

Rulon Gardner

Olympic Gold Medalist for Wrestling

When Rulon Gardner won the Olympic gold medal for wrestling in Sydney, his victory rocked the world. It was more than just a simple tale of success - it was the story of an underdog who rose to unimagined heights of accomplishment and glory. An athlete with a history of notable but obscure success, Rulon became a household name - and the pride of a nation - when he took Olympic gold from the hands of Alexander Karelin, an athlete who had been undefeated since 1985.

In a modern day David and Goliath, Rulon found himself fighting a match of mythic proportions - the United States versus former archenemy Russia and a first-time Olympian versus a veteran three-time Olympic gold medalist.

The road his first Olympic victory was not an easy one. Throughout school, Rulon had struggled with reading and comprehension. With a great deal of determination (and frustration) Rulon successfully completed high school and earned a wrestling scholarship from Ricks College. While at Ricks College, Rulon received a Division 1 scholarship to wrestle for the University of Nebraska.

Graduating from the University of Nebraska with a degree in physical education is something of which Rulon is very proud. Following graduation, Rulon continued his Olympic wrestling pursuit with full-time dedication. Winning the gold in Sydney was the culmination of hard work and sacrifice.

Rulon authored an autobiography entitled *Never Stop Pushing: My Life from a Wyoming Farm to the Olympic Medal Stand*. Avalon Publishing released his book on September 6, 2005.

In 2000, Rulon was named Sportsman of the Year by the United States Olympic Committee and received the U.S. Olympic Spirit Award. In April 2001, he was honored with the James E. Sullivan Memorial Award, which is given to the nation's top amateur athlete for athletic excellence, leadership, sportsmanship and character. During his trip to Athens during the 2004 games, Rulon added to his medal count by winning the Bronze.

Rulon shares with his audiences the sense of determination, the self-confidence and the fighting spirit that gave him the strength to stand up against seemingly unbeatable odds - and win. He has experienced wins as well as losses in his life. However he has never dwelled on the negatives in his life instead he takes each challenge and uses it as a means to improve his life.