

Create a Life Changing Experience

By Olympic Champion
Ben Peterson



It is incredible the way life can be changed by the simple timing of the losing and winning of a few wrestling matches. Many can tell of the way a first win or a final loss is remembered years later and still affects the confidence, and even the happiness, of an individual and his family. The highs and lows of life are significant.

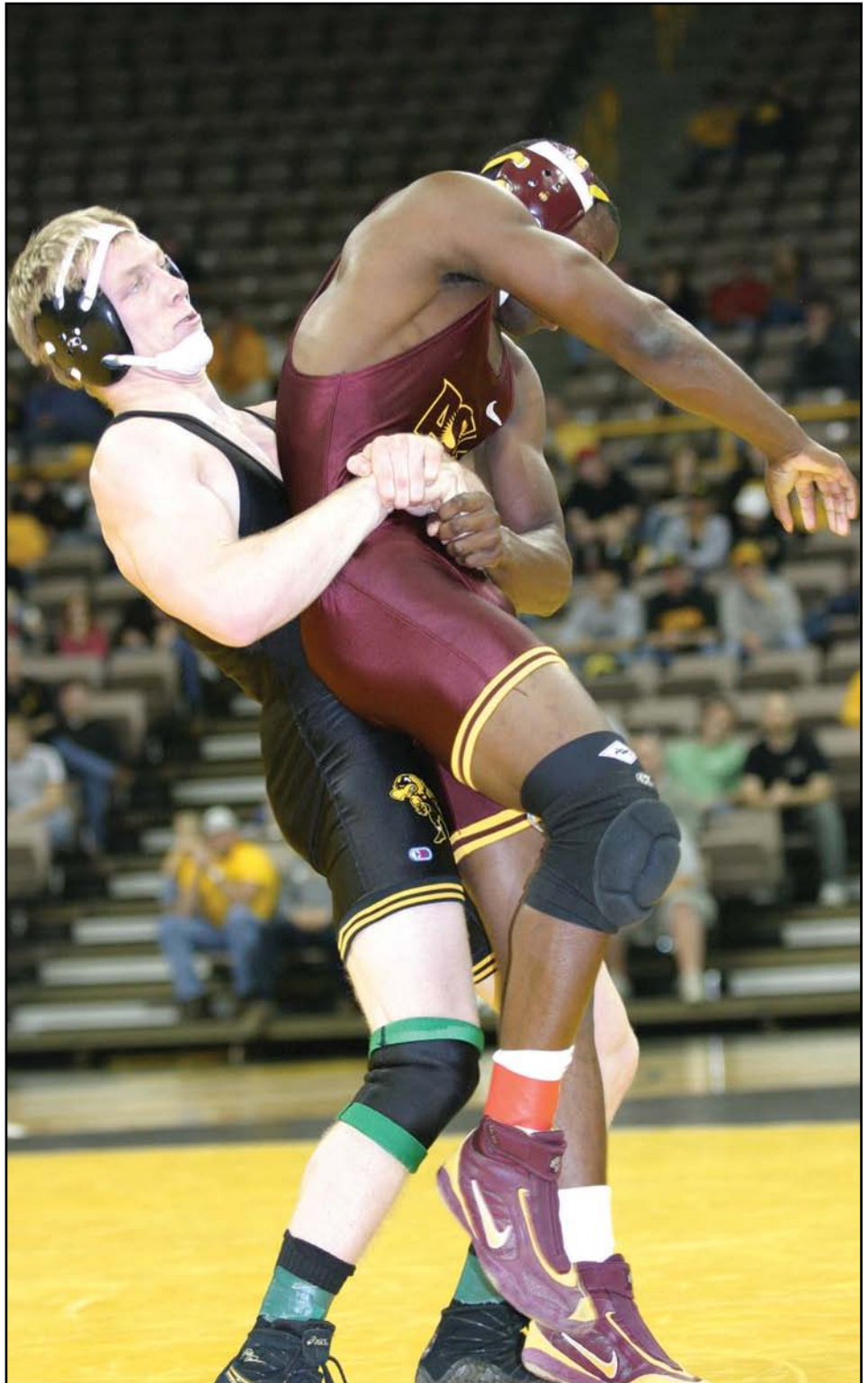
When John and I returned from the Munich Olympics with a silver and gold medal we were soon asked to speak at special events. We were asked to teach the things that brought us success in the Olympics and explain what it was like to compete at that level. We immediately found ourselves as guest speakers at all kinds of events. I remember discussing with John how we could use each opportunity to help others. We determined to encourage each other to take advantage of those opportunities.

Returning from the Montreal Olympics four years later with another gold and silver increased the requests and the willingness of others to help us. As a result we started Camp of Champs Wrestling Camps where we train wrestlers with the same intensity that we had trained and competed. John and I began to notice that one of the highlights for people was the chance to see an Olympic medal and then see that normal people win them. We are people just like everyone else. We face the same temptations and struggles as others. When we forget this we get in trouble too.

My records indicate that well over 2,000 special guest groups have seen my medals and listened to my Olympic stories. I can't imagine how many places John has spoken and how many times he has been around the world doing the same. These events have ranged from:

- School Assemblies to Business Lunches

Iowa City 11-18-06 - 157 lbs. Brian Stith (Arizona State) dec. Ryan Morningstar (Iowa), 3-1 OT. Photo by John Johnson.



- Wrestling Practices to all day clinics
- Awards Banquets to Graduations
- Church services to Birthdays
- Prison cells to County Fairs
- Individual training Sessions to Tournament Display Tables

We thoroughly enjoy speaking whenever we can. Our desire is to:

1. Be a help and encouragement to others.
2. Promote Camp of Champs.
3. Promote and strengthen local wrestling programs.
4. Portray a patriotic, hard working, honest, God fearing way of life.
5. Let others see a real gold medal. This is still a highlight to many!

When an event is well planned by local people and an appropriate speaker is selected and secured, a life changing experience can follow. That was true for me. Here are a couple examples.

Long distance runner Glen Cunningham came from central Kansas to Cumberland high school in northwestern Wisconsin my junior year to speak in an all-school assembly. John and I still remember that day. I left asking myself, "How far could Ben go if he was as motivated as Mr. Cunningham?"

Two Green Bay Packer players, Jerry Kramer and Bart Star, spoke at awards banquets in my early years. I secured autographs and was impressed at how down to earth they were. To this day I seek to remember how much they inspired me and that I can do the same for others.

Many hesitate to ask a person to come and speak thinking they are too busy to come. Most often that is not the case. I know of many very noteworthy wrestlers that would be anxious to speak. Give them a call or email them. "You have not because you ask not" James 4:2. The worst thing that can happen is they say no, or they may refer you to someone else, or maybe they can come for a future event.

Please consider doing the following for Guest Speakers:

1. Consider what groups/events could benefit from their expertise.
2. Give information to the people who could help coordinate the event.

3. Pray and donate toward the expenses of this kind of experience.
4. Don't throw this idea away. Keep it for just the right time.
5. Make the contact!

When you contact a potential speaker I suggest you; 1) Briefly explain the event, 2) Give location, 3) List the time and date (Or possible dates if you can be flexible) and 4) Be ready to discuss finances. Be ready to make adjustments if possible. Some speakers have a set fee they will not adjust. John and I usually ask for expenses plus an appropriate honorarium. If wrestling is promoted and kids are being helped we would rather have the event happen instead of pricing it out of existence. Many others will work with you also.

You may ask what motivates a speaker? Certainly that will vary. But here are some recent statements that have encouraged me to keep saying yes to requests:

"I am so thankful for you being able to be our speaker."

Kiwanis President

"I thank you for your words of wisdom, stories of faith, and your commitment to helping others. I hope I can pass on some of what you gave me today."

Prison Inmate

"I was impressed with your passion, sincerity and genuine interest in building and encouraging each child."

Wrestling Club Secretary

Your group could be next! So contact that special speaker you know could inspire a young person and be part of creating a life changing experience.

*Ben and his brother John now run Camp of Champs Wrestling Camps. Contact them at: Camp of Champs, PO Box 222, Watertown, WI 53094; Phone: 800-505-5099; E-mail: ben@campofchamps.org; Web: www.campofchamps.org.

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