

PHYSICAL AND PRE-COMPETITION PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION OF INDIVIDUAL WRESTLERS

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Theory and methodology of physical culture and sports training

Abstract: The preparation of individual wrestlers for competition involves both physical and psychological components that are critical to optimal performance. Physical preparation focuses on strength, endurance, flexibility, agility, and injury prevention through structured training routines, including strength training, conditioning, flexibility exercises, and recovery strategies. Psychological preparation addresses mental toughness, focus, stress management, and cognitive skills, which are essential for wrestlers to perform under pressure and maintain concentration during matches. A pre-competition routine that includes tapering, mental rehearsal, and optimal weight management is also necessary to ensure readiness. Together, physical and psychological preparation enhance a wrestler's ability to compete successfully and consistently achieve peak performance.

Key Words: Wrestling preparation, physical conditioning, strength training, endurance, flexibility, psychological readiness, mental toughness, stress management, goal setting, pre-competition routine, recovery, injury prevention, cognitive skills, focus, concentration, visualization.

Physical preparation is a cornerstone of any successful wrestler's training program. Wrestlers are required to possess strength, endurance, flexibility, agility, and explosive power. Each component of physical fitness is tailored to meet the unique demands of wrestling, where both stamina and brute strength are crucial for outlasting and overpowering opponents. Strength is critical for both offensive and defensive techniques. Wrestlers need to develop core strength for stability during grappling, upper body strength for controlling opponents, and lower body strength for powerful takedowns and explosive movements. Strength training is typically broken down into:

- **Upper body exercises:** Bench press, pull-ups, and overhead press.
- **Lower body exercises:** Squats, lunges, and deadlifts.
- **Core exercises:** Planks, leg raises, and rotational movements for better control.[1,23]

Wrestling matches require sustained high-intensity effort. Wrestlers must be prepared to fight for extended periods, with bursts of energy followed by moments of strategic recovery. Both aerobic and anaerobic conditioning are necessary: Physical preparation is a fundamental pillar of a wrestler's overall training regimen. To perform at a competitive level, wrestlers must develop a well-rounded fitness profile that encompasses strength, endurance, flexibility, speed, agility, and explosiveness. These physical attributes ensure that wrestlers can perform at their highest capacity during a match and manage the physical demands of the sport effectively.

Strength is one of the most important factors for success in wrestling. Wrestlers need to develop strong muscles throughout their bodies, particularly in the core, upper body, and lower body, to execute techniques with power and control. The core is especially critical, as it provides the stability necessary to perform various wrestling moves like takedowns, throws, and escapes. The upper body is essential for controlling an opponent, while the lower body helps wrestlers generate explosive movements for powerful shots and takedowns.

Upper body exercises: Exercises such as the bench press, pull-ups, and overhead presses build the shoulder and arm strength necessary for clinching, holding, and pushing opponents. The ability to control an opponent's upper body through these movements is crucial in maintaining an advantageous position.

Lower body exercises: Squats, lunges, and deadlifts are the foundation of lower body strength. Wrestlers often rely on their legs to drive forward in attacks, to maintain balance while defending, and to lift opponents during throws or sweeps. Strong legs are also essential for explosive movements like sprawl defenses and quick shots for takedowns.

Core exercises: A wrestler's core is key to maintaining balance, posture, and power throughout all movements. Core exercises such as planks, leg raises, Russian twists, and medicine ball throws target the muscles that help stabilize the body and aid in transitions between positions. A well-developed core allows wrestlers to better control both themselves and their opponents in various situations.[2,45]

Wrestling is a high-intensity, anaerobic sport that demands both aerobic and anaerobic endurance. Matches can be grueling, with moments of rapid, explosive activity followed by short rest periods. Wrestlers must be conditioned to endure these fluctuations in intensity, as matches are often won or lost based on a wrestler's ability to continue executing techniques at a high level throughout the entire match.

While wrestling is predominantly anaerobic, having a solid aerobic base is crucial for endurance over the course of a tournament. Aerobic exercises such as long-distance running, swimming, or cycling improve cardiovascular endurance, enabling wrestlers to recover faster during breaks and remain active for longer periods during a match. This endurance can help wrestlers maintain their level of performance across multiple rounds in a tournament setting.

Wrestling also requires the ability to execute high-intensity, short bursts of energy. Anaerobic conditioning, such as sprinting, high-intensity interval training (HIIT), and wrestling-specific drills, prepares the athlete for the explosive efforts required during a match. These drills simulate the rapid acceleration, quick pivots, and explosive power that are necessary during moments of intense engagement with an opponent. In addition, these training exercises help improve a wrestler's ability to recover during short breaks between movements or during periods of lower intensity in a match.[4,67]

Flexibility plays a critical role in wrestling, as it allows wrestlers to maneuver smoothly during grappling, defensive movements, and when executing throws or takedowns. Flexibility reduces the risk of injuries and promotes better movement mechanics, enabling wrestlers to move more freely and react faster to their opponents.

Dynamic stretching involves active movements that stretch the muscles through their full range of motion, such as leg swings, arm circles, and lunges. Dynamic stretching is an essential part of a wrestler's warm-up routine, preparing the body for the intense physical activity ahead. These stretches help improve joint mobility and flexibility, increasing the range of motion during movements like sprawls, shots, and escapes.

Static stretching is done after practice or competition and involves holding stretches for a prolonged period. This type of stretching improves flexibility by elongating the muscles and tendons, preventing them from becoming stiff and tight, which can lead to injury. Static stretches focus on the hamstrings, quads, hip flexors, and shoulders, all of which are involved in various wrestling techniques.

Yoga and targeted mobility drills can help wrestlers improve joint mobility, balance, and flexibility. Specific yoga poses such as downward dog, pigeon pose, and warrior pose help increase flexibility while also enhancing mental focus and stress management, which are vital for wrestling performance.

The success of a wrestler is not solely determined by their physical abilities but by a comprehensive approach that includes both rigorous physical training and robust psychological preparation. Physical preparation, involving strength training, conditioning, flexibility, and recovery strategies, ensures that the wrestler is physically prepared for the intense demands of the sport. Each aspect of physical conditioning contributes to endurance, explosive power, and injury prevention, which are vital for competing at a high level.

Equally important is the psychological aspect of preparation. Mental toughness, focus, anxiety management, and goal setting provide wrestlers with the resilience and clarity needed to excel under pressure. Mental preparation helps athletes overcome challenges, adapt to changing situations during matches, and maintain peak performance when fatigue sets in. Visualization and mental rehearsal are particularly crucial, as they build confidence and enhance tactical readiness.

Together, these components—physical and psychological—create a balanced and effective training regimen. Wrestlers who combine the right level of physical conditioning with mental strength are best equipped to face the challenges of competition and perform at their highest level. With consistent training, dedication, and a comprehensive approach to both body and mind, wrestlers can achieve sustained success, minimize injuries, and unlock their full potential in the sport.

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