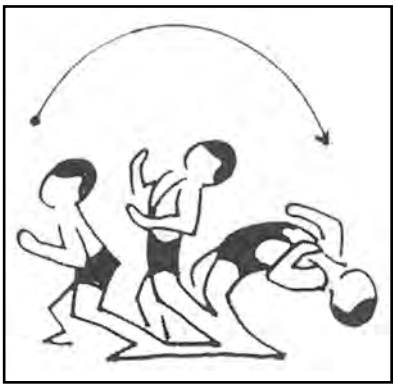
NUMBER 7:
BACK ARCH



Wrestling, man's oldest and most challenging sport, ca n trace its history back 5,000 years. Inscriptions on the walls of the tombs at Beni Hasan, Egypt, show m aneuvers that are the same as those practiced in any wr estling room today.

Although there are an infinite number of moves and countermoves to the sport, each is based on a series of specific skills.

The back arch leads to another very specific position to lift. In its ultimate form, it gives rise to the spectacular lifts and throws associated with the international styles of competition.

It requires the ability to balance your own body over a p oint of s upport a s y ou d rive y our h ips i nto a nd under y our op pponent (Skill No. 4), w hile y ou g o from y our f eet into a higharching back bridge.

When d one p roperly, lit tle if a ny w eight is d istributed t o y our head. The continued thrust of your hips forward counterbalances the weight of your upper body as you go into the arch. The end result is that your center of gravity remains over the point of support, your feet!

And your hips are now under your opponent in a position to lift (Skill No.5).

The seventh and last skill in this sequence is the back arch. Much like the back step, it represents a special and unique way of positioning your hips under your opponent for maximum lifting ability.

In its purest form, the back arch gives rise to the souplesse or salto, both moves recognized as the ultimate throw in Olympic and w orld c ompetitions. Although t hese t hrows a re no t l egal under our high school and college rules, the basic arch is found in many of the maneuvers used by our better athletes.

It is important that you practice the skill in steps and with the assistance of a partner. Once you have mastered controlling your own body as you go back into the arch, you will find that little if any weight is distributed to your head. That, in fact, is the key to the proper execution of the move.

Start in a low squat to get the feel for moving your hips forward as y our u pper b ody g oes b ack. You m ust t ry t o d istribute y our weight evenly on both sides of the balance point represented by your feet. Once you have done this, you should press your hips up to create the lift.

On your feet–if you are keeping your hips coming forward–there will be little need for your partner's help. As soon as y ou f eel y ourself pulling o n h is arm, y ou k now y ou h ave t o d rive your h ips f orward to r edistribute your weight.

Carrying the d rill o ne s tep f urther, h ave y our p artner reach around y our w aist; n ow g o b ack i nto a n a rch, m aking s ure y ou keep y our h ips c oming f orward. Your p artner p rovides t he s upport around your waist and his free arm will act as the final point of support when you are ready to pop your hips up and make the turn.

To b e s uccessful i n a m atch s ituation, y ou m ust g o i nto y our opponent, p ositioning y our h ips u nder h is c enter o f m ass while keeping yourself flexed and ready to pop your hips up once you have gotten under him.

The same important thrust from your hips and the arch in your back c an b e s een i n a s uccessfully ex ecuted d uck-under, a f ireman's carry or a high crotch takedown.

Ricky Stewart on the Back Arch

The fireman's carry is a perfect example of a move that includes the b ack a rch. You m ust k eep y our h ips i n a nd u se t he a rch t o throw the man to his back.

The b ack a rch a lso i s i mportant o n a ll y our t hrows, a nything with high amplitude; it's also good for a high crotch, duck-unders, everything that requires lift.

We've had the opportunity to see an awful lot of exciting maneuvers, all of them based on the ability of the wrestler to get his hips into and under his opponent while he goes into a back arch position.

Although m ore of t he c lassical t hrows a re r ecognized a s t hose practiced in in ternational c ompetition, it a lso s hould b e o bvious that in the majority of the moves executed that the back arch is an integral part of them. For the development of a total wrestler, the back arch must be part of his repertoire.

2007 C entral R egional C adet Freestyle - 145 lbs. Kyle Mosier (Indiana) with a deep half nel son on D an C ox (Minnesota). M osier w on by fall; 1:05. Photo by Charles T. Bennett.