

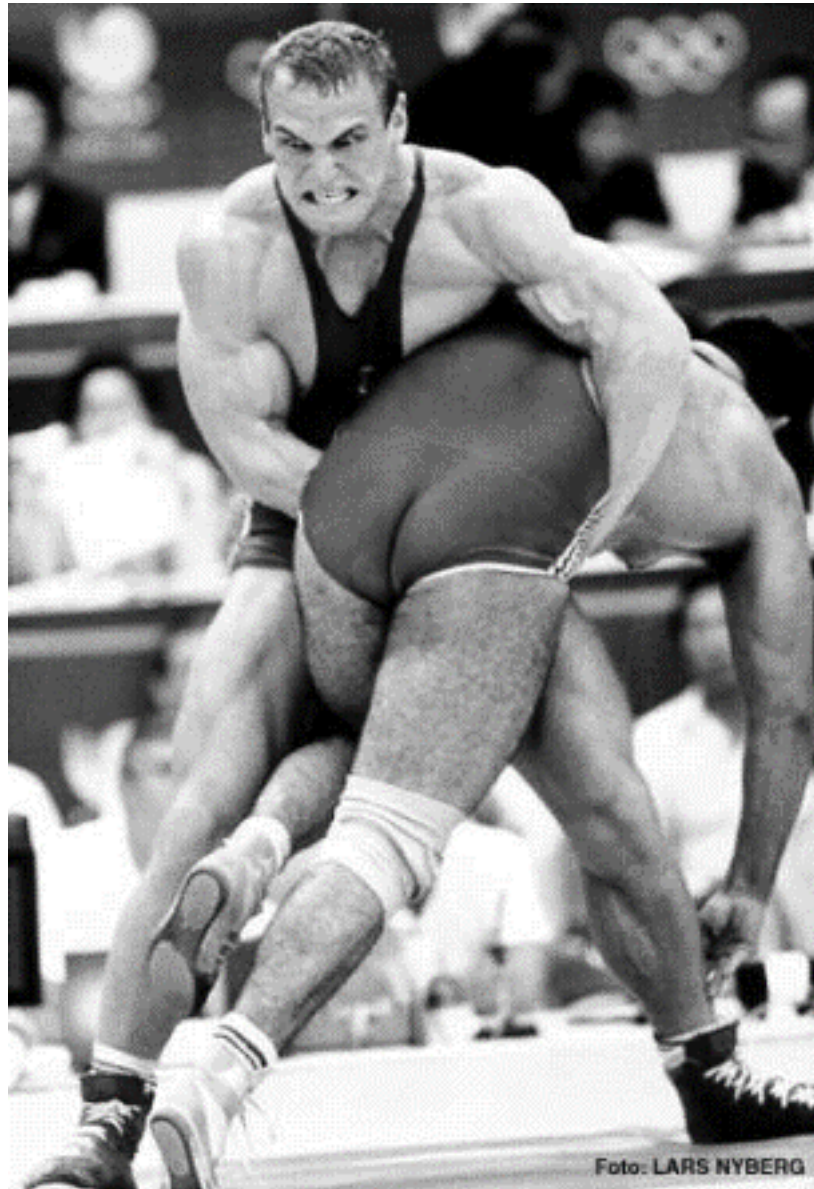
**BUILDING THE STRONGER  
WRESTLER**

by Gabe Salinas

# It's the 1st period of the finals...

And you can't wait. You've been training for this moment all season and you know it's your time. You walk up to your opponent, shake his hand, and start wrestling. You start out confident, but then it starts happening.

Every shot you take gets stuffed. Every time you grab his wrist he gets away and every time he grabs yours, you feel stuck. He's stronger. You try to push the thought out of your mind but it keeps coming back. Everything you try fails, and he wins the match.



Would you be prepared physically to wrestle Karelin?

What went wrong? You had the best wrestling coach and partners and you trained incredibly hard. Unfortunately though, at the highest level, almost everyone has that. You need to set yourself apart, and here is where [StrongerWrestler.com](http://StrongerWrestler.com) comes in.

At the highest levels of wrestling (and all sports) athletes are becoming stronger, faster, better conditioning, and more powerful. In order to reach the top of the podium, you need to be all of those things as well.

Over the course of my career I've learned a lot and worked with some of the best wrestlers in the country. I've had the opportunity to test them and see what makes them great. Through those experiences and countless hours of research I have come up with some of the most common mistakes I see wrestlers make when it comes to Strength and Conditioning work.

My goal with this information is to help make you a stronger, more powerful, and better conditioned wrestler than ever before.

Let's begin...

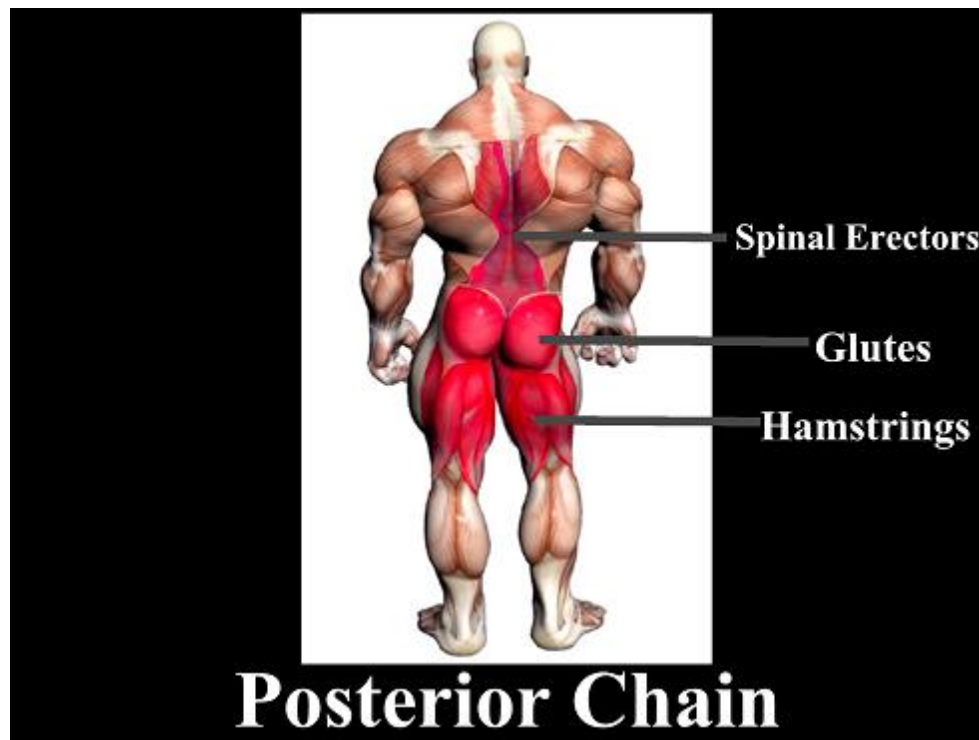
# 1. Train Like an Athlete

Far too often I see wrestlers getting caught up in how much they can bench press or curl. While those two exercises do have a (small) place in a program, they are often very overrated. As a wrestler, we must focus on what will make you a better wrestler. One of those things is the “seat of power”, otherwise known as your posterior chain (P.C.). To be successful, you not only want to have a strong P.C., but also a powerful one!



Training like an ATHLETE has helped out JB

The posterior chain includes the hamstrings, glutes, and spinal erectors. These muscles are incredibly important when it comes to shooting, resisting snap-downs, sprawling, and many other wrestling situations. Any wrestler with a strong and powerful posterior chain has a distinct advantage over his opponent.



The posterior chain

In addition to strong and powerful lower body (Horswill, 1989), studies have also shown great value in grip and back strength when comparing elite vs non-elite wrestlers (Garcia-Pallares, 2011). Another study testing Illinois high school wrestlers showed grip strength is incredibly important as well: Check it out here: <http://strongerwrestler.com/state-champion-grip/>.

**Fix:** For a strong Posterior Chain, focus on exercises like the Squat, Deadlift (and variations), RDL's, Glute Ham Raise's, Reverse Hyperextensions, Box Step-Ups, Bulgarian Split Squats, and Hip Thrusts. Once your strength increases, to create a powerful P.C. start adding in Broad Jumps, Squat and Box Jumps, Snatches, Explosive Medicine Ball Throws, and KettleBell Swings (make sure to "hinge" at the hips instead of squat down).

For Grip and Back Strength do Pullups (and variations), heavy rows (and variations), Rope Climbs, Grippers, Plate Pinches, and incorporate FatGripz whenever you can!

## 2. Listen to Your Body

There IS such a thing as overtraining! Wrestlers very well may be the hardest working athletes in the world of sports, but that is sometimes a hindrance to peak performance.

Working hard is a necessity, but it is possible to overdo it. There will be days in the weight or practice room where no matter how hard you try, your body cannot keep up with your mind. On days like that, back off, lift or drill lightly, stretch out, and hit it hard the next day!



Overtraining is no joke

**Fix:** I know of a high profile D1 coach who has been known to tell his athletes to go out and have fun in season to take a break and relax. When you have trained hard weeks on end, your body AND MIND needs a break to repair and recover. Take a day off when you have a break in between tournaments and give your body a chance to come back



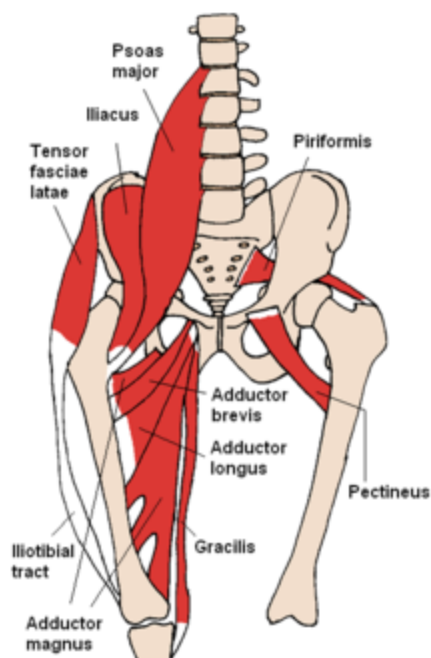
stronger. Generally, athletes can work **HARD** for 3-5 weeks before they must “deload” IF they are hydrating/resting/eating properly.

At the same time, don't take this as an excuse to not train hard! There is a difference between being overtrained and being lazy...make sure you're not lazy

# 3. Increase Your Mobility and Flexibility

Older wrestlers with hip, back, knee, and shoulder problems is unfortunately a very common occurrence. This can be partially attributed to runnings thousands of miles over a wrestling career (something I am very much against), but also to a lack of mobility and flexibility.

Tight and stiff hip flexors and glutes are common in wrestlers due to the forward leaning stance, and this often contributes to back pain. I have seen far too many new athletes come into my gym who think that back pain from wrestling is just a normal thing. It is not! Mobile and flexible hips go a long way in fixing that.



Notice the hip flexor muscles attach directly to the spine!

**Fix:** Incorporating hip mobility drills and stretching on a consistent basis will keep you from aches, pains, and injuries. Hip mobility and flexibility drills include the fire hydrant series, the scorpion, squat to stand, the couch stretch, and any glute stretch (I prefer the 90/90 stretch).

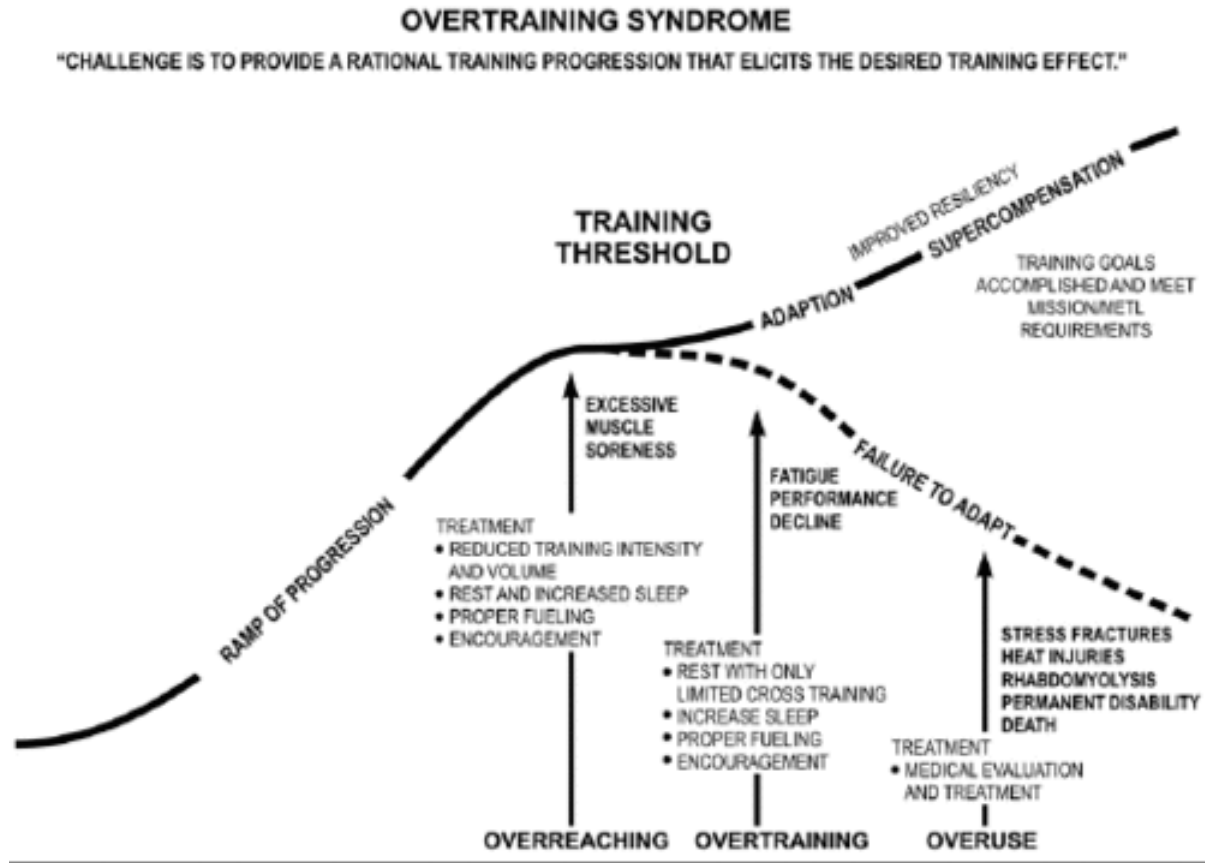
Additionally, by strengthening the posterior chain as in #1, you will also be lengthening the hip flexors. Also incorporate shoulder traction drills in your routine. Shoulder traction is performed using a Jump Stretch or EliteFTS band hooked up to a power rack or pullup bar. Grasp the band and move your shoulder around. The goal is to create space in the shoulder joint which will increase shoulder health. There is no “right” angle for your arm to be so just move it around while the band pulls on your shoulder and hold for a bit any angle that feels like a good stretch.

## 4. Peak for the “Big Stuff”

While training hard should always be the goal, as we learned in #2 there are times we should back off in order to grow, recover, and avoid overtraining. Principle #4 falls right in line with that.

As a wrestler, we tend to see the same opponent multiple times in a season. When training starts to ramp up, it is important not to “peak” too soon. Peaking is being at the height of your athletic potential-physically, mentally, and skillfully. Unfortunately, once there, that is not something you can hold on to for weeks on end. Because of that, it is very important we peak for the proper events.

While I am by no means advocating losing or not trying, it is important to back off training a bit for the “greater good”. It is far more important to win a state championship than it is to win a dual or district. For this reason, olympic athletes’ programs are written in anticipation of the Olympic games, just like NFL and NBA players programs are written to peak for the playoffs.



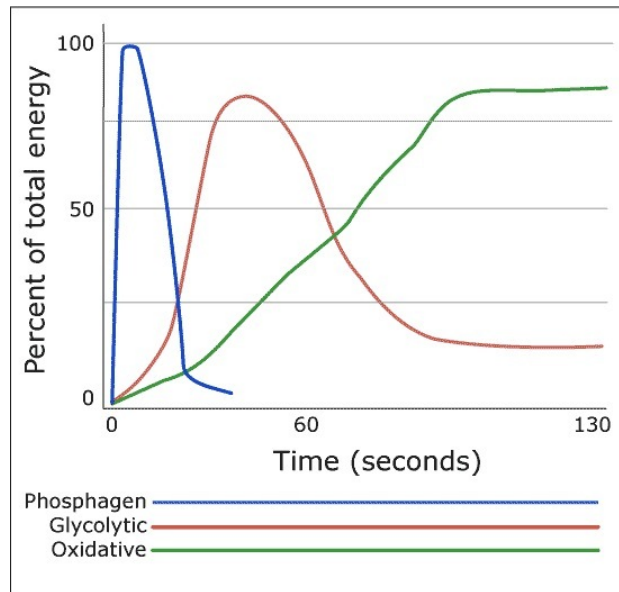
Don't work so hard you are overtrained when State comes around

**Fix:** If you feel fatigued, lethargic, lack of motivation, or small injuries appearing, back off on training slightly, eat, rest, and sleep! Be prepared for the big tournaments, don't peak for the wrong events.

# 5. Increase your Specific Work Capacity

The great Mel Siff defined work capacity as "the general ability of the body as a machine to produce work of different intensity and duration using the appropriate energy systems of the body". Energy systems are your bodies fueling response to certain types of exercise. For example, we fuel a 3 hour marathon run much differently than we fuel a 2 second blast double leg.

In order to be a successful wrestler who is explosive and powerful and STAYS explosive and powerful in the third period and beyond, we must increase our ANAEROBIC work capacity as wrestlers, NOT marathon runners. It truly baffles me when I hear about my athletes' coaches having them run miles and miles every day. Not only is this hard on the joints, but it is a completely worthless training method!



A double leg doesn't take 20 minutes.

**Fix:** Besides wrestling live and drilling hard in practice, what other things should we be doing to increase our specific work capacity? A time-motion analysis found that “Olympic (62 kg) wrestlers performed a mean of 16 (3.0-19.5) high intensity action-reaction sequences. Each attack sequence lasts approximately 3.1 seconds (1-8 seconds) in duration, with a mean recovery period of 23.6 seconds (Cipriano, 1993).

What that means is we should shoot for HIGH intensity training that mimics a 3:23 ratio. While the ratio doesn't have to be exact, it should be close. For example: Sprinting for 8 seconds, and resting for about 60 seconds.

I personally love sprinting and prowler intervals for increases in lower body anaerobic performance. One recent study showed that only 4 short weeks of 6-35m sprints with 10 seconds rest in between each sprint performed 2 times weekly improved “both aerobic and anaerobic performances in trained wrestlers” (Farzad, 2011). Additionally, I like to have my athletes perform 6-8 heavy 10 yd prowler pushes

with 20 second rest in between. I find both of these protocols fall into the time-motion analysis and positively affect wrestling performance and match recovery. For the Upper Body I incorporate things like rope climbs, rope slams, pullups, and medicine ball throws using similar interval ratios as stated above for the lower body.

# Never Stop Improving

While these are certainly not the **ONLY** things you should be doing in your quest to be a **STRONGER WRESTLER**, it is absolutely a start. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask on the Contact Form on [StrongerWrestler.com](http://StrongerWrestler.com). Thanks for reading!