

# Small decisions can make huge difference

## **The Road Not Taken**

*TWO roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;  
Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,  
And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

- Robert Frost

## **By Mike Clayton, National Coaches Education Manager**

Have you ever wondered how a decision you have made in your life has impacted the events of the life you and others live today? As I was making my decision on where to wrestle in college, I spent many hours staring at the famous Robert Frost poem, *The Road Not Taken*.

One of my toughest life decisions was whether to accept a nomination to the US Naval Academy for an amazing education, a guaranteed career after college and an opportunity to wrestle on a solid top-20 NCAA Division I team or to take a chance at going to the University of Iowa to test my mettle each day against the best wrestlers in the nation in the room that Dan Gable built.

Recently, I had the opportunity to return to my hometown of Brooklyn, Iowa, to help work our annual Session 6 Wrestling Camp at BGM High School. It has been an annual event for almost 20 years and in the past few years the team dual and training camp format has helped the camp grow to over 250 campers from six states.

After camp one night we went over to my junior high coach's house for a bite to eat. Coach Corky Stuart, the Iowa Junior High Coach of the Year in 2002, was the varsity coach who started our high school program in the mid-1970's.

Corky started wrestling in 1959 for Chariton Junior High, under the direction of Coach Bob Melgrum (who later went on to coach at powerhouse Cedar Rapids Prairie High School). In those years, the junior high team would wrestle just two meets per year. Corky mentioned that while he enjoyed the sport, he started getting impatient with just practicing all the

time and wrestling just a few opponents.

At the end of his 7th grade year, Corky decided to quit the team.

Luckily, one of his teammates, Dave Threlkelb, said that their coach would like him to come back out. The coach told Corky that he saw talent in the young 95-pounder and felt he could be an impact wrestler on the team. Not only did Corky come back out, but he became a standout high school wrestler and wrestled all four years at Cornell College for another Iowa Hall of Fame Coach, Barron Bremner.

Had it not been for his teammate and coach asking him to come back to wrestling, Corky would have been among the over 70 percent of youth athletes that quit sports by age 13 because it is no longer fun.

The decision of his teammate and coach to get Corky back on the team allowed him to not only have a successful career in his own right, but he started the program in my hometown that has afforded me an opportunity to reach my goals through wrestling.

The actions of these men have also allowed me the opportunity to reach out to help others through our sport.

"The impact of the amazing coaches in my life was really the key in keeping me active in the sport," said Corky.

Have you asked anyone to come back out to be a part of your team lately?

My decision after high school was to attend the Naval Academy. I had a strong wrestling career and the reputation of The Academy for building people of character did not disappoint.

Most of my closest friends in life are friends I went through Annapolis and served with in the military.

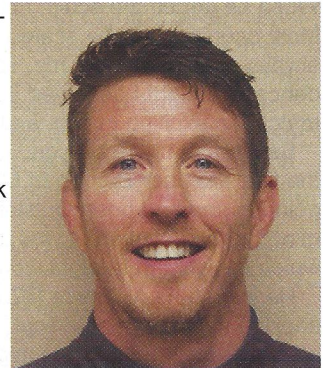
We grew from the system and leaned on each other, somehow making it through.

The Frost poem concludes this way:

*"...I shall be telling this with a sigh, somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -- I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference."*

My biggest takeaway, from the decisions I have made in life, is that regardless of the road you choose or the road you are dealt, do as Iowa coach Tom Brands said at my high school's camp this summer.

"Whatever you do today...be the best in the World at that thing," Brands said. "If you can do that in everything you do, you will be a success."



Clayton