive wrestler’s attacks, the athletes must focus on having superior technique on all of their attacks. Moreover, freestyle and folkstyle attacks are very similar. This allows athletes to continually sharpen their skills throughout the entire year instead of just during the designated wrestling season.”

**Greco-Roman:** “Greco-Roman wrestling focuses a great deal on hand fighting and being able to move an opponent to expose them,” Nolan says. “This is great because the same principles carry over into folkstyle wrestling.” Some hand fighting techniques that will carry over directly from Greco-Roman to folkstyle are: Under hooks, 2 on 1’s, front headlocks, and level changes, Nolan adds.

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Brandon Paulson won six national titles in Greco-Roman and freestyle wrestling during his career, and was a 1996 Greco-Roman Olympic silver medalist at 114.5 pounds. He was also an NCAA All-American at the University of Minnesota and currently trains youth and high school wrestlers as a coach at PINnacle Wrestling School in suburban Minneapolis.

“Greco-Roman is all about controlling position,” Paulson says. “Fighting to get an underhook, or a 2-on-1 and dominating in those positions. In folkstyle, if you control position, you control the match. Freestyle is great for learning how to control your body, and learn different positions that you can put your body to control your opponent in any style. For wrestlers who wrestle a lot of folkstyle, freestyle and Greco-Roman can not only be a change of pace, but also less pressure. Go out and have fun, don't worry about the results.”

Joe Russell, Manager of Freestyle Programs for USA Wrestling, agrees, saying training in freestyle and Greco-Roman encourages young wrestlers to try something new, breaks up the routine, and provides new challenges not offered through competing in folkstyle only.

“It is a nice change of pace working on new skills,” Russell said. “Trying new styles of wrestling will help challenge you as an athlete.”

There are also several other benefits of competing in freestyle and Greco-Roman, which Russell outlines here:

### **BENEFITS OF FREESTYLE AND GRECO-ROMAN WRESTLING**

1. Out of season training leads to greater success in the scholastic season. By continuing to work on skills, competing, and training, you will grow as a wrestler. You grow as an athlete.
2. Freestyle and Greco-Roman techniques can transfer over to folkstyle. Learning how to hand fight and throw in Greco-Roman will make you a more dangerous folkstyle competitor. Learning mat awareness and tilt positions in freestyle will make you a better folkstyle wrestler.
3. Even though some techniques are only used in freestyle or Greco-Roman, the skills learned transfer; the body awareness learned transfers; strength gained transfers. For example, although a gut wrench is illegal in folkstyle, the skills learned offensively and defensively help with 2 on 1 tilt offense and defense in folkstyle.
4. The mental skills needed in folkstyle are the same skills you will work on while competing and/or training in the Olympic styles. The crossover between the styles of wrestling is seamless when it comes to mental skill development.
5. Mat strategy skills used in freestyle and Greco-Roman are helpful for folkstyle. Working on situations in the Olympic styles will help you when you see the same or similar situations in folkstyle.
6. Competing in freestyle and Greco-Roman can help you see and experience new things. From traveling, to meeting people from different areas, your eyes will be opened wider.
7. When you learn the Olympic forms of wrestling, you can understand and communicate with fellow wrestlers from around the world. Watching the world's best compete is more fun and you learn more when you have an understanding of what they are trying to do.
8. By knowing the Olympic styles of wrestling, you are part of a worldwide community of wrestlers. You may not share the same language, live in the same continent, or believe in the same ideals, but you may still have a strong bond with another human being, because of Olympic style wrestling.
9. Since wrestling has been in the Olympics since ancient times, why not try to become one of the exalted few to compete in the Olympics? Dream big. There is much more out there for you to accomplish in wrestling than what is offered in folkstyle wrestling alone. Go out and experience more of what wrestling has to offer you.



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