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The Seven Habits Of Highly Effective Wrestlers Part III

By Steve Marianetti

In my last article, I discussed the importance of creating motion and angles. I also proposed several methods and drills to help teach your wrestlers these skills. Today I will talk about the fourth and fifth concepts on my list: hips and lifting.

4. HIPS & 5. LIFTING: Learning how to use your hips and lift your opponent are basic, foundational skills—and just like my article on motion and angles—these skills are related. A wrestler needs to learn how to “use their hips” before they can execute a proper lift. Then they need to develop the strength—through a structured, comprehensive weight training program-- to lift an opponent in a match. These skills are used in many positions and situations, but for this article I will focus on using the hips and lifting from a takedown.

It is only after a wrestler learns to engage his hips in an attack that he will lift properly. So many young wrestlers try to lift with their lower back or arms. Using the wrong muscles will waste energy and take you out of position. Power comes from the hips.

To learn these skills, your wrestlers should start by drilling their double leg or high crotch--slowly. They should turn the corner, drive to their feet, make a conscious effort to drop their hips and tighten their back and then lift the opponent off the ground. Don't worry about finishing the move; once an opponent is in the air, there isn't much he can do.



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At first, you should make your wrestlers stop their motion just before the lift so that you can check their position; they should be in a strong stance, like they are midway through a heavy squat. If their back is flat or their hips are pushed back or their legs are straight, point out the problem and make them adjust on the spot. All of the power should come from the hips and legs; the back and arms are only needed for stability.

Once you check their position, make sure to watch that they maintain a strong foundation throughout the lift. It will also help if you tell them to look at the ceiling as they lift. If they keep their eyes looking up, it will be much easier to keep their back and hips in the proper position.

In addition to drilling, it is important for your athlete to have enough strength to lift from the double leg or high-crotch. If they have a weak core (abdominals and lower back) or weak legs, it will be difficult to hit a proper lift in a match, when the opponent is not being cooperative. This is why a rigorous weight training program--with squats, Olympic lifts (clean, jerk, snatch, ect.) and core work—is so important. Learning the Olympic lifts will also reinforce the correct lifting motion. Your athletes will learn how to throw their hips under the bar, which is the same motion as throwing your hips under an opponent. They will also develop balance, body awareness and explosive strength.