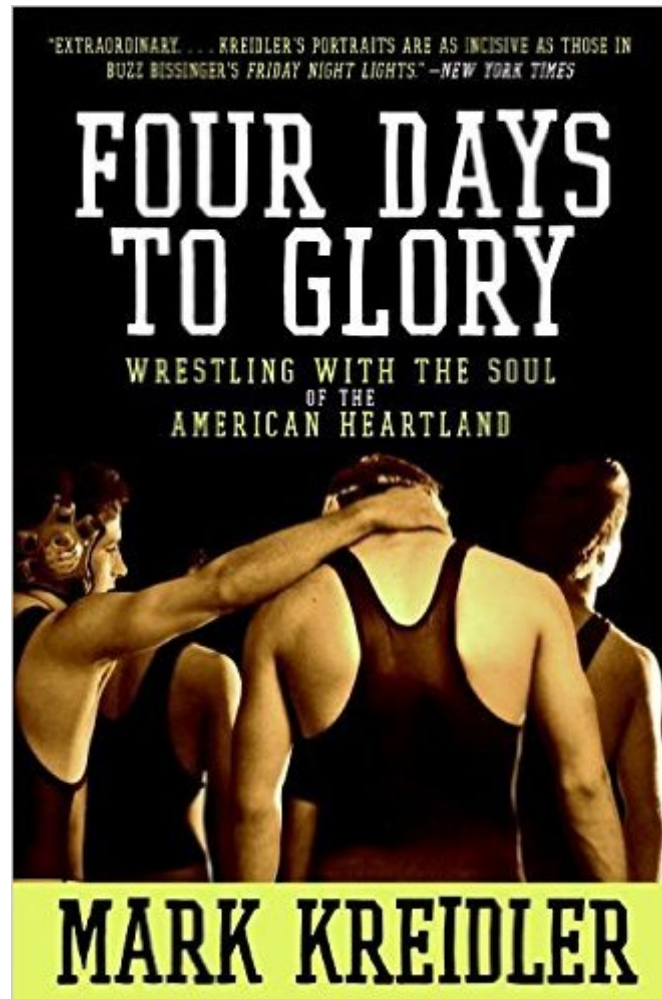


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# Four Days To Glory: Wrestling With The Soul Of The American Heartland



## Synopsis

Somewhere beyond the circle of money, glitz, drugs, and controversy that characterizes professional sports in America, remnants of an ideal exist. In Iowa, that ideal survives in the form of high school wrestling. Each a three-time state champion, Jay Borschel and Dan LeClere have a chance in their senior year to join the sport's most elite group: the "four-timers," wrestlers who win four consecutive state titles. 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. For Dan, who carries on his back the burdens of his tiny farming community, the dreams of his hard-driving coach and father, and his own personal demons, another title is the only acceptable outcome. *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: as a means of mattering to the folks next door.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Mark Kreidler is a true wordsmith, as he clearly demonstrates in "Four Days to Glory." A remarkable tale, he vividly brings to life the trials and tribulations of two high school wrestlers in wrestling-mad Iowa and their quest to win their fourth state championships. Wrestling in Iowa is much like football in Texas, and "Four Days to Glory" should reach the same heights as "Friday Night Lights."

I purchased *Four Days to Glory* the moment it hit the book stores. I was one of the thousands of people in "the barn" when both wrestlers made it to their final matches. For them it was the culmination of their high school careers in wrestling. For me, it would be the first time I'd ever been

to a match. I left Des Moines that afternoon a lifelong fan of not only Jay Borschel, one of the two wrestlers for which the book chronicals, but a fan of the sport. Mark Kreidler is true to that in his account of what happened, i.e. even a non-fan becomes a fan of these two extraordinary young men as they battle against tremendous odds to do something very special. The movie, when it comes out, is sure to take its place right along side "Rudy".

Wrestlers toil in relative obscurity, except perhaps for certain Midwestern states like Iowa, where wrestlers are gods. This entertaining book takes the reader through the life of high school amateur wrestlers during their fateful senior year season, where they attempt to become state champions. In Iowa, that is a huge deal. If you or in any way a fan of amateur wrestling, this book will be a sweet dessert. It provides insights as to the physical, mental and emotional (as well as dietary) sacrifices that these athletes must make. We will never definitively settle the argument about which sport is toughest or produces the best athletes, but from reading *Four Days to Glory*, you could make a compelling case that wrestling deserves the top spot. Worth the price of the book alone is the chapter profiling legendary wrestler and then coach Dan Gable. It is, at the same time, a rather pitiful characterization as you meet a one-time world champion who is now reduced to hobbling around on crutches, the result of 16 or 17 surgeries he has had on his deteriorating body. One cannot escape the impression that Dan Gable mortgaged his health in order to become a fantastic wrestler and wrestling coach. You can view this as *Hoosiers* for wrestling fans, but you owe it yourself to view it as a compelling story of athletic sacrifice and success.

I have been a High School wrestling Coach in New York State for the past 19 years and nothing comes closer to telling the tale of our sport than this book. I couldn't put it down. It is a great read about the trials and tribulations in the wrestling careers of two young men in the state of Iowa. Iowa is the mecca of our great sport and Mark Kreidler does a masterful job of bringing the sport of wrestling to life and showing that dedication and hardwork can lead to great things. Kreidler's account shows valuable insight into the sport and how it can prepare you for life. His chapter on America's Legendary Olympian Dan Gable and his many contributions to the sport was filled with great information and details. I brought my copy to our year end Sectional wrestling championships and coaches all wrote down information and purchased this great book. The next weekend at our State Qualifiers I was lauded by those who bought the book and had read it quickly just like I had done.

This non-fiction book takes us into the lives of several high school wrestlers and their quest to become state champions. It helps that the wrestling takes place in Iowa, the epicenter of American wrestling, which makes the journey with the boys tense and thrilling. The author also profiles some notable names in the amateur/Olympic wrestling world, including Tom Brands and Dan Gable. Dan Gable is profiled extensively, which will delight any wrestling fan. The book is much harsher on former Iowa Coach Jim Zalesky, who replaced Dan Gable, essentially calling him an insufficient recruiter for the University of Iowa. (The criticism may be unwarranted: another Zalesky brother coaches at UC Davis, which produced the incredible Derek Moore.) As an ex-high-school wrestler myself, I wasn't surprised by the insights into the wrestlers' training regimens and daily lives. Unfortunately, the sport's multiple maneuvers and tactics make it difficult to convey its complexity secondhand, but the author does his best to make readers feel as if they're on the mat. Although the author did an admirable job providing some insight into the lives of the high school wrestlers, ex-wrestlers will not gain any new information besides the conversations with Coach Gable and the pressures of being a Midwestern wrestling coach. The conversations with and the author's profile of Dan Gable are the highlights of the book, and non-wrestlers will gain a good view into a little-followed, but inspiring sport.

As someone who grew up in Iowa, I am familiar with many aspects of Mark Kreidler's book. However, because I did not wrestle growing up, I found the personal accounts of Borschel and LeClere's quest for a fourth state championship to be fascinating. I cover wrestling at the college level, and continually amazed by the physical and mental sacrifices these athletes make on a daily basis. This book offers insight into those sacrifices and the thought process that goes into them by both the athletes and coaches. Kreidler does a wonderful job of taking the reader into the practice room and on to the mat during competition. Highly recommended.

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