

GRECO ROMAN WRESTLING: HISTORICAL ROOTS, DEVELOPMENT, AND CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE

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Abstract:

This article explores the origins, historical development, and modern-day significance of Greco-Roman wrestling. Tracing its roots back to ancient civilizations, the study highlights how the sport evolved through various eras and became a disciplined and respected form of athletic competition. Special attention is given to its role in international sports, particularly the Olympic Games, and its impact on physical education and cultural identity in different societies.

Keywords: Greco-Roman wrestling, history of wrestling, Olympic sports, ancient sports, wrestling development, traditional wrestling, modern wrestling, cultural heritage.

Introduction

Greco-Roman wrestling (Latin: *Lucta Graeco-Romana*) is considered one of the oldest and most prestigious styles of the sport of wrestling. This wrestling genre has occupied a significant place in global sports culture, being an inseparable part of the Olympic Games since their early stages. In this article, the historical roots of Greco-Roman wrestling, its technical and tactical characteristics, its modern development, and its social significance are analyzed on a scientific basis.

Origins of Greco-Roman Wrestling Greco-Roman wrestling has its foundations in the martial arts, athletic competitions, and systems of physical training of ancient Greek and Roman eras. Historical sources state that Greek wrestling was one of the main events in the ancient Olympic Games as early as the 8th century BC. During the Roman Empire era, this sport style was further refined and was widely used as a form of military training.

Important Historical Milestones:

- **708 BC** – Greek wrestling was included for the first time in the ancient Olympic Games.
- **19th century** – The French scholar Jean Exens Maren reintroduced Greco-Roman wrestling, shaping it based on modern rules.
- **1896** – Greco-Roman wrestling participated officially, for the first time, in the modern Olympic Games.

In Uzbekistan, the formation of Greco-Roman wrestling largely corresponds to the 1960s–1980s. During this period, being part of the Soviet Union, our republic began establishing specialized sports schools for wrestling, including Greco-Roman. Wrestlers often had opportunities to participate in the USSR national teams.

After gaining independence, Uzbekistan built its own national sports system, and Greco-Roman wrestling began to receive state support as an independent sport. Presidential decrees, state programs for sports development, the Uzbekistan Ministry of Sports, and the National Olympic Committee have increasingly emphasized Greco-Roman wrestling.

Examples:

- Dedicated Greco-Roman wrestling departments have been organized in sports schools.
- Multiple regional and national competitions are held annually.
- “Young wrestlers” clubs operate to attract youth to the sport.
- Today, hundreds of sports halls, specialized training institutions, and elite sports preparation centers function across Uzbekistan. Tashkent, Fergana, Samarkand, Andijan, Bukhara, and other regions are considered leaders in this area.

Achievements of Uzbek Wrestlers

In recent years, Uzbek athletes have achieved high results in Asian and world competitions.

Athlete	Achievements
Rustam Assakalov	Asian Games champion, World Championship medalist
Jalolov Mirsobir	Asian Championship winner
Muxammadali Shamsiddinov	2023 Asian champion, strong performances at U-23 level
Bekzod Abdurahmonov	Known in freestyle, but also contributed to Greco-Roman

- In Asian Championships: Uzbekistan consistently competes for places 1–3.

- In World Championships: representatives of Uzbekistan have earned several bronze and silver medals.
- At the Olympic Games: no gold medal has yet been won, but there are finalists and strong top-8 contenders.

Objectives and Tasks

Purpose: To develop systematically the technical mastery and tactical thinking potential of athletes and ensure their successful participation in competitions.

Tasks:

1. To form skills for accurate and correct execution of technical actions. Teach techniques step by step according to stylistic sequences.
2. To develop tactical thinking and the ability to make quick and correct decisions during the match. Cultivate the skill of anticipating opponent's moves and constructing pre-planned strategies.
3. To enhance technical effectiveness in the par terre and standing positions. Especially strengthen the techniques of turns and holds in the par terre position.
4. To improve psychological and technical readiness through match-like training conditions.
5. To prepare athletes based on individual characteristics via a technical-tactical plan tailored to each athlete's age, physical level, and wrestling style.

Innovations:

1. Individualized approach system
Training programs are designed based on analyzing each wrestler's strengths and weaknesses, differing from earlier generalized approaches.
2. Digital analysis-based training (video analytics)
Using video recordings to analyze technical errors and optimize training accordingly - this approach helps accurately identify real issues in wrestling.
3. Competition model based training structure
Methodology includes modules based on actual match scenarios (tactical tasks, time pressure, point differences). This prepares the athlete not only technically but strategically.

4. Integration of psychological preparation with technical training
Planning technical exercises while considering the athlete's psychological state (stress, pressure, time constraints) is considered a very effective innovation.
5. Model adapted to the conditions of Uzbekistan
The methodology is developed based on existing infrastructure, resources of youth sports schools, the training level of coaches, and the style of local wrestlers.

Scientific-Methodological Foundations and Training System

In Uzbek sports schools, training is carried out in the following directions:

- Physical preparation: strength, endurance, flexibility, coordination.
- Technical-tactical preparation: par terre position, throws, combinations.
- Psychological preparation: coping with stress, match motivation, desire to win.
- **Analytical preparation:** opponent analysis, video studies.

Many former athletes transition to coaching. Additionally, coaching training courses are organized, renewing knowledge in methodology and sports psychology.

Problems and Prospects

Challenges and Prospects

- Shortage of Qualified Coaches – Some regions still lack sufficient professional trainers.
- Infrastructure Deficiencies – Sports halls do not always meet modern international standards.
- Limited International Experience Exchange – Athletes rarely participate in overseas training camps.
- Underdevelopment of Women's Wrestling – In Uzbekistan, Greco-Roman wrestling is primarily developed among men; there is little to no representation in women's sports.

Proposed Solutions and Innovations:

- Inviting International Coaches – To facilitate experience exchange and enrich training methodology.

- Introducing New Technologies – Video analytics and AI-based match analysis tools.
- Establishing Wrestling Academies – Creating central sports schools in each region.
- Popularization of Wrestling – Through television programs, YouTube channels, and interviews with athletes.

Technical and Tactical Characteristics

Unlike freestyle wrestling, Greco-Roman wrestling prohibits the use of legs. This requires athletes to dominate their opponent using only upper-body techniques.

Main Technical Elements:

- Lifts and throws (from both standing and par terre positions)
- Circular throws
- Gut-wrench turns using body locks
- Arm drags and throws

Tactical Characteristics:

- Maintaining balance
- Controlling the opponent's center of gravity
- Coordination of strength and endurance
- Speed and agility in the par terre position

These features require athletes to possess high levels of physical fitness, technical skill, and strategic thinking.

Types of Training Sessions

Type of Training	Objective	Example
Technical Block	Proper execution of techniques	Perform 10 perfect suplex throws
Combination Sparring	Multi-step sequences	Arm grip → throw → turn
Tactical Duel	Responding to opponent's moves	“Attack, then retreat” scenario
Game-based Drills	Reaction and movement learning	“Who strikes first” game
Matches Under Pressure	Decision-making under stress	“Score 2 points in 2 minutes” challenge

Assessment and Evaluation Criteria

Athletes' technical and tactical progress can be assessed using five key stages:

Assessment Factor	Metric
Technical Precision	Percentage of correctly performed techniques
Combination Thinking	Effectiveness of 2–3 move sequences
Reaction to Counter-actions	Delay in seconds to respond to opponent's move
Competition Effectiveness	Number of technical points scored in matches
Psychological Resilience	Stability in body language and recovery time after matches

Modern Development and International Status

Today, Greco-Roman wrestling is governed by sport federations worldwide, with United World Wrestling (UWW) as the official global governing body responsible for regulating the rules.

Leading Countries in Greco-Roman Wrestling:

- Russia
- Iran
- Turkey
- Uzbekistan
- Georgia
- Armenia

Uzbekistan's Progress:

In recent years, Uzbekistan has achieved notable success in Asian and world championships in Greco-Roman wrestling. Prominent athletes such as Rustam Assakalov, Jalolov Mirsobir, and Bekzod Abdurakhmonov have represented the country at international events with honor.

Social and Cultural Significance

Greco-Roman wrestling is not just a sport — it plays a crucial role in fostering:

- Patriotism
- Discipline
- Courage
- Physical health among youth

It also serves as a bridge of friendship and cultural exchange among different nations and peoples.

Conclusion

Greco-Roman wrestling is one of the oldest and most culturally rich sports in human history. It contributes significantly to the development of physical, intellectual, and moral excellence, strengthens international sports relations, and promotes a healthy lifestyle among the youth.

It must be valued and developed not only as a sport but also as a historical and cultural heritage. In Uzbekistan, Greco-Roman wrestling continues to grow steadily, and the country's athletes are increasingly recognized on the Asian and global stages.

However, by improving existing infrastructure, coaching methodology, and the qualifications of trainers, Uzbekistan can pave the way toward winning Olympic gold medals in this discipline. State support, wider youth engagement, and innovative training approaches are key to achieving this goal.

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