

# American Folkstyle Wrestling



Photo by Larry Slater

Folkstyle has a rich heritage dating back to the founding days of the United States and has touched every part of American life. Many US Presidents were Folkstyle wrestlers, including Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, and the speaker of the American House of Representatives, Mr. Denny Hastert, who was a distinguished Folkstyle coach. Several other fields were marked by famous wrestlers, such as: the sciences with Nobel Prize winner Norman Borlaug; the commerce and finance with business luminaries Stephen Friedman and Henry Kravis; the arts with famous author John Irving who wrestled and had wrestling play a prominent role in many of his novels. FILA Bureau member Stan Dziedzic was a national collegiate folkstyle champion before becoming a World Champion and Olympic medallist.



Folkstyle wrestling is the fifth most popular sport in American high schools and the most commonly practiced style of wrestling in the United States. The pinnacle of the sport, the national university tournament, is broadcast on live television to millions of viewers and attracts a "sell out" crowd of 17,000 spectators every year.

USA Wrestling is the largest, non-scholastic sponsor of Folkstyle competitions in the United States. Every year, USA Wrestling affiliated organizations sponsor over 2000 local, state, regional, and national competitions. The main folkstyle wrestling season runs from mid-November until March. Within each state, clubs compete in dual meets, multi-team events, and open tournaments. Each state also typically holds a state championship, which is preceded by regional qualifying events. One of the major events is the USA Wrestling National Folkstyle Championship held annually in April on 25 mats. In 2011, the event attracted 2400 athletes from all age groups.



Folkstyle matches are comprised of three periods. The first period is always contested in the neutral position, and, unless ended by fall, technical fall or disqualification, each wrestler is given the opportunity to choose the starting position in the second and third periods. Folkstyle rules provide for no rest between periods and delays between periods may be penalized by the mat referee. Mat wrestling (*par terre*) is an important component and, in addition to points for exposing and holding an opponent's back to the mat, points are awarded for escaping an opponent's control or gaining control from him/her. In Folkstyle wrestling, the defensive wrestler must wrestle from the bottom position and the offensive wrestler must work aggressively to earn near fall points (*exposure*) or a fall. Failure to wrestle aggressively results in stalling penalties (*passivity*) from the mat referee, which can lead to disqualification. Tied matches are settled first with a "sudden victory" period (i.e., first wrestler to score from the neutral position wins) and then with mat wrestling where the wrestlers alternate the starting position.