in another article.) I feel so blessed to have had all these men to train with on a daily basis for that entire season. Some were already top college wrestlers. Others were working to become national champions before they graduated. And we all desired greatly to beat the Oklahoma schools and win Nationals after the previous year's 2nd place finish.

In late September I received a phone call from John. He had roomed with Gable on the European trip. Although John's performances were losing ones, Gable saw hope of John making the Olympic Team. And he saw in John a good workout partner for himself. Dan was a grad assistant at ISU and offered to share his apartment if John would come to Ames and train. After working a few weeks John packed and came down.

Consider the wrestling room Harold Nichols and Les Anderson had assembled. There were young first year wrestlers fighting to keep their hopes alive, there were experienced competitors beginning to believe they could win, there were returning national champions, there was the biggest man I had ever seen, there was my brother with Olympic dreams and there was the newly crowned World Champion Dan Gable. When I see the big practice rooms today I wonder how 30 plus of us fit on the one and a half mats with padded walls on the third floor of Beyer Hall. The closeness must have added to our intensity.

Whenever I think of this setting it is like the epitome for training. Proverbs 27:17 says, "Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend." Truly my teammates were iron that ground away to sharpen me and I fought back to sharpen them. It was a year to remember. Our first competition was the Southern Open Tournament in Chattanooga. With seven wrestlers (including Gable and John) we won five weights, losing only to each other. That was also a great introduction to traveling with Chris Taylor. We were becoming friends and were experiencing the attention of the crowds with him. When we got home we found that the rest of our team had won the Northern Open in Madison, Wisconsin. After three duals it was off to the Midlands Tournament. Again I met Russ Hellickson in the finals. By the narrowest margin I won by referee's decision in overtime. I had finally defeated Russ!

Gable and John put their attention to freestyle. Their training intensified after returning from the great Tbilisi, Georgia Tournament in southern Soviet Union. Daily after the ISU team finished practice they would stay and go hard for 30 or more minutes. I wanted to be a part of that. So every day there was one and a half hours of the hardest folkstlye training, a 5-minute break and then freestyle. People have often asked how I switched from college wrestling to freestyle so quickly. My answer is that all through college I was doing freestyle in the spring and summer and then my senior year "everyday". Making the change in rules and emphasis on the back is hard for many. We changed scoring in our minds daily. It became as simple as putting on our headgear.

John and Dan were training mornings and evenings as well as afternoons. By mid February I sensed they were getting significantly ahead of me in freestyle. By then the idea of making the Olympic Team was also strong in my mind. I suggested to Gable that maybe I should set aside my folkstyle and pursue the higher goal of the Olympics. Dan simply said, "What makes you think you can make the Olympic Team if you can't win the college Nationals. Keep your focus on winning the NCAAs and there will be plenty of time to get ready for the Olympics." That was sound advice that I clearly needed. After that the NCAAs became a step/plateau to a higher goal. The NCAAs were like setting up a "base camp" before heading up the peaks of the Olympics.

After a 17-1 team dual season and a team second at the Big 8s we were off to the NCAAs in Maryland. Carl Adams repeated as 158 pound champion and Chris Taylor won heavyweight. In the finals I used a freestyle hiptoss against Emil Deliere of Princeton University to score 5 points. Emil was injured and unable to continue. I had won the 190 pound class by injury default. But, with the help of Bill Fjetland's 5th, Rich Binek's 3rd, Phil Parker's 2nd and Keith Aben's 2nd, Iowa State won the team title again for the third time during my 4 years. As co-captians that team title was truly a dream come true for Carl Adams and I!

How blessed I feel to have been part of that "run". I experienced the building of momentum my freshman and sophomore years, the losing of it my junior year and the regaining of it my senior year. There was no way I could imagine how that momentum was going to catapult several of us to much higher levels.

Following are a few of the many verses that tell the way I felt when I graduated with a Bachelors Degree in Architecture eight months later.

"But I have trusted in Your mercy; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

I will sing to the LORD, Because He has dealt bountifully with me." –Psalms 13:5,6

"The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places: Yes, I have a good inheritance."
–Psalm 15:6

"But the LORD was my support. He also brought me out into a broad place:

He delivered me because He delighted in me."
–Psalm 18:18b-19

Every person's development will be different and unique. It is my prayer that the telling of my story will encourage others to work as hard as possible, to learn from others and to pray for God's help and blessing.

**Ben & 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.*