



Four Days to Glory: Wrestling with the Soul of the American Heartland

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Somewhere beyond the circle of money, glitz, drugs and controversy that characterizes professional sports in America, there exists the remnants of the ideal. In Iowa, that ideal survives in the form of high school wrestling, a way of transforming the local virtues—modesty, privation, hard work—into sporting glory. To be a wrestling champion in Iowa is to achieve greatness—individual glory where the only back to pat is your own.

For Jay Borschel and Dan LeClere, though, the stakes have been raised. Already three-time state champions in differing weight classes, each boy has a chance in his senior year of high school to do something historic—to become a "four-timer," joining the most elite group in the sport and essentially ensuring his status as an Iowa wrestling deity. For Jay, a ferocious competitor who feeds off criticism and doubt, a victory would mean vindication over the great mass of skeptics waiting for him to fail. Dan, the kid from a farm near the tiny town of Coggon (population 710), carries other burdens. For his community, for the hard-driving coach who doubles as his father, and for his own triumph over his personal demons, another title is the only acceptable outcome.

As the two boys approach the finals in a series of increasingly tense and hard-fought matches, Jay and Dan reveal the forces that drive young men through a grueling routine of early-morning and late-night workouts, social isolation, and starvation diets—and the rewards of the wrestling life. But in the finals, a victory is the only answer; blow that chance at a fourth title, before the fanatical crowds at the giant state tournament in Des Moines, and you will be little noted nor long remembered.

Four Days to Glory is the story of America as told through its small towns and their connection to sport, the way it was once routinely perceived—a way of mattering to the folks next door.

Four Days to Glory: Wrestling with the Soul of the American Heartland Details

Date : Published January 23rd 2007 by Harper

ISBN : 9780060823184

Author : Mark Kreidler

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Sports and Games, Sports, Nonfiction



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Heartland Mark Kreidler

From Reader Review Four Days to Glory: Wrestling with the Soul of the American Heartland for online ebook

Brendan Beattie says

It is a lousy, wonderful life.

a great review of the sport from an outsider. as an Iowa born wrestler and coach's son... this hits square at home. I lost in Sectional my Senior year, at 171, after getting hit by the same bronchitis train. it is crushing and you never let it go.

Chuck Alexander says

If you ever wrestled this is a must read

Tom Whitaker says

Once a wrestler, always a wrestler.

Kreidler gives a very good insight to the story of two young men attempting to become legends in Iowa wrestling history. Besides their personal journey's and their families, Kreidler also lets the reader learn more about a state whose identity is wrapped up in a sport that at the most last for six minutes.

It's hard for me to be totally objective about a topic I am so passionate about, but if it was poorly written or transparent, I surely would have put the book away instead of going for the pin!

Brandon Valet says

I liked this book a lot. I really liked the topic because since I'm a wrestler I can relate to almost everything in the book. I also liked how the author described how Dan and Jay felt and reacted to things throughout their senior years. And how they felt when the days of the state tournament arrived.

Another thing I liked was that the book was set in Iowa. Jay is from Linn-Mar, which is in Marion. Dan is from North Linn, which is in Coggon. Both places are within an hour and a half from here, which is cool. One thing I didn't like was that it was a little hard to follow at the beginning, because it "moved" around a lot, but after I got into it, it was good. Overall this is a very good book.

Chasec says

This was an amazing book. I don't even like wrestling, and this book was interesting. This book was special

because it wasn't viewed as the characters. It was viewed by an article writer that then decided to write this book. If you like sports books, or good stories i recommend this book to you.

Nathan Willard says

Kreidler tells the story of Jay Borschel and Dan LeClere, two wrestlers on the verge of becoming 4-time Iowa state wrestling champions. I actually wrestled with another 4-timer (Jeff McGinness, later also a Hawkeye), and so a lot of the details of the wrestling room, matches, and mindset that Kreidler tries to get across were instantly familiar to me. Dan LeClere just working on a takedown until he thinks it's perfect, then pinning his opponent, both Jay and Dan putting themselves in a different spot, mentally, than the rest of the team, and the need to find better quality sparring partners all the time all reminded me of my freshman year. Kreidler's interactions with their families were the best part of the book, for me. I've never been someone who could easily empathize with the low-level insanity required to do anything at the level these guys do it, much less something that can destroy your body like wrestling can (cauliflower ear and growth stunted from cutting weight). I was a terrible wrestler, and my attitude sort of showed why--I always wore a headgear and refused to cut weight.

I also really liked reading the book this year, a year after all the people followed in the book had finished their college career or established themselves in college (one freshman on borschel's team is now a sophomore at Iowa and the defending national champion). It gave me a longer narrative arc to work with, and that, I think, made the book more powerful.

Kreidler does get some details wrong, and that's kind of annoying to me. If he'd shown those pages of his proofs to anyone who lived in Iowa, they would have immediately fixed them, so it was just careless and distracting for me (The thing that is particularly impressive about Dan Gable's run in the Munich Olympics was not that he won all his matches; Olympic Champions have to do that. It's that no one scored a point on him. There were a few other things like that, but you would need to be me to be bothered by them).

Overall, a great book on the mentality of Iowa youth wrestling.

Sarah says

First, I have to admit that I might be a little too randomly related to events in this book to be a fair and unbiased reviewer.

The book chronicles the attempt of two high school wrestlers to become the 15th and 16th four time Iowa State Champions during the winter of 2005. My brother's team wrestled in several tournaments with Dan LeClere's North Linn Lynx that year. It was so weird seeing one of my brother's teammates mentioned when he faced Dan, and I was actually at the Tournament covered in the chapter "Saturday in Wyoming."

So it was glaringly obvious that Kreidler (currently living in Sacramento) is not an Iowan (at one point he calls the University of Iowa, "Iowa University"), but it was also equally clear that he knew his wrestling. Not only did he document the senior wrestling seasons of Dan Le Clere and Jay Borschel, but he filled in the important details around that season needed to accurately capture what I affectionately refer to as "the cult of wrestling".

Anyone who's spent much time around wrestling and caught wrestling fever will love this book. Not only does he cover the drive and desire of Dan and Jay in their respective wrestling rooms and the ridiculous physical and mental demands of the sport, but he also covers at length the kiddie programs that started Jay and Dan down the road to wrestling glory, their dads' dedication to the sport, the legend of Dan Gable that motivated countless Iowa wrestlers (including Dan and Jay) to strive for greatness (and to wrestle collegiately for the University of Iowa). If you love wrestling, even if you don't know a lot about the sport, you will absolutely love this book. Kreidler captures the magic of this demanding sport and the state that has claimed it for its own.

Angie says

Honestly, this is a pretty good story. I don't regret reading this.

MATT ABHOLD says

"Four Days to Glory", written by Mark Kreidler, is the true story about two small town kids from Iowa who have the chance to become gods in the wrestling world. Dan LeClere and Jay Borschel are some of the top high school wrestlers in Iowa history, and they want to achieve what everyone says is impossible.

In this book, the author goes deeper into the lives of two high school wrestlers, with a chance to win the State Championship all four years of high school. Only thirteen people in Iowa have done it since 1962. The two boys he writes about are more focused on wrestling the last matches of their high school careers than anything else, and they will do anything to win it. LeClere, wrestling at 141 pounds as a senior, shows a lot of determination to prove to everyone that he can do it. Borschel, wrestling at 171 pounds as a senior, has to prove to all of the doubters around the country that he can win four times, gaining 68 pounds throughout high school. They both show the drive to win and have different ways of doing it. The author of this book explains all sides of wrestling, and how much work goes into it. He also talks about some of the other wrestlers on Jay or Dan's teams, as well as their families.

Jay Borschel out of Linn-Mar High School of Iowa; three time state champion at 103, 125, and 152, will be going for a state championship at 171 pounds, which is the biggest weight gain of a four time champion in history. Jay thrives on doubters, and likes to prove them wrong. He uses that fuel to overcome the obstacles in the way. Other than people knowing he is a good wrestler, he isn't treated much differently than other kids. He figures that if he wins a fourth state title, it won't be a huge deal. The author also talks about the family support, and that it's a huge part of the sport. Jay's father, Jim, was Jay's biggest supporter and made sure he could do everything so that Jay could succeed.

Dan LeClere out of North Linn High School is also a three time state champion at 119, 130, and 140, attempting to capture another title at 140 pounds. Dan shows people that he can come through the doubt and go down in history. Dan's father, Doug, is Dan's biggest mentor and pushed him to be the best he could be by coaching him. If it weren't for his family's support, Dan wouldn't be where he is now. He knows that if he is good at anything, it is wrestling, and that's what he wanted to be known for. His dreams are to wrestle in college, whether it be in Iowa or not, and become a champion there also.

Midway through the book, the author talks about where the boys hope to go to college. They would both like to stay in Iowa because of the rich history and a very good wrestling team, but the coach wasn't very welcoming. They had met with a few other coaches, and they both separately decided to attend Virginia Tech, because they could tell the coach, Tom Brands, was going to help them with whatever they needed.

By the end of the book, it was kind of obvious that the two were going to win a fourth title, and they both did. Jay had gotten sick with bronchitis about a week before the tournament, and was having a really tough time against some of his opponents, but pushed through and won. Dan wasn't worried about the actual winning of the tournament. He wanted to dominate every opponent he faced, which he did.

After their freshman year of college at Virginia Tech, which they had redshirted, the two followed their coach back to Iowa, giving up their second year of college wrestling. They did this because they believed in their coach, and figured that going with him would be their best choice. Jay went on to become an All American and an NCAA champion for Iowa. Dan had one of the best GPA's along with a sport that the school had seen. They were both members of three time NCAA and Big Ten championship teams.

The setting interacts this book in the way that they are both small town kids, but make themselves a state-wide name. It is set somewhat recently (2004-2005), and the two still interact in wrestling. This tells us that even though there are many differences outside of wrestling, the sport stays the same, and if you love it enough, you'll be in it for life.

I encourage anyone who is interested in the sport of wrestling to read this, or ages 15 and up. Some of the topics in the book are hard for younger people to understand and that is why I recommend a higher age group. I would mainly think that boys would be more interested in this book, but I suppose girls may enjoy it too.

DocHolidavid says

Four Days to Glory: Wrestling with the Soul of the American Heartland

I had a misguided assumption that this book was fiction. Well it's not, and it's about a real as books get.

Four Days to Glory provides a foundation for the appreciation of wrestling to the uninitiated, provided, they're not guided by common misconceptions. First of all WWE is NOT wrestling. Next, wrestling is difficult to understand, and understanding can only be accomplished through love – not of the sport but of another individual. Once interest is piqued through the love of another human, the haunting inhumanity compels the spectator like watching your child in a formula one car on a rain slick fast track and equally emotionally and physically draining. Once hooked, an obsession evolves as love of the sport replaces ignorance and the need for the involvement of a loved one.

Finally, one must appreciate that eventually every wrestler must admit the one he faces is better than that day. No excuses. No teammates to blame. Such obvious truths makes men out of boys in this sport above any other. After wrestling, life is a cake walk. Boot camp? Mere child's play.

The narrative slowly develops a tone of a convert appreciating the particularly unique ruddy dynamic of American folkstyle wrestling. The authenticity of the empathy for the the rural Iowa families of Jay Borschel, Dan LeClere and their teammates bleeds through the page and blends with the ink. By chapter

three you're hooked, and obviously Kreidler, the author, is no sports page hack.

More important than being about wrestling, it's about wrestlers – not just the winners but those willing to give their last ounce of will to be one. It's about the drive, desire, insanity and valor of wrestling. Kreidler, in this brilliant tale, pretty much covers the entirety of the sport from "Little Guys" to collegiate championships – even mentioning dusty icons like Frank Gotch, Dan Gable, Tom Brands and Cael Sanderson.

More than the immoderate drive and discipline, what sets wrestling apart from grappler to score keeper is that they thrive on thanklessness. The training rooms are small, hot and muggy, and no one participates for popularity. Spectators are slim to none, and girls typically prefer the captains of team sports. Unlike socially correct team athletes, wrestlers aren't hung-up on prettiness. Many wrestling moves are as unsightly as road kill. Gushing noses are common attire. All eventually yield to tears and puking in the waste can. Ringworm and impetigo are more common than jock itch. Twisted ears are badges of honor. Eventually an angry bubble rises to the surface and pops in the public eye – raw, ugly and humiliating to wrestler, family and spectators. It's all forgotten in an instant as everyone is glued to the next match and the wrestler ingests just enough food and water to get him through the next fall without pushing the scales above his weight class while winning burns like a hot iron on an open wound.

I recommend this book which I feel is a modern sports classic.

Meghan says

I checked this out for John, since it's about wrestling and Iowa, two of his interests. I didn't have many other books to read at the time, since I ended up carrying it around with me for a few weeks. It follows two high school wrestlers in Iowa and paints a picture of the pressures they face as they attempt to become four-time state champions in wrestling. It's interesting because wrestling is not a prestigious sport anymore, and it's definitely not where the money is, but there is still a culture that is totally dedicated to it - the author makes claim that Iowa is the center of the high-school wrestling world.

Max says

pretty good kinda broing

Lucas Barnum says

I really like this book because I wrestle i can't really relate much with the character in this book because there all great wrestlers four and three time state champions. It such a great story especially since its real life. I think the most amazing story is jay borschel he has gone up so many weight classes.

Blaine Baumgartner says

I feel like it was a good book because I can relate to most of the book

Alexis G says

This book is great if you've participated In wrestling or sports they detail that they have in the story I've experience and many athletes have they way he creates the story it's great. I definitely would recommend this
