INSPIRED BY A HIGHER GOAL

My Senior Year in College

By Olympic Champion
Ben Peterson

Training for my college senior year started 2 weeks after the Nationals as a junior. For two weeks I ate and caught up on sleep and my studies. By the end of it I felt fat, lazy and anxious to get a good workout again.

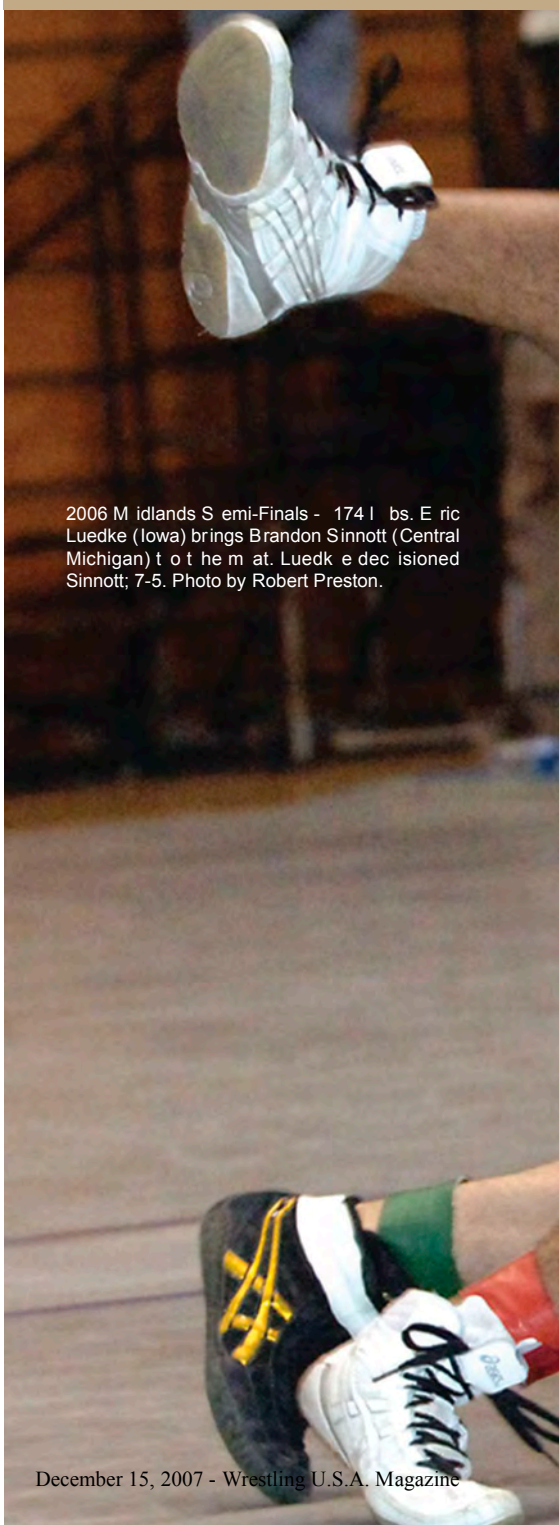
Lifting, some running and freestyle practices on our own were just enough. No coaches, no demands, just training because we wanted to and because another season would come before we knew it. Freestyle Nationals opened the door to the Pan American and Senior World Training Camps. This time they would pay expenses for me to train with the best wrestlers in America.

Arriving at home in June, I spent another month and a half roofing with my brother John. He had graduated from University Wisconsin Stout and was wondering if the Army would be asking for his services in Vietnam. I suggested he attend the National Training camps with me and test his wrestling skills at a higher level. Having only placed 5th at the NAIA Nationals his confidence was not that high. For weeks he said I was crazy. Then in early July he agreed to go. When it was time to fly to Miami, John paid for his ticket and was in the seat next to me.

For a full month we trained with America's best and then were a part of the World Team Trials. My fellow Wisconsin nemesis, Russ Hellickson, had won the Pan Am Gold and was ready to earn a World Bronze. Again he was too much for me. But John would not be denied. After training for a month he climbed the entire tryout ladder and made the World Team. As he flew to Sophia, Bulgaria for the World Championships, I flew home. (I'll have to tell John's story more fully in another article.)

I remember enjoying two weeks with Dad and Mom. After raising six they had just sent Dan, their youngest, off to preseason football at NIACC Junior College in Mason City, Iowa. Mom fed me real well and we talked a lot. I left refreshed. I was anxious to get back to Iowa State for my senior year of Architectural Studies and to train daily with the hardest working wrestlers I had ever known.

Standouts like Carl Adams, Keith Abens, Rich Binek, and Al Nacin were anxious to train for a national title. They were all great workout partners. Joining us this time was a mountain of a man, the good-natured fun loving Chris Taylor. During the days of unlimited heavyweights Chris was the biggest and would become the best. He was 6' 5" and weighed 425 pounds. Yes, I said 425 pounds! I can't imagine how many times I have been asked, "You didn't wrestle him, did you?" My answer is: "Of course I did! Why not? Who else is going to? I was the next biggest man in the room much of the time." He presented literally a mountain to conquer. For one and a half years I plotted and picked away at conquering the Mount Everest Coach Nichols' recruiting had put in front of me. (I'll have to tell Chris' story more fully



2006 Midlands Semi-Finals - 174 lbs. Eric Luedke (Iowa) brings Brandon Sinnott (Central Michigan) to the mat. Luedke decisioned Sinnott; 7-5. Photo by Robert Preston.