



Newsletter

What is Grit? 3/30/15

Learning through failure



In wrestling, beyond shaking hands and acknowledging that one wrestler out scored another, at the end of a match, the winner gets his hand raised. For some, this is a public declaration, or message that may sound like 'I worked my but off, and now I'm getting paid' or 'hard work DOES pay off.

But what does this mean for the opponent? While some children may view it as a deflating experience, the right coach can look at this as an opportunity.

While this is not a new concept, it is one that needs constant re-examination. Failure can hold the biggest lessons for us.

In her TED Talk, Psychologist Angela Lee Duckworth defined Grit as 'Passion and Perseverance for very long-term goals.' She also talks about working really hard, over time, to turn a goal into a reality. She went on to distinguish Grit from raw talent, citing that there are many talented individuals who don't

follow through on their commitments.

In the short term, raw talent can prove misleading to the child who possesses it. I've seen kids new to the sport take to wrestling very quickly and excel against others beginning at the same time. Grit is where the rubber meets the road. Over time, those talented athletes may see that unless they are willing to continue and actually work at improving their skills, they may begin to lose to the apparent 'less talented' athletes who have a better understanding of how to win the game.



Like other sports, wrestling has its share of athletes who have overcome huge obstacles in order to participate. Meet Theophilus Agbi. Theo wrestled for the Allen-Stevenson School and later competed in high school at Exeter. After a series of setbacks, Theo started to consider the advantages of a taller wrestler who has very long limbs. Fast forward to the National College Wrestling Association National Championships in Allen, Texas, on Saturday, March 14th.

Representing Amherst College, Theo had some tough matches, and ended a very respectful 3rd place, making him the first Allen-Stevenson alum to reach All-American status. He graciously acknowledged me in a text shortly after his final match:

'As I was warming up for the match I was thinking about you and the first time I got on the mat all those years ago. I remembered all the failures and disappointments, but I can still remember your advice: Use what you've got!'



To say that I'm proud of Theophilus (pictured here third from right) is an understatement. To persevere beyond middle and high school is an achievement in itself. When wrestling did not come very easy for him, he kept going. For me, Theo personifies the concept of Grit.

He went on to talk about the importance of character in wrestling:

'You were my first coach in the sport and I will say that you not only taught me how to have confidence in my own abilities you taught me how to be gracious in both defeat and victory. It is just as much as a part of this sport as anything.'

Theo has coached in the Grapplin' Gorillas summer camp. After taking a break to pursue other ventures over the last few summers, he will be returning to help out in our camp this summer.

See you in April (our spring season starts on the 1st!)
-Glenn

Summer Camp Registration:

AGES 3-5:

<http://grapplin gorillas.com/summer-camp-ages-3-5/>

AGES 5-13:

<http://grapplin gorillas.com/summer-camp/>

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