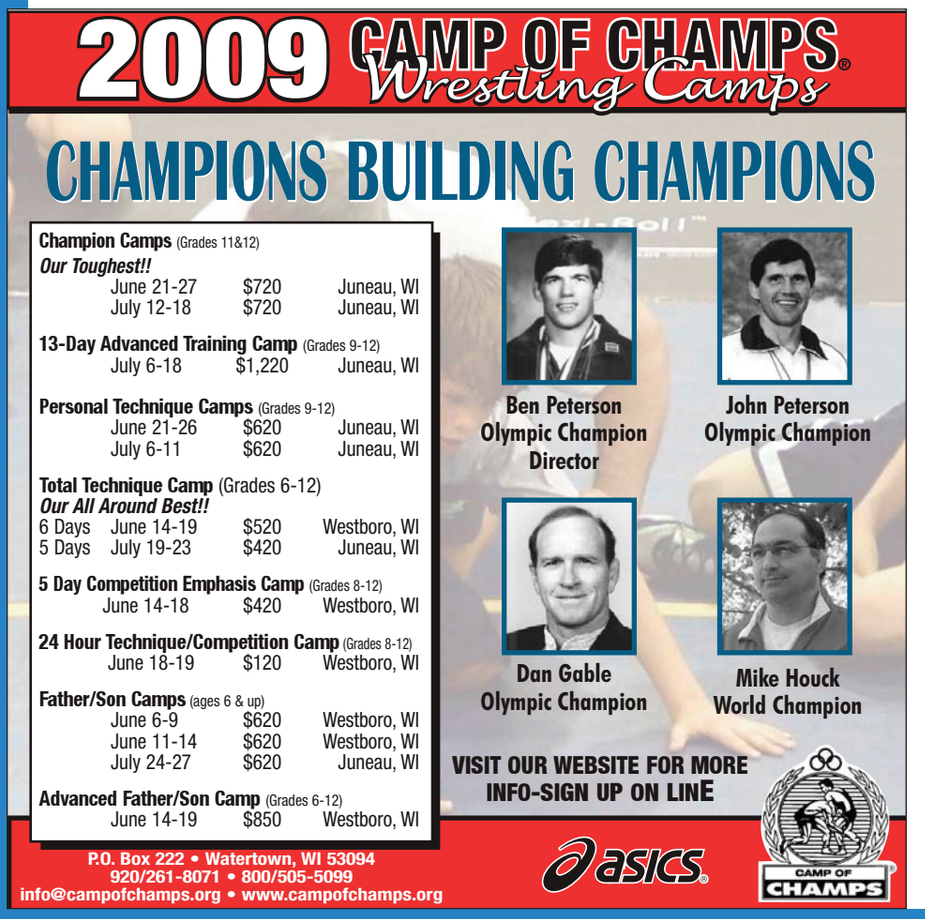
Being a year older than me, John could begin football as a freshman. His 95 pound body was strong, quick and aggressive and a position at half-back seemed the most likely for him. But with many other boys bigger and stronger than John, he took a beating more than he was ready for. Soon his right knee was swollen and out of commission. After draining it a couple times (which John later felt was a mistake) the doctor realized this would take significant time to heal and needed to drain on its own.

By the time wrestling season was to begin he was told, "You better let that knee rest and heal or you may never play varsity sports again." John took the doctor's advice. He always says he could have been the varsity 97 pounder from the very beginning. However, he does not regret waiting. He learned the importance of protecting his "wrestling machine" and when it was injured he learned the value of rest, ice and rebuilding muscle strength.

Watching our older brothers wrestle, along with many matches in the hallway and haymow, had prepared us for the basics of the sport. We were looking forward to the next year of high school wrestling. One match was enough bait to hook me. John had a similar experience in 8th grade also. With his short and smaller stature, wrestling was definitely his choice.

Our dabbling and delays were important steps. There was hunger for competition when the door to begin was finally opened. There were many opportunities to remember the value of protecting ourselves. Years later, being just under the heavyweights in size, we trained with the biggest around – the unlimited heavyweights (Chris Taylor at 425 pounds was the ultimate). There was a fear coupled with respect that gave us the savvy to attack but also protect ourselves and even plead for mercy when needed.

When the injuries came and we found ourselves in rest-ice-rehab mode, we experienced learning by watching without participating and longing without losing hope. Competing to age 30 and beyond had its own challenges. Patience and adjusting permitted us to extend our careers. We were challenged with the reality of Isaiah 40:31, "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." As young Christians, we were learning to trust and honor God and "not faint." We were learning to discern when to soar at an eagle's pace, when to run at a sprinter's pace and when to walk at a gentleman's pace.

We urge you to learn patience and wisdom while caring for your body – your wresting machine! If there are injuries or reasons to wait, do so with purpose and intensity. Then resume slowly and build up the pace as you are ready. In time it can all fit together, both on and off the mat.

**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