

Is Your Opponent the Bad Guy?

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Friendly competition - can it exist?

"Friendly," according to the dictionary is *"having the attitude and character of friend; willing to promote the good of another."* You know, Casper is a friendly ghost, your brother is friendly (when he wants to borrow your in-line skates), and the Super Friends are friendly (unless you try to take over the world with your stapler and knee pads).

The word "compete" comes from two Latin words "com" (together) and "petere" (seeking) making the true definition of competition to be a 'seeking together' where your opponent is not your enemy but your partner. The more skillful your opponent is - the better you perform.

Hmm, think about that. Your opponent is never the bad guy, the enemy, or someone to be hated and destroyed. He or she is your classmate, your friend. He or she is a kid - just like you - that comes to the mat filled with excitement to have a fun match.

Without a good opponent, wrestling is no fun. You can win after performing your best, plus you can win after playing really bad. You can have a great game when you lose, because you tried your best. A win can also be a failure if you didn't try your best.

Failure is a part of life. Believe it or not, you fell many times before you learned to walk. Each time you fell, did your parents laugh at you? No, they picked you up, gave you a hug, set you back on your feet, and helped you to try another step. When you fell, you felt the 'thump' and it toughened you. Next, you learned to stick your hands out to cushion your fall, and after that, you learned balance. You kept falling and trying again.

By the way, it's a good thing that you were a baby when you learned to walk, because if you were older, your pride would've gotten in the way and you probably wouldn't be walking yet! Babies are determined - when they want something, they go for it. When you get older, you worry too much about what other folks think and how your hair looks when you fall.

Losing is a part of life too. Some kids love to gloat when they win to make their opponents feel like losers; I like to think that mostly younger kids do this because they aren't mature enough to understand sportsmanship. The dictionary says that sportsmanship is fair play, courtesy, striving spirit, and grace in losing. In other words, you don't dance when you win and you don't whine and make excuses when you lose.

Friendly competition means that each wrestler should respect his teammates, himself and his opponent. This isn't a professional wrestling league and you aren't paid to win. Wrestling isn't about your parents reliving real (or imagined) athletic triumphs of their youth through you. It isn't about making your coach proud, and it isn't just about winning.

Youth wrestling is about fun, the desire to succeed, skill, responsibility, excitement, commitment, discipline, respect, cooperation, competing with friends, and the trophy and medals are pretty cool too.
