



Mexico

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I had the opportunity to serve as the team physician for the United States Greco Roman, women's Freestyle and men's Freestyle teams in Mexico City for the Pan American Championships. All in all it was a successful tournament as the men's teams took first place, the women second place and nobody from the US had to injury default.

I've been to Mexico on a handful of occasions for a variety of mission trips, tourist trips and now for a sporting event and each time I've seen a different flavor to the country. Some things, however, seem to never change; the slower pace of life, the frijoles and tortillas, the friendly and happy people, the crazy roads with ill-defined lanes, driving like it's a video game, differences approaches to sanitation, bright colors, diffuse and artistic graffiti, open air markets, street vendors, and a large police presence that doesn't necessarily make you feel more safe. My tourist time was limited on this particular trip but I always enjoy experiencing as much of the Mexican culture as possible. I was able to dust off my Spanish and serve a dual purpose as an interpreter.

It was a real privilege to work with the elite level wrestlers. It's an intense world that these guys live in and their focus has to be razor sharp to compete at this highest level. They like to goof around but when it's time to practice or compete, it's all business and focus. For example, if you watch Burroughs up close before a match, you couldn't tell if he was preparing to wrestle for a gold medal or going up against a kid no one has heard of.

At this level, most of the wrestlers are dealing with or have dealt with injuries along the way. Fortunately, their peak physical condition and strong core muscles allow them to overcome most injuries or at least not see limitations from them. Thankfully, most injuries that I evaluated for the US teams were more chronic in nature and did not limit their ability to compete.

I was happy to be treating mostly wrestlers from other countries (sorry Canada). The athletic trainer, Randy Boswell, and I spent a fair amount of time examining, and diagnosing injuries for these athletes. We were happy to share supplies that some of the countries had limited access to. There is a little different approach to medical care in some Latin American countries. Similar to what you might see in the soccer world cup, if there's an injury, the stretcher comes out almost immediately. I saw one heavy weight get carried off the mat on a stretcher because he was out of breath after the match. I can't imagine the grief that one of our wrestlers would get from his coaches and teammates if he were taken off the mat on a stretcher without an actual injury.

The wrestling was phenomenal to see up close. I have a little bias toward the MN guys and it was especially great seeing Bisek and Sanders beat tough Cuban wrestlers to pick up hard fought gold medals. Victoria Anthony was explosive in each of her matches on the way to picking up a gold. Watching matside as Burroughs blew through the formidable Cuban on a double leg that launched him all the way across the mat to his back reminded me of watching Lebron taking it to the hole to throw one down- they both make it look as if their opponents are standing around helpless.

One highlight of my trip was sharing stories and pontificating with Dr. Bernie Feldman, who was serving as the FILA doctor overseeing the tournament. He would claim, "I'm a legend in my own mind," but his passion and dedication to the sport of wrestling over so many years truly does make him legendary. He's a walking wrestling historian and has seen it all.

I'm looking forward to working with the USA wrestling teams locally and on future international trips. This was an awesome experience and it is always a privilege to work with these elite athletes.