

Title: Gratitude on the Mat: Have a Thankful Heart, High School Wrestling

In the realm of high school sports, wrestling stands as a formidable crucible, shaping young athletes in ways that extend far beyond the mat. As we approach a season of gratitude, it's opportune to delve into the intricate web of thankfulness that envelops those fortunate enough to partake in the challenging and transformative journey of high school wrestling. In this exploration, we'll unpack the specific elements that evoke gratitude: the invaluable role of coaches, the unwavering support of parents, and the camaraderie shared with teammates.

At the heart of a wrestler's journey is the guiding hand of coaches, mentors who sculpt not just athletes but individuals of character and resilience. The ability to be in high school wrestling is, indeed, a privilege, and the coaches act as custodians of that privilege, ensuring that it is not squandered but rather used as a catalyst for personal growth. These mentors dedicate countless hours to refining not only the technical skills of their charges but also their mental fortitude and moral compass. The thankfulness for coaches extends beyond the mat, encompassing the lifelong lessons they impart on discipline, perseverance, and the importance of continuous self-improvement.

Take a moment to envision a high school wrestling practice—the sound of wrestling shoes squeaking against the mat, the echo of bodies pummeling in controlled chaos, and the unwavering voice of the coach providing guidance and encouragement. It is within this mix that the foundation for success is laid, and it is here that thankfulness for coaches truly takes root. Coaches are more than instructors; they are motivators, mentors, and role models. They instill the belief that success is not just about winning matches like I have said before about “becoming the best version of oneself, both on and off the mat.”

The gratitude for coaches is multifaceted. It's about the personalized attention they give to each wrestler, recognizing strengths to be honed and weaknesses to be fortified. It's about the strategic wisdom they bring to the sport, analyzing opponents, and devising game plans that go beyond mere physical prowess. Coaches are the architects of success, building not just skilled wrestlers but resilient, disciplined individuals ready to face the challenges that extend beyond the wrestling room.

Yet, a wrestler's journey is not a solo endeavor. The unyielding support of parents is another cornerstone that fuels the thankfulness filling the wrestling experience. The ability to be in high school wrestling is, in many cases, made possible by the sacrifices parents make, from waking up at the crack of dawn to drive their athlete to early morning practices, tournaments across North and South Dakota to attending matches with unwavering pride and nerves.

Parental involvement in a wrestler's journey is a testament to the deep-rooted belief in the transformative power of the sport. It's about the financial commitments to shoes, singlets, travel expenses, motels, and tournament fees. It's about the emotional investment, witnessing the physical and mental toll the sport takes on their child and providing a steady anchor of support. The sacrifices of parents extend beyond the tangible; they are a source of motivation and inspiration, reminding the wrestler that they are not alone in their pursuit of excellence.

The sense of thankfulness for parents is grounded in the understanding that their support is not a given but a choice, a conscious decision to invest in their child's passion and development. The ability to be in high school wrestling is, in many ways, a shared achievement between athlete and parent, a collaborative effort that enriches the wrestling experience and lays the groundwork for a lifetime of gratitude.

As the journey unfolds, a wrestler's path intersects with that of teammates, forging bonds that transcend the boundaries of the wrestling room. The ability to work alongside these individuals, to share the triumphs and tribulations, adds a layer of camaraderie that is as integral to the sport as the physical prowess displayed on the mat. Thankfulness for teammates is born out of the understanding that success is not an individual pursuit but a collective effort.

Teammates are more than competitors; they are comrades in the truest sense of the word. They share the grueling practices, the elation of victory, and the disappointment of defeat. The ability to be in high school wrestling is enhanced by the sense of belonging that comes from being part of a team, a family united by a common goal. The thankfulness for teammates is rooted in the mutual support system they create, fostering an environment where each wrestler is uplifted by the strengths of others and supported through their own challenges.

In the crucible of competition, where individual strength is tested, teammates become a source of inspiration and motivation. They are the ones who witness the countless hours of sweat and dedication, who understand the sacrifices made, and who celebrate not just the victories but the personal growth of each member. The gratitude for teammates is a recognition that, in the pursuit of excellence, the shared journey is as significant as the individual milestones.

In conclusion, and in the Thanksgiving spirit, the ability to be in high school wrestling is a privilege entwined with layers of gratitude. The journey is not a solitary one but a collective endeavor, shaped by the guidance of coaches, the unwavering support of parents, and the camaraderie of teammates. The thankfulness is specific—it is for the coaches who mold athletes into individuals of character, for the parents whose sacrifices make the journey possible, and for the teammates who share the triumphs and tribulations on the mat. As the wrestling season unfolds, let us not only give thanks for the victories but also for the lessons learned, the friendships forged, and the personal growth that accompanies the journey on the wrestling mat.

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