

## **Becoming a Champion**

by Baba the Storyteller

The intensity of this moment would be too much for most men, but you've been training almost your entire life. All of your years of preparation come down to this one match. It is both simple and complex. The result will either be in your favor or not in your favor. Champions are created not born. Character is forged like steel from fire, there can be no margin for error.

In plain and simple words; you know what you must do. There are no shortcuts to success and that which separates boys from men is staring you in the eyes. No man challenges himself throughout his life in order to face the weakest of opponents. What appears to be ninety percent physical you learn, through wisdom, is actually more mental. You dreamed of being confronted by the best and now here you stand.

What races through your mind in situations like this? Is there a gut response to want to retreat? Does fear conquer you or do you conquer fear? What will your next move be?

Your opponent is confident, fearless in fact and has already made the first move. You have no choice but to counter. His voice pierces your ears, almost forcing you to lose focus. He gets louder; you become quieter in order to channel all of your concentration where it is needed. A sliver of time separates you from victory or defeat.

The sweat begins pouring, in large drops, from your forehead. Your heart is frantically beating its way out of your chest as adrenaline frantically courses through your veins. You thrust your right hand forward, breathing as you've been instructed.

His foot meets your hand mid-air and you, instinctively, draw back, away from the threat.

Your motion with your left, feigning with your shoulders that you intend to step forward but your opponent is cunning and his other foot smacks against the open palm of your hand.

You breathe. You inhale deep in order to gather your thoughts and proceed with a clear mind. You've faced others but this time it is different. There are many levels to becoming a champion and this single competition will determine whether or not you have what it takes. There is little, or no, time to think. Instinct takes over where reason and fear have, literally, frozen your body's ability to move.

You've spontaneously and intuitively formed a plan in your mind. You know what you have to do. Like a real man you accept responsibility for the success or failure of this intuitive plan as you repeat your very first movement. You thrust your right hand forward and, almost as if by sheer magic, he kicks at you in the exact same manner but, this time, you are ready. You successfully anticipated his reaction and

now you have caught his foot mid-air, it has been seized in your tightly clenched hand.

A confused look crosses his face. You know he is thinking and thinking hurriedly. You've got to act quicker than he and so you do. Bending your knees you maintain balance, because that was one of the first lessons you ever learned. Balance is the key to all things. You maintain balance bending your knees, feet an equal distance apart, and your shoulders are squared. With the stealth like reflexes of a cat you swiftly shove your other hand towards his waist.

Taking full advantage of his confusion you now lock both of his legs at the ankle while simultaneously shifting his entire body sideways, first left and then right before firmly planting him, dazed and disoriented, flat on his back.

You have won! You are a true champion among men! You have changed a diaper.