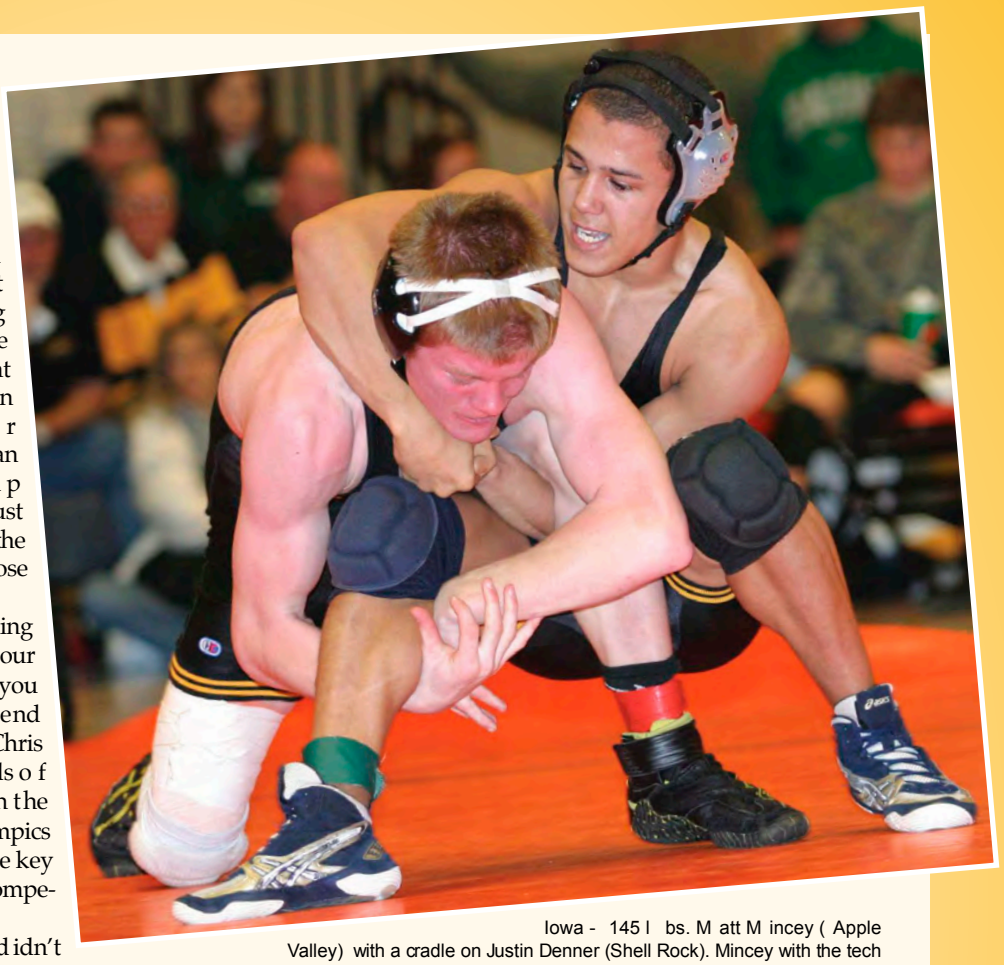
I also had the good fortune of wrestling with someone much smaller than me. Dan Gable was 40-50 pounds lighter. For most of 4 years we wrestled hard with each other several times a week. Dan taught me how to deflect power again and again as he repeatedly protected himself and then attacked from another angle. He seldom fought my weight and power head-on. He was always deflecting it. That was so important for me to experience as the heavier and stronger man. As time went on I learned to tie up his speed. This, too, is an essential element of a champion. Sooner or later, most everyone faces someone faster than themselves. You must slow down and tie up your opponent's speed. Heavyweights must learn this and where better than by wrestling the lighter men on their team even though those lighter men may often seem like pesky flies.

Please take your time. Don't hurry into training with someone much different in size. But as your patience, understanding and position grow you will learn some great wrestling skills. In the end you could build some great friendships, too. Chris Taylor and Dan Gable became great friends of mine. I must also say, I would not have won the NCAA's without Gable and then the Olympics without Chris Taylor. Training with them were key elements in getting to a whole new level of competition.

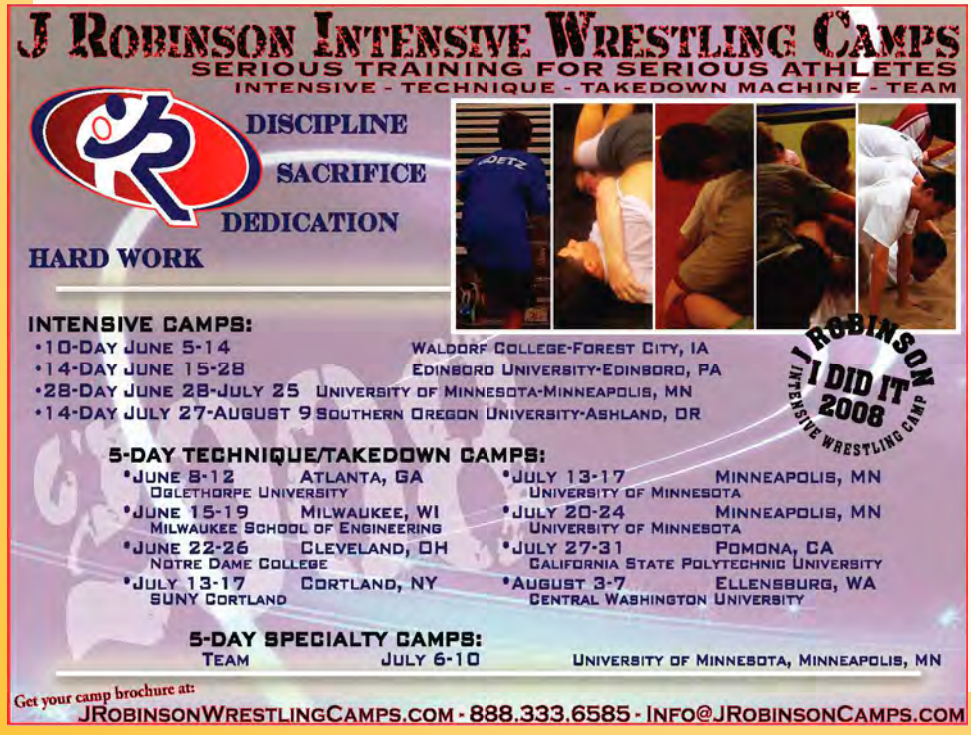


Iowa - 145 lbs. Matt Mincey (Apple Valley) with a cradle on Justin Denner (Shell Rock). Mincey with the tech fall over Denner; 5:04. Photo by John Johnson.

In the story of David and Goliath, David didn't charge Goliath. He threw a stone before he got the angle and Goliath's sword. In the end, he finished the job with the giant's own sword. You can read about this in the Bible in I Samuel 17. David learned not to fear the big guy. Yet he was wise about how he approached him. He respected Goliath's size and strength but he also knew how to make the giant vulnerable.

David was confident that God could use what he had repeatedly practiced as a boy, his sling shot. If you faithfully prepare and practice a plan of attack you can defeat the giants you face both on and off the mat. Don't make excuses or run in fear of defeat or injury. Be wise, be patient and be tactful.

You, too, can learn to use your opponent's strengths against him. But you will need to be patient and watch repeatedly for the moment of weakness and vulnerability.

Take the challenge! Wrestle a giant! Not with reckless abandon but with planned, careful stalking. Always leave a way out. Always protect yourself. Protection is first. Deflect the power. Get angles and then advance at the right moment. There is nothing that builds confidence quite like defeating a giant!

**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: info@campofchamps.org; Web: www.campofchamps.org*