

## **Team Impact Wrestling Club**

### **Reaction-Resistance Drilling – Best Practices Simulate Competition Conditions**

by Stan Tzogas (Revised December 8, 2021)

**The purpose of this document is to detail “how to drill” wrestling techniques best.** Drilling your wrestling technique is key component of any great wrestler’s practice from how to drill to what to drill. This document will outline the “how” to best drill. How we drill our techniques when in practices determines how well we apply them in a match. A concerted effort is required to drill properly as outline below as well as with a good partner that provides a reaction with reasonable resistance.

Wrestlers with satisfactory results at the sake of being nice to their partners or being lazy, are drilling with no match-like resistance-reaction and with non-competition stances. There is also a tendency to get up slowly off the mat and standing straight up to get into a Greco-Roman like high stance. A real freestyle match does not look like this poor type of drilling. This is training to beat poor wrestlers and not excellent ones. In competition their skills are not as good because their stance is lower than practice and competition requires reading and reacting decision making on your opponent which doesn’t take place in this poor drilling. We need to stop wasting time drilling with poor stances, no reaction-resistance, no decision-making by reading and reacting and spend more time with match specific stances, match like reaction-resistance and getting up with a sense of urgency into a competition stance and into the next repetition. Not-realistic match like simulation drilling might be good for initial skill development and maybe for some initial improvement; but **to perfect a technique for competition we need to re-create the “competition like match feel” for the technique; which is completely different from drilling with a partner that applies too little to no realistic match like reaction-resistance.** *Drilling same move over and over with zero resistance from your partner is wasting time. You already know how to hit the move and doing it on a guy who gives no resistance will not make you a better wrestler (Andy Hrovat, US Olympian & National Coach).*

Athletes need to practice drilling techniques with match-like reaction-resistance from their partner. When drilling skills, our partner must provide enough resistance to stimulate competition like situations. We need to drill with more reaction-resistance so that we can flow from action to reaction to takedowns to turns. We need to eliminate the amount of time spent drilling with no resistance. We need to be excellent at reacting quickly when we miss our initial attack in order to flow into a second or third attack. The “one and done” tactic of attacking one move and if it is unsuccessful retreat and reset into your stance will not win the big matches. **The benefit of reaction-resistance drilling is that it develops match intelligence (also known as match I.Q.) by improving your attack scoring rate percentage with better timing and attack selection for improved position by knowing how to create better opportunities to attack or to better take advantage of open positions and also how to wrestle out of those tough situations to become better at scrambling. Another benefit, is the partner who is getting the move done to them is physically and mentally working on their defense.** Reaction-resistance drilling requires athletes to practice match decision making. Passive zero resistance fails to improve match intelligence which is important in wrestling matches and includes decision making ability inclusive of timely decision-making, knowing when the time is best to attack.

#### **A Good Partner is Essential to Drill Effectively**

Both athletes should be actively engaged in wrestling as if in a match, and both the offensive and defensive wrestlers have chance to work on their skills. When learning new techniques, too much resistance from your partner can make it difficult to focus on the mechanics and too little resistance can make the technique too unrealistic. **When initially learning a technique execute it at about 20-40% and your partner provides a reaction-resistance of about 10-20%. When you already know the technique well, execute it at a 70% or higher match like pace and your partner provides a reaction with resistance by working their defense at no less than 40% and no more than 50%. If your partner is reacting with too much anticipation and you cannot execute your move it is expected that you exercise your Match I.Q. and hit another move that is open. An excellent partner working their defense should not react with too much anticipation, they should not permit poor technique from being executed and should provide coaching advice back for improvement.** When you can teach someone something, you learn that something better. The objective is to incorporate match like

decision making skills that require reading and reacting to the opponent; in order to accomplish a high percentage attack success rate with near perfect body position. A good partner applies enough counter wrestling resistance to challenge the partner but allow the partner to complete their technique. This allows the partner to cognitively work on defense instead of not cognitively working at all. This process has to be done with perfect technique and attention to optimal body position so that the opponent has minimal opportunities to defend. The majority of drilling in practice should be spent drilling with reaction-resistance.

This reaction-resistance drilling will help to improve our wrestling in all aspects. Keep in mind that the best way to improve wrestling is to wrestle and that's what this drill achieves. We have to recreate the circumstances as similar to a match as possible, this concept is called the training principle of "specificity of training." The research is out there and currently there are several books that examine excellence in sport and refer to this concept as deliberate training, deep learning and/or purposeful training.

### **More Tips for Drilling:**

1. Think of your partners like toys, if you keep breaking them, soon you will not have any toys to play with. Take care not to be overly physical and hurt your partners because soon no one will want to drill with you and you will have a problem find a training partner. Be empathetic, respectful and grateful
2. Best to drill in multiples than singular repetitions. Doing 2 or more repetitions of a technique allows for immediate correction.
3. A cooperated effort requires that each athlete receives an equal number of opportunities to score.
4. If your move fails to score against 40-50% reaction resistance, it will not work in competition and your move needs to be improved... ask a coach for help.
5. Best to be in-motion (not standing still, busy hands, busy feet, hand-fighting, forward offensive pressure etc.) initial attack, reaction (partner attempts a counter: resistance), and quick transition into pare-tarre scoring (could lead to a second or a third attack).
6. Attack legs at an angle, keeping knees off the mat. Especially, not putting both knees on the mat. If your knees touch the mat, they must be exploding to standing or exploding moving forward
7. Excellent body position: shoulders pass ears, shoulders and back straight, shoulder making initial contact on leg attacks followed by hands, then chest and hips in
8. Quick transition of all takedowns and/ or defense counter-attacks to a pare-tarre scoring situation without any pausing in the action. The pare-tarre scoring should be a pin or match ending technique either the x-ankle or the gutwrench. For example, skip the takedown finish and go directly to the turn or pin.
9. Always stay in your competition stance, don't standing up and get out of stance...stance discipline. After each repetition get off the mat and into your stance
10. Diversify your moves by not always drilling with the partner. You need to practice your technique on people of various body types, strength, and conditions
11. At the end of practice grab a partner and drill your signature go-to technique 10 or more times consecutively. This is a great way to make sure that you are constantly improving your go-to move and always ending practice on a good note feeling confident regardless of how bad or good the practice went.
12. Make note of your learning in a journal for better retention.

### **Wrestling Intelligence/ Wrestling IQ:**

What can you do to learn to outsmarting the opponent's 1<sup>st</sup> line of defense which is their head, hands and their 2<sup>nd</sup> line of defense which is a little more difficult, their hips?

Can you manage a lead to finish the last 60-30 seconds and win the match?

Can you manage good mat position (mat awareness) during the match and especially in the zone?

What is your best takedown? Do you use it often and in different variations?

Do you know to step out instead of getting takedown with a throw or to bridge out of bounds instead of getting pinned?

Do you know not to stand up when on the edge of the match, to not give up a step out?

Have you read the rule book?

Do you have routines: morning weigh-ins, night before, initial warm-up, pre-match warm-up, after match cool down, what to do while waiting to wrestle etc.

\*Refer to the Match evaluation document for more examples.

<b>Wrestling Intelligence is also being capable to read and react to the following cues:</b>	
<b>Attacking Cues</b> <b>Attack because conditions are optimal</b>	<b>No attacking cues</b> <b>Do not attack because conditions are very bad</b>
Always attack a lead and heavy lead	Do not attack non-leading leg
Must be close within touching distance prior to attacking	Too far to attack, cannot touch the legs prior to attacking
Attack by feet moving 1 <sup>st</sup> followed by the shoulder making contact, wrapping hands around the knees and driving the opponent back, shoulders never past your knees back straight hips in	Reaching for the legs and not driving the opponent back, shoulder pass your knees extended
Opponent moves forward and reaches high	Backing up
Immediately after you just down blocked a leg attack	Hands low
Opponent has a high stance and hands are at waist level or higher and not moving back	Approaching carefully lower-level stance
Immediately from a dominate tie-up position	From a non-dominate tie up position
After an attack fake when opponent doesn't react to the fake	After a fake when opponent reacts with down block and or sprawl
After a snapdown when the opponent reacts by standing up and out of their stance	After a snapdown opponent did not come out of their stance
Strong confidence in the technique tested in practice against good competition with a high success rate	Weak confidence in the technique and a very low level of success in practice

When how you practice and how you compete is more important to you than winning, you will win more often. Trust the process and embrace the grind.

Gold-medal potential athletes exhibit high performance characteristics in all aspects of life, every minute of every day. Their nutrition, sleep, strength and conditioning (working out on your own or with or a personal trainer), sport specific training (practices), mental health (including having a growth mindset/ positive attitude), and well-being should consistently reflect high standards.