

Monday Motivation - Do It and Appreciate It: Building the Foundation for a Successful Wrestling Season

By Jon Gums – Dakota Grappler

We are three weeks out in North Dakota four in South Dakota so the start of a new wrestling season is always a time of anticipation. For some, it's the excitement of stepping back on the mat, while for others, it's the challenge of taking the next step toward greatness. No matter where you stand, there's one simple message that should echo through your mind: **Do it and appreciate it.** Get to work, no excuses, no questions—just action.

The Little Things Matter

Greatness isn't achieved overnight. It's built through the small, consistent actions that add up over time. Whether you're a veteran wrestler or just starting, the foundation you lay now will determine your success later in the season. This is the time to focus on doing the little things—those things that might seem minor but have a significant impact on your performance.

Start with the basics. Showing up to practice on time, listening to your coaches, pushing yourself in every drill, and giving your best effort even when no one's watching. These are the habits that separate the average from the elite. When you do these things, not because you have to, but because you want to, you're already ahead of the game.

Do It: Get in Shape Early

One of the most critical aspects of the early season is getting into good shape. There's no substitute for conditioning in wrestling. When you're well-conditioned, you're able to maintain intensity from the first whistle to the last. If you're gasping for air in the second period, it doesn't matter how great your technique is—fatigue can be your greatest enemy.

Here's how to do it:

1. **Set a conditioning routine:** Commit to a regimen that includes running, sprint drills, circuit training, and mat-specific exercises. Your goal should be to build both endurance and explosiveness.
2. **Stay consistent:** Consistency is the key to progress. It's not about how hard you go one day, but about showing up and putting in the effort day after day.
3. **Push through the pain:** There will be days when your legs are burning, your lungs feel like they're on fire, and all you want to do is quit. In those moments, remind yourself why you started. Keep moving, keep pushing, keep grinding.

Appreciate It: Stretching and Flexibility

In the rush to get stronger and faster, it's easy to overlook stretching and flexibility. But these are the unsung heroes of wrestling performance. Stretching not only prevents injuries but also enhances your agility and mobility on the mat. It's what allows you to flow from one position to the next with ease, making you a more dynamic wrestler.

Make stretching a priority:

- **Warm up properly:** Always begin with dynamic stretching before practice or matches to get your muscles ready and reduce the risk of injury.
- **Cool down:** Incorporate static stretches after practice to increase flexibility and promote muscle recovery.
- **Consistency is key:** Just like your conditioning routine, stretching should be a daily habit. The more you stretch, the more you'll notice improvements in your movements and overall performance.

Remember, the moments you spend stretching are not wasted; they are investments in your longevity and success. Appreciate these small steps because they lay the groundwork for what you can achieve later.

Do It: Control Your Eating Habits

Wrestling demands discipline, not just on the mat but at the dinner table too. Early in the season, getting your eating habits under control is crucial. Fueling your body with the right nutrients will not only help you perform at your best but also make weight management easier throughout the season.

Focus on clean eating:

- **Balanced diet:** Prioritize whole foods like lean proteins, complex carbohydrates, healthy fats, and plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- **Hydration:** Staying hydrated is as important as what you eat. Water helps regulate your body temperature, aids in digestion, and keeps your muscles working properly.
- **Portion control:** It's not just what you eat but how much you eat. Controlling portion sizes can help you stay within your weight class and avoid the drastic weight cuts that hurt performance.

Understand that what you put into your body directly affects your energy levels, recovery, and overall success on the mat. When you make conscious choices about your nutrition, you're giving yourself the best chance to perform at your peak.

Appreciate It: The Grind

Every wrestler knows that the grind is real. It's what defines the sport and the athletes who choose it. There will be tough days when you don't feel like giving your all—days when the

alarm clock seems louder, the weights feel heavier, and the mat looks unforgiving. But these are the days that matter the most.

Appreciate the struggle. It's during these tough moments that your character is forged. When you do what needs to be done, even when you don't feel like it, you separate yourself from those who only do it when it's easy. You're building resilience, mental toughness, and the discipline that will carry you through the toughest matches.

The "Get to Work" Mentality

To all the athletes out there, this is your reminder to **get to work**. No questions asked. There will always be a reason to skip a workout, a temptation to cut corners, or an excuse for why you can't. But champions don't rely on excuses; they rely on effort.

- **Show up every day.** Be the athlete who shows up early, stays late, and does more than what's expected.
- **Set small goals.** Focus on achieving daily wins—whether it's running an extra mile, holding a stretch longer, or sticking to your diet plan.
- **Hold yourself accountable.** Push yourself to be better than you were yesterday. When you hold yourself accountable, you're taking control of your own success.

Closing Thoughts

This wrestling season, don't just go through the motions. **Do it, and appreciate it.** Appreciate the small steps, the grind, the sweat, and the moments when you feel like giving up but choose to keep going. Because it's these moments that will define you as an athlete, as a wrestler, and as a person.

Remember, the journey to greatness is paved with tiny steps and the willingness to do what needs to be done without question. Get to work, stay disciplined, and always appreciate the process. It's not just about the destination; it's about the work you put in along the way that makes all the difference.