

Wrestling With Life: Stories of My Life Immersed in the Sport of Wrestling

Phil Nowick

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At 5 feet 2 inches, Phil Nowick would not be classified as a physical giant—especially in the world of wrestling. But what he lacked in stature, he more than compensated for with drive, determination and unabashed love for the sport that gave him direction throughout his life.

Direction became especially important to a young Phil Nowick, since one of his first milestones was getting expelled from school on the very first day of kindergarten. Yes, kindergarten. So begins Nowick's endearing and enlightening account of "Wrestling with Life."

Nowick sets the tone of his book from the start with hilarious stories about that kindergarten fiasco, some theatrical calamities and his emergence as a young neighborhood Mafioso-type trafficking Hostess Chocodiles (think Twinkies smothered in chocolate). All of these escapades are in partnership with his twin brother, David. Their bond strengthens over the years, despite what could be understatedly described as an intense competitive relationship.

The boys' discovery of wrestling helped both find purpose as they quickly began to excel in the sport. Through youth leagues, high school and even into collegiate competition, their skills continued to strengthen right along with their maturity as brothers and men. One of the most compelling chapters reveals Phil's complete admiration for his brother and his incredible comeback to wrestling after having one of his legs grotesquely shattered in a match.

Following college, Phil became a junior investment banker with Merrill Lynch. One day in September 2001, he had just completed an early-morning workout in the Marriott World Trade Center health club. It was 8:46 a.m. when he heard the explosion that will forever be remembered by Americans. He immediately headed for the stairwell and made it to safety outside the building. Over the next several weeks, he would once again review his life and sense needing to make changes.

Phil had one last wrestling match—this one with life. In October 2008, he was diagnosed with stage four colon cancer. Just as he faced down a challenger in the ring countless times in his earlier years, Phil fought bravely and with determination. But on Sept. 7, 2010, cancer won.

Wrestling With Life offers a warm, often funny, transparent view into the life of Phil Nowick. But even more, it speaks of family, love, growing up and persevering. Phil left behind a book of inspiration that will most certainly cause readers to reflect on life and making the most of it.

Maybe cancer didn't win after all.

JEFF FRIEND (July 28, 2011)

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