

Scouting Video Tape

Videotape is an essential learning tool for both coaches and wrestlers. You can use it in four different fashions.

1. **Instructional Videos** - allow you to expand your repertoire and perfect the finer points of your techniques.
2. **Self Analysis** - is a necessity if you are going to perfect your style and correct your mistakes.
3. **Scouting** - can give you an edge against your toughest opponents.
4. **Studying Champions** - performing in top flight competition will help you learn what it takes to excel at the highest levels of competition.

Both instructional videos and self analysis were essential to my development during my competitive career. Today, I still study instructional videos on a weekly basis, always looking for new ideas to share with my students. I also study my individual wrestler's styles, striving to help my students polish their weaknesses and develop new techniques that will fit their style well. I strongly encourage my wrestlers to analyze their competition tapes and welcome them in my home to review their tapes with me.

SCOUTING

Scouting is only beneficial if you keep it in proper perspective. Do not get so wrapped up in what your opponent may do to you that you forget to stay focused on what you want to do to him. When competing, you must stay focused on your offense! Scouting makes you aware of your opponent's favorite attacks, so you can anticipate them and react quickly. It is not beneficial if it causes you to worry about them.

I like to familiarize myself with my student's toughest opponents. In many cases I will not share much detailed information with my wrestler(s), because I want them to stay focused on their attacks. This is especially true with my younger students. I expect my experienced high school and college wrestlers to be able to absorb and benefit from a brief scouting report on their most challenging opponents.

When scouting future opponents you should be more interested in planning and visualizing how you are going to attack him than on how he may attack you. With this perspective in mind, I will share with you some different things to look for when scouting an opponent and why.

1. *What foot does he lead? What tempo does he like? What ties does he like?*

With these things in mind, design a game plan to capitalize on your strengths, while exploiting your opponent's weaknesses. Visualize yourself implementing your strategy so you can execute it instinctively in the heat battle.

2. *Does he have any big throws or junk moves?*

It is nice to be aware of any unique moves your opponent likes, so you do not get caught in them. Stay out of your opponent's favorite throw positions (or surprise him and toss him from one of his favorite positions) and finish your moves quickly and cleanly, so you do not get caught in any of his favorite funky/junk moves.

3. *What are your opponent's favorite attacks?*

By knowing what your opponent is good at you can anticipate his attacks and counter more quickly. Visualize yourself countering your opponent's best stuff and scoring.

4. *Does your opponent have any tendencies that make him vulnerable to any specific attacks?*

For example, many wrestlers reach carelessly with one or both arms. Anticipate and time your opponents reach, change levels and score. Some opponents put a lot of weight on their lead foot and bend over. This makes them vulnerable to the ankle pick. These are just a couple common examples. Many wrestlers have a variety of subtle bad habits that can be easily exploited, if you will identify them ahead of time on videotape.

Once you have scouted your opponent, assess what you have learned and develop a game plan to defeat him. If you want your strategy to work, you must rehearse it over and over in your mind. When I made the 1988 Olympic Team, I had to defeat Jack Cuvo and Joe Gonzales two times each on consecutive days. During the weeks leading up to the final Olympic trials, I studied film of all my possible future opponents extensively, and I had game plans to defeat all of them. Cuvo was the defending NCAA Champion and Gonzales was a 1984 Olympian, so I had plenty of footage of both of them to study. More importantly, I had visualized myself defeating them time and time again in my mind. Studying videotape makes visualization much more practical and effective.

I dominated both Cuvo and Gonzales in the Olympic Trials winning 4 consecutive matches over two days. There is no doubt that my many hours studying film helped my performance. I even studied my videotape between matches back at the hotel room. I had game plans for victory and implemented them well. Plus, tactics aside, I believed I was going to win. I knew I was going to win. I had seen myself in victory hundreds of times in my mind during the months, days and hours leading up to the final trials. I have written a few articles on visualization and imagery, and I know that studying videotape has allowed me to use my visualization skills more effectively. Video analysis and visualization can work hand in hand together.

Remember, at high levels of competition one takedown is often the difference between winning and losing. If scouting helps you score or defend one scoring attack it was well worth your time.

Editor's Note: To learn more about Coach Chertow's Gold Medal Training Camp System and Instructional DVDs, visit www.kenchertow.com, call 814-466-3466, or e-mail camps@kenchertow.com.