

Amit Elor: I Refuse to Give Up!

A California 8th Grade Female Wrestler Shares Her Story

I became interested when my older siblings, Ronny and Orry, started wrestling in high school. At the time, I was only four years old. Seeing how they moved on the mat like superheroes inspired me to join them. I liked to watch their practices and then pretend to do wrestling moves. Eventually, I begged my mom to let me start wrestling, too.

When I first started wrestling, I was the only girl on the mat. Many wrestlers did not want to partner with me in practice and some coaches didn't want me there either. It was awkward and made me feel like an outsider. Refusing to give up, however, I learned to deal with rejection by developing thick skin and standing up for myself.

In my first club, coaches used to say I shouldn't train with boys because I could get injured. Later, after I had improved, they said boys shouldn't train with me because I might injure them (they even told me to go easy on my partners); yet they still did not allow me to train with the elite group. While I no longer train with that club, that experience prepared me for my journey into wrestling.

My mom Elana has helped me so much since I was young. She takes me to tournaments as well as helping me find places to train. When I finally decided to eat healthily, my mom helped me stick to my goals. Whether I win or lose, my mom always tells me she is proud of me. She always does her best to help me follow my wrestling passion. I wouldn't be the wrestler I am today without her help.

I started training with Coach Valentin Kalika a few months before the 2016 Olympics. My mom and I drove down to SoCal to train with him. Some practices are even on the beach, which is fun but challenging, as we carry and throw boulders. It was astounding how quickly my freestyle wrestling and attitude improved in just a few practices. Coach Kalika's techniques just clicked for me; his stories about international wrestling lit a fire in my heart. My Olympic dream has now become an Olympic goal. Since 2016, I train with Coach Kalika as often as I can.

My international wrestling experience is through training with Russian coaches in Israel. They are tough on us and practices were in singlets instead of practice clothes, with instruction a mix of Russian and Hebrew. While I did not understand the languages, with some translation help I copied other wrestlers and smiled a lot! Although freestyle at first was an adjustment, particularly in scoring, I prefer not having escapes and being able to score on a push out. Girls currently do not compete in Greco, but I like that style as well and hope that female Greco competition will become official.

There are so many wrestling coaches who have made a difference in my life. Coach Casey Strand knows how to pump me up before matches; he also finds me great training partners. He improved my shooting technique and the way I drill in practice. Currently, I represent Coach Strand's club, the Bay Area Titans. Coach Charlie Hong partners with me during practice when I don't have any partners. He is always down to wrestle or drill with me, then gives me feedback on my technique. I always appreciate when coaches drill with me, because I can learn firsthand from their years of experience. Coach Roberto Gonzalez helped me perfect my cradle as well as teaching me several other techniques that help me in tournaments.

Coach David Miller from Forma Gym trained me in athleticism, including weight lifting, mobility, and cardio. He taught me that training for wrestling off the mat is just as important as on the mat, helping me with the mental preparation such as visualization, in addition to examining how to exploit an opponent's weakness. I also learned that off-the-mat training should not just be about maximal strength; it's about overall athleticism.

Coach Cesar Gracie encouraged me to start jiu-jitsu after I visited his gym for Coach Strand's wrestling practice. Jiu-Jitsu has helped my wrestling by improving my balance and scrambling skills.

I had the opportunity to compete against blue-belt adult women in jiu-jitsu, which I have not yet had that opportunity in wrestling. Those matches improved my confidence. Also, I developed a love for jiu-jitsu and hope to continue training forever in it. I am thrilled that RMN has added jiu-jitsu to its tournament offerings.

Getting to see Orry and Ronny compete in tournaments and practice in training inspired me to start wrestling. They have been a huge part of my support system. Wrestling has made me a hard worker and taught me to never give up. I finish my homework first so that I can go to practice and tournaments. Wrestling has helped my time management skills and gives me confidence in myself. I believe anyone who can survive grueling practices can also conquer challenges in school.

I love RMN Events! Can't get enough of them! There are so many reasons! RMN Events are enjoyable because the events have large venues with large crowds; they are well-organized and on time, have fun graphic design themes, and exciting opening ceremonies with light shows and smoke. I love the staff and referees. The referees are professional; I trust them to stop a match in dangerous situations, which is something I worry about. The awards are exciting; they really motivate me to compete for them.

RMN Events are rewarding because they are challenging. I had many tough battles with opponents from different states, which is fun and exciting. The RMN tournaments have significantly helped build my confidence and grow my experience. My mom acknowledges that she has "fallen in love with RMN" to the point of being "addicted" to the atmosphere where "wrestling is a celebration" and where you have "knowledgeable people at all levels" who know how to represent the sport.

My goal in wrestling is to be an Olympic gold medalist and world champion. Along the way, I want to help grow the sport of women's and girls' wrestling. Outside of wrestling, I'm still learning about my interests. My aspiration is to combine my passion for sports, traveling, cooking, and animals into a career. I hope to get into a good college in order to pursue a science degree.

For a young wrestler just beginning, I would advise her or him that the first step feels like the hardest step when starting something new. Keep going and never give up. Wrestling has taught me to maintain a growth mindset. If you work hard enough, you can achieve anything. Through wrestling, I have met many friends and cool people, as well as travel to places that I have never been to before.

Wrestling keeps me in shape. Before starting wrestling, I was slightly overweight. Being in shape allows me to enjoy other activities (without getting tired as easily) such as hiking, rock climbing, paddle boarding, and snorkeling. I enjoy outdoor activities with my dog Saoirse, who also accompanies me as "pet therapy" at local tournaments. I would like to share my dog with others; currently I am training Saoirse to gain a pet therapy certificate. When she is ready, I look forward to volunteering with her in children's hospitals and hospices.

One day I hope to coach wrestling. I love wrestling and always want to be part of it. Coaches have made a big difference in my life, so I want to do the same for others one day. My goal is to help grow wrestling, especially female competition, in the United States.

Wrestling has shaped me into a person who has self-control, confidence, tenacity, appreciation for the little things (food and water), and gratitude for being able to wrestle and meet new people. Without wrestling, I think that I would be less grateful, not have as much confidence and patience, and would not be as positive in my overall attitude.

RMN Events

- 4x RMN Events National High School Champion
- +10x RMN Events National Champion (mix of Girls Middle School and Boys Divisions)

Girl's Wrestling

- 2018 Reno Worlds 18U Women's Champion
- 2x Reno Worlds Girl's Champion
- 2x Reno Worlds Outstanding Wrestler Award
- 3x USGWA/USBWA National Champion
- USAW Folkstyle National Champion
- Multiple California State Championships

Boy's Wrestling

- Reno Worlds Runner-Up
- USA Wrestling National Triple Crown Winner
- Multiple California Triple Crown Winner
- Multi-time California State Champion

Currently undefeated in the Jiu-Jitsu World League.