

TRIPOD

As I sat, awaiting my match with the man known as Tripod, I had my "wrestling epiphany." My match with Tripod exemplified what I felt was the central dilemma in wrestling and made me realize that wrestling was not the sport for me.

The match with Tripod was no ordinary match—it was greatly complicated by the absence of his left leg. This complication made the bout one of the most intensely confusing experiences of my life. If I won the match, I would have faced the ignominy of having beaten up a disabled person. If I lost the match, I would have suffered the humiliation of having been out-wrestled by a guy with one leg. Surely, there could not be much dignity in either outcome.

The match was highly unorthodox. Tripod had an unusual repertoire of moves that effectively compensated for his disability. While Tripod used his specially designed pinning combinations on me, I succeeded in doing little but look shocked and confused. Tripod's competence as a wrestler was my only consolation as I returned, easily beaten, to my heckling teammates.

My match with Tripod taught me that I was not nor would ever be a wrestler and resulted in a temporary general distaste for athletic competition. Although wrestling a one-legged guy is not a common experience,

the same dilemma presents itself in every competition. In victory you humiliate another, and in defeat another humiliates you. Realizing that wrestling can be a losing proposition in both victory and defeat changed my life significantly.

The world of sports organizes competition into wins and losses. Through my match with Tripod, I realized that winning and losing are only two of many possibilities and that each competition has the potential for an infinite number of outcomes. In my match with Tripod, the public outcome was less important than the outcome of my internal struggle. I now coach a Hillview Middle School girls' basketball team. Our primary goals, taught to me by the players, are pride, respect, and good sportsmanship.

Michael Kinsey, age 17

Name:

Response Questions for "Tripod"

1. What is the narrator's "wrestling epiphany"?
2. Why was the match with Tripod so special?
3. What changed his life significantly?
4. What was his final realization?
5. The match with Tripod seemed to be a lose-lose situation. Describe a time you have felt like the narrator.