

Published January 22nd, 2020

Adrian Bautista - 120 lbs of power and technique on the mat

By Jon Kingdon



Photo provided

If someone asks why don't you pick on someone your own size, they certainly weren't at a high school wrestling match. While so many sports give an advantage to the larger athletes, wrestling has 14 different weight classes - 113, 120, 126, 132, 138, 145, 152, 160, 170, 182, 195, 220 and 285. Each weight class goes up by two pounds after the new year.

Adrian Bautista, a senior at Campolindo, began wrestling as a freshman, at 110 pounds, and has in four short years become a top candidate to make it to the state tournament in the 120 pound class. So far this year, Bautista's record is 18-6 with nine pins, having placed third at the Bill Martell Invitational, second at the Nick Buzolich Classic and second at the Kermit Bankson Invitational and is currently ranked sixth in the North Coast Section.

Co-head coach Louis Suba was Bautista's first coach for his freshman and sophomore years: "I've seen his progress and it has been amazing. Adrian was a good athlete but as a wrestler he was a blank slate. Still I

could tell that he had that innate ability and we just had to work on his strength and technique."

Bautista was drawn to wrestling after seeing a demonstration at the high school: "I saw how these guys were throwing each other and it seemed that it was a good way to stay fit and also a way to make friends. With Sam Settello, who was the head coach at the time, it was like a family, with everybody helping everybody out."

The innate ability that Suba saw in Bautista was his natural strength, athleticism and aggressiveness. "Some kids are strong but don't have that aggressive personality," Suba says. "Some are aggressive without the strength. Adrian had all the tools. We just had to get him under control and teach him the proper technique which he definitely adopted."

Nikko Triggas, the other co-head coach with Suba, was a state champion himself when he was a student at Campolindo and Bautista gives credit to what he has learned from Triggas and Suba. "Both of them have been awesome coaches," he says. "Coach Louis taught me the technique along with being a good role model. Nikko relies on basics, which can be annoying, but it's really important because basics is what you need in order to get better. Both of them love the sport and they create a fun environment. They get us to believe in ourselves which builds up our self-esteem. The dedication and the time that they put into the team shows how much they care for us."

Suba draws an analogy to what a cross country runner has to go through, being willing to put up with a lot of pain. "The pain is pushing yourself to the limit," says Suba. "Wrestling is a short burst of energy every 15 seconds and you have to push yourself to the limit if you're executing a move. If you relax at any point in time, you're going to get taken advantage of and put on your back. Adrian is definitely a kid that will go through a lot of pain and put himself through a lot of anguish to come out on top. Each match is six minutes and that may not seem a lot but there's just no stopping. It's the most grueling thing that you'll ever go through. If you're willing to put yourself through the suffering and the anguish, that is the definition of the successful wrestler."

It's at the end of the matches where Bautista feels you can hit the wall: "It's mostly in the third period when your muscles are aching and you have to keep on wrestling if you want the win. You have to tell yourself that you're more capable than what you think you're capable of. Putting in all the hard work in the off-season and during the season, putting your heart and soul into it and then getting the win is what makes you feel happy."

Suba also appreciates the technique that Bautista has mastered and learned from himself and Triggas. "Adrian is just fundamentally strong and sound. All his take downs look really good. His double leg, his single leg, his high C. He is strong on top and bottom," says Suba. "We try to give the wrestlers all the positives and negatives that they've done. Usually there are just not many negatives at all with Adrian. His margin of error in his losses has been so razor thin, he could be undefeated but for a few minor things in each one of those losses."

If there is one move that Bautista and all of the wrestlers at Campolindo have come to rely on, it's the arm bar that was Triggas's speciality when he wrestled, said Suba. "When Nikko wrestled, it was almost indefensible. Nikko is now handing that down to all of our wrestlers. In the nine pins that Adrian has had, probably eight of them have been with the arm bar."

As much as he does utilize the arm bar, Bautista has learned to not rely on that single move: "Nikko says that you can't rely on one option. I do use the arm bar a lot but you have to have multiple take down moves in mind."

It not just the coaches that have helped Bautista with his performance. Noah Hammond (11-8 this

season) who wrestles at 126 pounds has worked closely with Bautista for the past four years. "Adrian also has a really good training partner with Noah," says Suba. "They just push each other as much as they possibly can at practice."

"Noah is one of my best friends," says Bautista. "He and I are about the same weight and we've both been wrestling beginning as freshman and at camps together. We just really work hard and encourage each other."

As a senior, Bautista has taken on a leadership role, says Suba: "Adrian leads by example. He's not the most vocal guy but he is one of the hardest workers and is constantly moving during practice. He'll just keep pushing himself. He's very coachable and respectful. He's never one to think that he knows more than the coach. Even though Adrian is in one of the toughest weight classes, he can certainly make it to the state tournament."

Bautista sums it all up simply: "You learn to fight through the pain and believe in yourself. Making state has been my goal since my sophomore year. I want to make myself proud and to show that hard work pays off."

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[back](#)

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