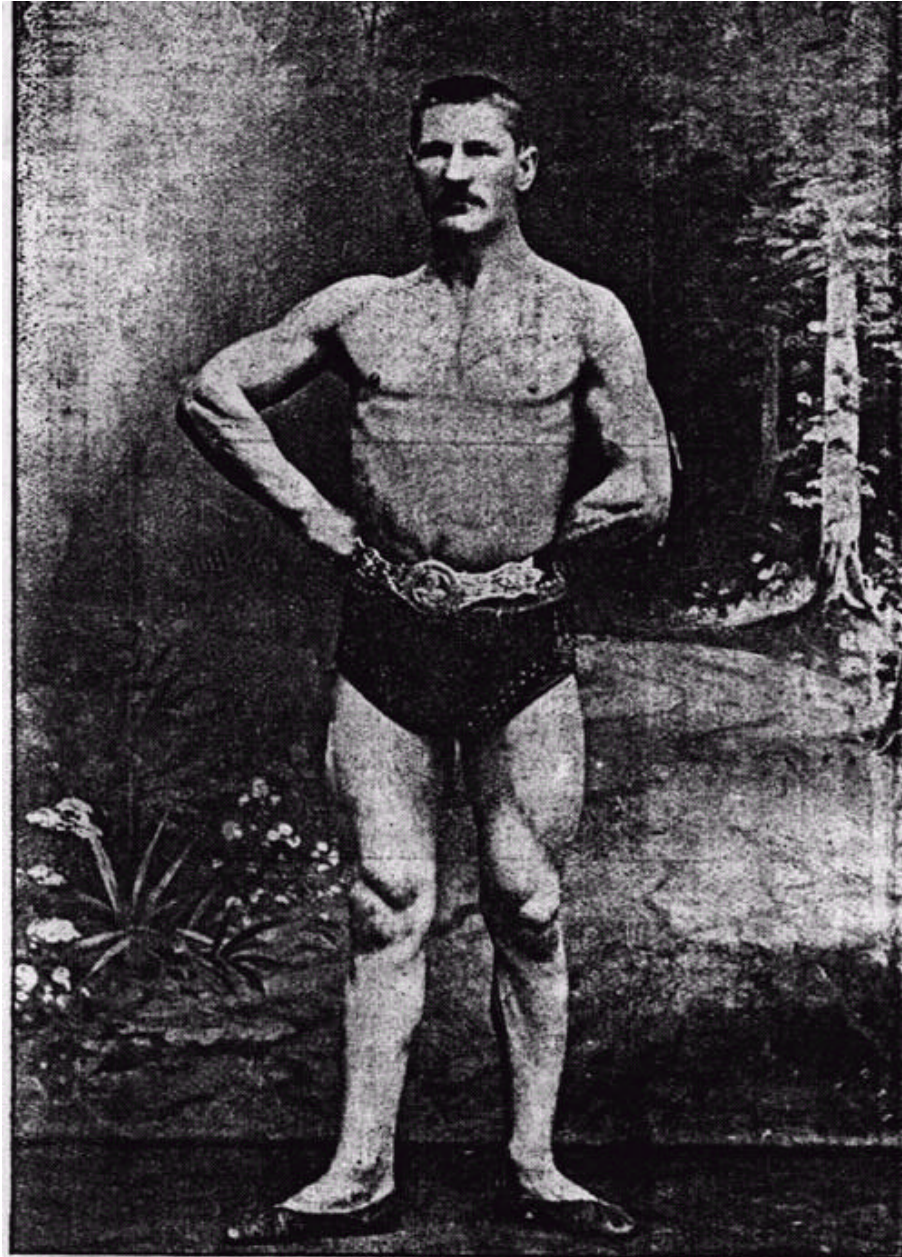


Icelandic Wrestling



By Johannes Josefsen
(Icelandic Champion)

1908

Icelandic Wrestling

We name this style of wrestling Icelandic because it had its origin in Iceland, and has never been practiced, or even known, in other lands. The perfection to which it has been brought in recent years has proved it to be, to a very high degree, an exercise which gives health and endurance to the body, and is a real source of refreshment to the mind, while at the same time it sharpens the courage, smartness and intellect of those who take part in it. Its benefits, to some extent, were recognized in the olden days, when the deceitful sword of the ancients had frequent use, and life and death were at stake. Many instances are on record, where weaponless men, on being attacked with a sword, rendered that weapon entirely useless, by getting a “grip” on the hand that was raised to strike, in some cases even wresting the sword away from them. “Gripping” was also resorted to in the event of a man losing his sword. This kind of wrestling is preserved in Iceland as the affectionate foster-child of the nation, having been practiced as far back as 1100, when Iceland was a republic. It was not then limited to the platform nor to any special occasion, for throughout the land, from the country farm to the Althing (Parliament) it was a daily exercise in which most men took part. In those days a contest called “Baendaglimi” was occasionally held. The wrestlers divided themselves into two opposing parties,. The weakest man on either side was sent out first, and the one who fell was reckoned *hors de combat*. A second man took his place, succeeded, if he fell, by a third and then a fourth, and so on, until the conquering man fell. One can well imagine that these encounters were truly calculated to stimulate and encourage the younger generation to doughty deeds, to promote love and comradeship between man and man, binding the nation together as a whole.

When we read about combats between Icelanders of olden time and giants, outlaws, Ethiopians (slaves belonging to the reigning kings) and warriors of the heathen age, we see always a sure victory for wrestlers when they took part, even though their strength differed considerably from that of their formidable opponents. As a matter of fact, the essential idea of Icelandic wrestling is to enable the weaker man to hold his own with the stronger. Most of the “grips” are formed with the feet and legs, so that though one’s hands are tired, - a thing most common in days gone by, - a fair resistance might be made, no matter from what side the enemy attacked. Self-protection was the first thing which led to Icelandic wrestling, and today the motive is the same, though there is now much less need for it. In

the game there is only one lawful wrestling position (See Fig. 1), which has been maintained as such since wrestling became a national sport, and if this position is kept, gymnastics, more than strength, must be used to perform the tricks lawfully.

As the years rolled on the game became more and more popular, the chief schools in the land, at Holar, Skalholt, and Bessastaoir making a special feature of the art. At these places wrestling was practiced mostly in competition, and, as some of the best wrestlers in the land were there, many never-to-be-forgotten days were spent by them, the record of which is cherished by every true Icelfander. Those heroes occasionally made tours about the country exhibiting, which helped much to preserve the famous game amongst the people sparsely scattered among the hill-sides and around the coast of this bleak land. When the Grammar School was removed from Bessastaoir to Reykjavik the wrestling ardor appears to have become somewhat less among the students, as nothing is recorded in that regard from that time until recently. The country people, however, continued. In the Myvatn district in North Iceland, a daily wrestling match took place on the ice of Myvatn (Midge water) during winter, when the fishermen came together to catch trout.

Up to the present time this ancient pastime has been kept secret from foreigners. Like the Japanese with their "Jiu Jitsu" we have kept it to ourselves. That only occasion when strangers were allowed to witness it during the whole of last century, was when it was displayed before King Christian IX, of Denmark at Thingvellir when he visited Iceland in 1874, and even then only two men took part – the present Rev. Sigurour Gunnarsson of Stykkisholm and the Rev. Larus Halldorsson of Reykjavik.

During recent years more stress has been laid on healthy exercises of all kinds. Clubs and young men's societies have been formed throughout the land, and everything is being done to further the same amongst the rising generation. Some years ago a silver belt was offered to the best wrestler in Iceland, to be contested for by amateurs, - there are no professionals as yet in Iceland. A silver shield has also been offered for the best wrestler in Akureyri (North), and one for the best in Reykjavik (South), with many other smaller prizes.

King Fredrick VIII of Denmark visited Iceland last summer (1907) and, with visitors from other lands, expressed his delight at seeing Icelandic wrestling. Three prizes were competed for at Thingvellir in His Majesty's presence. There were six thousand spectators, and at the request of several foreign sportsmen, we publish this little book in English, so that they with others may have the opportunity of learning this very old yet new style of wrestling. It is true that, - at any rate among the older people, - there is a spirit of conservatism in most nations which influences them to hold their national sport exclusively for themselves, but so assured do we feel that much benefit will be derived from the practice of this style of wrestling by other nations, larger than our own, that we put such considerations aside. Once commenced amongst foreigners we believe that every educated nation, to a greater or lesser degree, will take it up. Its practice is its commendation. To shape and perfect it has been no easy task, and has absorbed a tremendous amount of time. The balancing principle is not acquired in a day, nor a month, nor a year; in fact, some men spend all their lives and never manage it. No other sport requires so much practice. Clever acrobats have spent a lifetime at it, and not reached anything like perfection.

The game is carried out in the same way it was eight hundred years ago. All the maneuvers bear the same name, and very little change has been made as a whole since the eleventh century. Some few new maneuvers have been added, and two or three have been discarded, owing to their calling for more brute force than gymnastic ability. Amongst these are the "Giantess Trick", the "Bull Trick", and the "Deceiver's Trick". Another thing worthy of note in this style of wrestling is, that there are no weight sections as in "Greco-Roman", "Catch-as-Catch-Can" etc. The light-weight man has equally as good a chance of winning as the heavily built one, the secret lying in keeping one's balance, not so much in strength or weight.

Icelandic wrestling necessitates a strong and elastic waist. Though the entire body is exercised in wrestling, the greatest strain is on the waist. Running, walking, jumping, swimming, in fact all kinds of bodily exercise require to be practiced, so as to make the body supple and nimble. Each trick must be performed sharply and decidedly if the object is to be gained. The tricks are so numerous and intricate, that unless one is always on the alert, the game is lost. Strenuous exercise is the only thing calculated to teach this. It seldom happens that a bout is longer than ten minutes, even though experts take part.

Volumes may be written in explanation of the numerous tricks, without conveying to the reader, however, a sufficiently clear idea as to how to perform them. It is necessary to study carefully the illustrations of the various positions, and to put them into practice, before grasping the essential idea of the trick.

It is obvious that the cost of such an exercise is a mere nothing in comparisons to others. We are convinced that a cheaper and more beneficial game does not exist. It may be practiced in an ordinary ten feet square apartment or on level ground anywhere, providing there are no stones. No carpet is required, and a man may wrestle in his ordinary clothes, on his stocking soles, or in a pair of soft shoes. In the clubs, however, it is a rule that every wrestler must have a grip on the left hip and the right thigh of his wrestling knickers, or on a leather belt, either of which may be bought for four or five shillings. Carpets and special clothing of course are used at tournaments, sports, concert, etc.

Rules

- 1) Before any trick is commenced, the lawful wrestling grip must be taken.
- 2) The grips may be slipped for the purpose of relieving oneself, or preventing oneself from falling and of using "Hand touch".
- 3) Seizing the opponent's clothing or body apart from the above named lawful grips is prohibited. Certain tricks, however, may be laid with the palm of the hand, both as independent and auxiliary tricks.
- 4) It is not permissible to beat or smite with the hands, feet, or head. Each trick must be *laid*.
- 5) It is not permissible to foul in any shape or form, or to stand prepared for a grip with the back bent, feet apart, and the seat out.
- 6) A fall is counted when any part of the body above the knee or elbow touches the ground.
- 7) Brotherfall (Breadrabylda), that is, when both fall at once, does not count.
- 8) The judge's decision in doubtful points is final.

The Game

The game is commenced, after shaking hands, by taking the grips, each having his right hand on the left hip of his opponent and the left hand on his right thigh. This is the only lawful grip. Both must stand erect, and the feet must not be too far apart nor yet together, about ten to twelve inches is sufficient, the right foot being a little in front of the left, and the right shoulder turned a little towards the opponent, the head facing his right shoulder (See fig. 1). This is the only position allowable. I will now endeavor to explain the maneuvers or tricks employed in this style of wrestling as I know them, and to show how one should receive and avoid them.

Fig. 1.



Wrestling Position

Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Heel-hook (inner). Right foot on left.
(attacker on the left).

Heelhook. (see Fig. 2 and 3). This may be formed by the inner or outer side of either heel. A hook is made as shown, (Fig. 2), and the opponent falls, unless he is clever enough to lift his leg up, holding it out straight for a moment, or to turn right about face, thus swinging himself out of the hook. He can also make a defense by bringing about “Lock-knee” with the same leg, or else by making another “heel-hook”.

Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.



Leg trick.

(Attacker on the left.)

This trick is made by placing the right foot on the opponent's left or vice versa, so that the inner part of the foot touches the outer part of his foot. The feet are then drawn from him and the hands are used to complete the fall. (See Fig. 4.)

Jumping up out of leg trick.

Defense is either to jump over it (See fig 5), or tire out the opponent by standing still, though in some cases the latter is very dangerous, especially if the trick is uglily laid.

Reception is "heel-hook" or "zig-zag trick" from the free side, or by making the "hip swing".

Fig. 6.



Right Hitch
(Attacker on the right).

The “right hitch” is made by placing the right foot against the opponent’s left, or vice versa, the “hitch” being made by the forepart of the foot catching the opponent’s heel. His feet are then drawn suddenly from under him. (Fig. 6).

Defense consists of lifting oneself entirely out of it, or by raising the foot on which the “hitch” is made.

Reception is the “split trick” from the side on which the “hitch” is laid, or the “heel-hook”.

Fig. 7.



Fig. 8.



Inverted Hitch (right on right)
(Attacker on the right)

The "inverted-hitch" is performed with either right foot on right, or left on left, by hooking the foot slantwise around the opponent's heel, the attacker's knee bent slightly outward and his opponent's slightly inward, so that the foot is locked in position. (See Fig. 7.)

The attacker then draws his foot smartly to one side, (see Fig. 8). With his hands he keeps his opponent from jumping; it is important to keep him down, for otherwise he can frustrate this trick. One can often follow a "split trick" on this "hitch".

Fig. 9.



Defense for an Inverted Hitch

The *Defense* against an "inverted hitch" is to lift oneself above it, so high that one need not fear a "split trick" if the attacker should follow with this (see Fig. 9).

Reception is the "zig zag trick" or "split trick" with the same foot.

Fig. 10.



Lock-Knee Trick

Fig. 11.



Lock-Knee and Leg Trick

Lock-Knee is performed with the left leg on the opponent's right or vice versa, the leg being bent so that the knee sticks out, the inner part against the outer part of the opponent's knee, at the same time effecting a swing to the same side, helping the effort with the hands. (Fig. 10).

Defense is to swing the foot either backwards or upwards. It may also be thwarted by standing still.

Fig. 11 shows a combined Lock-Knee and Leg Trick throw.

Fig. 12.



Fig. 13.



Right Zig-Zag Trick
(Attacker on right)

This trick is laid by placing the right foot round the opponent's right. (See Fig. 12). Swing him to the left, and, by aid of the hands, land him on his back. (Fig. 13).

This trick may also be laid by falling on the left knee as the grip is taken (See Fig. 14).

Fig. 14.



Fig.15



Defense for Zig Zag Trick

Defense is to free the right arm and put it over the opponent's neck and compel him to let go by pressing the head forward. (See Fig. 15). One may also free oneself by turning to the right.

Reception is "Right Hip-Swing" or "Twist-Hitch" on ther same side.

Fig. 16.



Inverse Zig-Zag Trick

The “Inverse Zig-Zag Trick” is laid by getting the left leg around the opponent’s left side, first swinging him upwards and then to the left, as far as possible. One then brings pressure to bear to the right with the hands, and the opponent falls. It is preferable in every case, to bring this into play with the “Inverted Hip-Swing” or “Right Split Trick”. (See Fig. 16).

Defense is the same as in the “Right Zig-Zag Trick”, only of course with the reverse foot.

Reception is “Inverted Hip-Swing” or “Twist-Hitch” by the left foot.

Fig. 17.



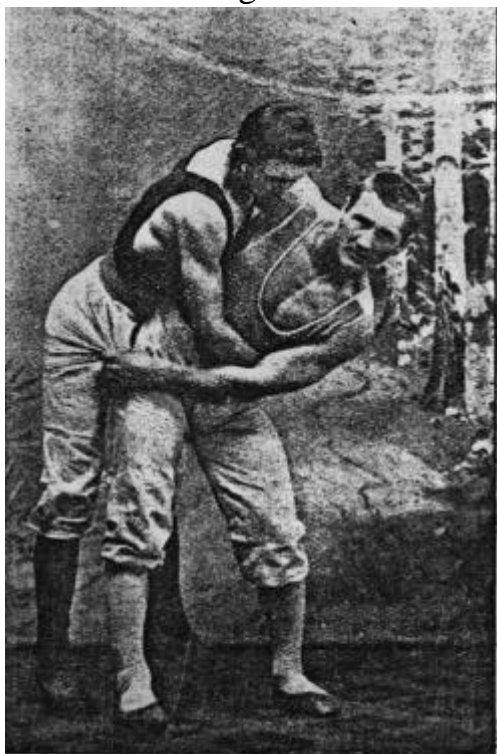
Loose-Fling

This is really nothing else than a powerful swing from right to left, made with the help of the left hand, and using the opponent's right arm as a fulcrum, pushing at the same time with the right. (See Fig. 18).

Defense is to jump to the side on which the trick is laid, or stand it out.

Reception may be either the same trick, or the "Leg Trick" with the left foot.

Fig. 18



Right Hip-Swing

Fig. 19



Fig. 20

The right hip put to the opponent's right and followed by bending the body to the left side, causing him to turn about in the air and reach the floor on his back, is called the "Right Hip-Swing". (See Fig. 19).

At the same time as this trick is laid, one can let go the left hand grip, and take the opponent by the right arm, so that the hand lies firmly under his arm. While he is bending himself, the attacker can slip the right hand over the opponent's back, resting under his left arm. Then with the right, thrust him forward and down as the "Hip-Swing" is laid. (See Fig. 19)



If done in this way success is sure, and the fall is softer, in that the overcomer has perfect power over the outcome. (See Fig. 20).

Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Defense for a right Hip-Swing

Defense is by stretching the right foot as far forward as possible between the opponent's legs, at the same time doubling oneself together mas much as possible and folding both arms round him until he lets go. (See Fig. 21).

In the event of being to late to use the above defense, a skillful wrestler can save himself by a summersault, provided that the hands are free on coming down.

Reception can be the "Loose-Fling" to the left, or "Right-Hitch" or "Leg Trick" with the right foot.

When the "Hip-Swing" is laid as in Fig. 19, one caqn use the defense shown in Fig. 22.

Fig. 23.



Fig. 24.



Inverted Hip-Swing

This is practically the same, only it is done with the left hip and hand instead of the right (See Fig. 23).

Defense follows the same rule. But if, for some reason or other none of the previously named defenses succeed, the defender should bend both legs a little, setting his knees in the ham of the attacker's knees, and keep them there untill he gives in. (Fig. 24).

Reception may either be "Inverted Split Trick" , "Outer Heel-Hook" with right or left, or "Twist-Hitch" with the right. It is always good, if at all possible, to lay the "Zig-Zag Trick" at the same time as the "Inverted Hip-Swing". This, when done neatly, is one of the best maneuvers in Icelandic wrestling.

Fig. 25.

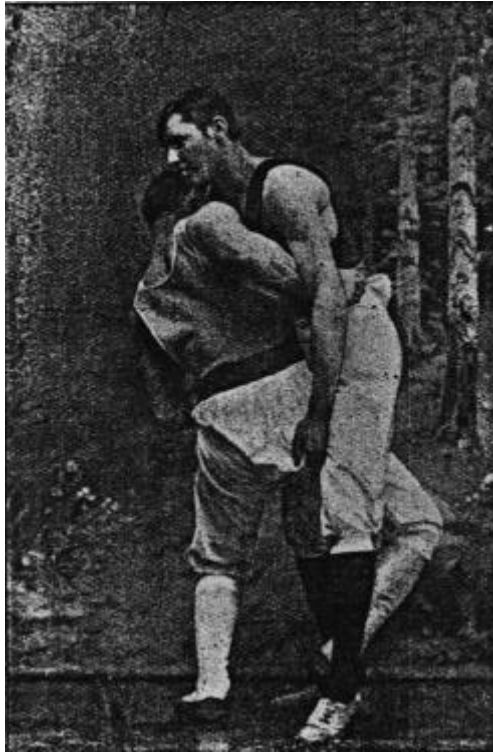


Fig.26



Fig.27.

Inverted Split Trick

After that the right foot has been put into position, the knee touching the inner part of the opponent's thigh, (see Fig. 25), a lift from the floor is given, while the attacker bends himself backwards as much as he can, and suddenly swings himself to the left.

Many when using the "Inverted Split Trick" give their opponent a blow in the ham of the knee at the same time the swing is made. This, as also holding too long and too fast, is to be avoided; such unmanly actions are unworthy of a true wrestler.



Defense is by lifting oneself up, so that the right knee rests on the breast of the opponent, the left foot being stretched right out behind, thus rendering the trick impossible. (See Fig. 27). Another way of defending oneself is by drawing the body up with both knees on the opponent's chest, but it is of the utmost importance not to land on both feet at once or else a fall will result from a "Hitch" or the "Leg Trick".

Reception is the Inverted Hitch with the right foot to the right or the "Inner Heel-Hook" from the same side.



Right Split Trick

The “right split trick” is laid with the left leg against the opponent’s right. (See fig.28). In all other respects it may be treated as the “Inverted Split Trick”. The best mode of doing the “Right Split Trick” is by using a swing with it, as follows: Lift the opponent’s right foot from the floor, swing him round to the right a few times, allowing yourself to bend with him each time; make a sudden jerk, and fling the opponent obliquely from the right shoulder. (See fig. 29). If, however, the opponent should not fall, a swing from the right side may be made, a “hip swing” from the same side, or an inverted “Zig-Zag”.



Defense is the same as the “Inverted Split Trick”. The outer “Heel Hook” by the right foot may be used both in defense and reception. (See Fig. 30).

Reception is the “Inverted Hitch” with the left or the “Right Hitch”

Swings.

“Swings” are used in almost every trick in Icelandic wrestling. They are so numerous and so very different according to how the tricks are laid, that it is quite impossible to describe them all here. Besides these there are many small crooks, hooks, twists, hitches, and tricks used, the secret of which the wrestler will find out for himself when he becomes practically acquainted with those which have been here explained.



Knee Hitch

The “Knee Hitch” is laid in the same way as the “Right” or “Inverted Hitch”, except that instead of the “Hitch” being on the heel it is on the knee. (See fig. 31).

Defense is to draw backwards or upwards the foot on which the trick is laid.

Reception is “Lock Knee” or “Loose Fling” from the side attacked.



Twist Hitch

“Twist Hitch” is laid in the same way as the Zig-Zag Trick” except that the foot is stretched farther around. The right foot is put behind the opponent’s right, reaching the fore part of his left, making then a jerk in a crooked manner, falling upon him at the same time with one’s whole weight. (See fig. 32).

Defense is in lifting the right foot quickly up.

Reception is the “Right Hip Swing” or another “Twist Hitch” by the left foot. (See fig.33)



Twist Hook

“Twist Hook” is laid with the right foot against the opponent’s left or vice versa. The attacker curls his foot round his opponent’s and then draws it quickly towards himself, the weight being put on as the opponent falls. (See fig. 34).

Defense is to stand still, not to attempt to turn. To turn would give the attacker the advantage. An erect position should be maintained until he gives up trying.

Reception is “Bang Crook” with the same foot. “Twist Hook” is liable to result in a serious accident should the players happen to lose their temper. Considerable caution should therefore be observed.



Bang Crook

“Bang Crook” is made by stretching out the right leg firmly across the opponent’s left thigh or vice versa, causing him to bend a little at the waist. The attacker then bends his leg and draws it towards himself. (See fig. 35).

Defense is by swinging out of the position, or by throwing oneself on one’s hands. It may also be stood out.

Reception is the “Split Trick” from the side attacked or the “leg Trick” on the reverse side.



Toe Trick

The attacker presses with his left foot on the right foot of his opponent, and swings him to the left, or vice versa.



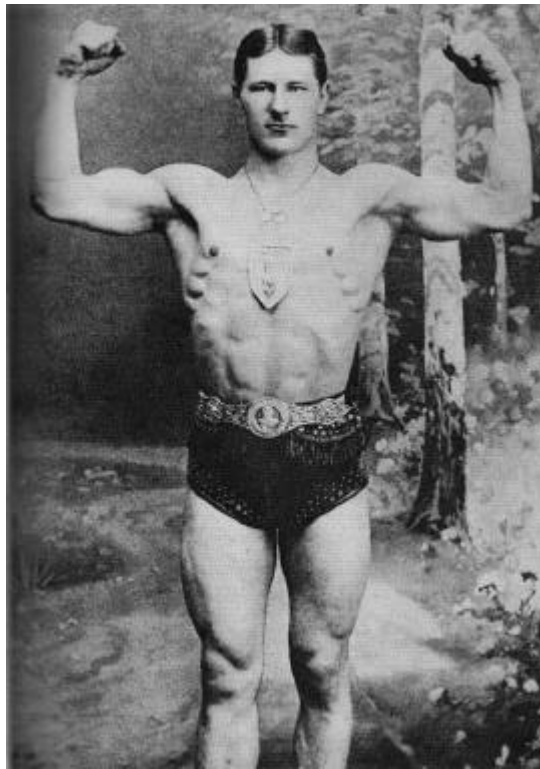
Handtouch

There are different ways of performing “Handtouch”. It may be done by placing the right hand on the opponent’s left leg at the knee (outer part), and swinging to the right, or vice versa. It may also be made by placing the right hand on the opponent’s right leg, allowing the left hand to rest on his right arm, and swinging him to the left. (See fig. 37).

Defense is best made by using “Swings”, and may be used in connection with the “Zig Zag”, “Lock-Knee”, and many others.

Johannes Josephsson

Legend of Glima



Perhaps you have never heard of the master grappler, Johannes Josephsson, so let me give you a quick rundown. He hails from Iceland, the remote Northern land of Viking fame. He is a lifelong student of Glima, which is a native folk wrestling style consisting mainly of stand-up throws. He wrestled in the Olympic games and has since fought in a number of mixed-martial-arts competitions, routinely beating Japanese jiu-jitsu experts. He has toured Europe and America demonstrating his art and has written one of the few English-language books on Glima, as well as being featured in a number of magazines. He has done both theatrical work showcasing his art and fought real challenge matches, often after publicly wagering on the outcome. Surprised that you haven't heard of this martial arts sensation? Read on, there's more...

What if I told you that he did all this and more long before you were ever born? Not possible, you say? Well, in 1907 and 1908 Josephsson was the national Glima champion of Iceland and holder of the Grettir Belt for those years (he is wearing the champion's belt in the photo above). He also wrote the first and only English Language book on Glima, simply titled “Glima – The Icelandic Wrestling”, which is a fantastic book, even by today’s standards. It details the basic grip and quite a number of throws and counters in large, clear photographs - quite the rarity for a book in 1908 which usually contained only text and crude illustrations or tracings of photographs to refer to.

In 1908 he was also in the Olympic Games in England as a Middleweight Greco-Roman wrestler. This was a doubly impressive feat, as Josephsson was the first Iclander to ever represent his country in the games. Though he was sadly forced to withdraw due to an injury, 6 other Glima players accompanied him to the Games, and they performed 2 wrestling shows a night for the London public over several nights. They fought with each other, and would take on audience members for money, wagering that they could throw any man within 5 minutes. According to one account of the tour in a 1908 Icelandic yearbook, they encountered a 220 pound English wrestler in the audience and decided to let him win the first night they encountered him, and only allowed their man to throw him at the last minute the next night...and in fact throwing him several times in that last minute. This was an early glimpse of Josephsson’s sense of showmanship that would serve him over the years.

From London, the troupe went to Denmark for a similar tour. This was the start of great journey for Josephsson and his boys. They would tour the world, not seeing their homeland for many years. The same Icelandic yearbook has an article from 1919 about Josephsson, heralding his return after 9 and a half years away. It tells how he had toured North America and all of Europe except for the Balkans (on account of the war, even back then) and was preparing to return to the United States.

During this time, the British magazine “Health & Strength” featured him on its cover in January of 1911. It showed Josephsson in top form, doing a reverse hip throw variation against “an armed assassin” in a photograph taken from the article on “Glima vs. Revolvers”. To give perspective on where all this falls in the grappler’s time-line, the other story on the cover of the magazine is “When Hack Meets Gotch”.

When he toured America, he didn't visit martial art schools or attend Karate tournaments as a guest of honor. In that era, there were no martial art schools, save the boxing gym or wrestling club, and the idea of a "tournament" where the competitors paid for the privilege of competing was unheard of (unless it was for a purse to split). Josephsson and his troupe played vaudeville houses doing demonstrations of his art against boxers, knife fighters, and multiple assailants – all as sports entertainment, mind you. One publicity photo even shows Josephsson wearing a long cape and a winged crown! Though I could not find written documentation, it would seem likely that Josephsson would have continued in the tradition of having an open "challenge" to the audience to wrestle for cash, as they did in England.



Glima vs. the Dagger wielding Assassin!

One piece the troupe performed was called "The Pioneer", and was billed as a story "Based on the Early Days of California" and "A Dramatic Novelty Act with a Thrill". In it, Josephsson used his Glima against "savage Indians" who tie him to a stake before he escapes, beats them, and saves the girl. Though politically incorrect by today's standards, it was perhaps accurate to the "Wild West" image of America, one that many Europeans had when Josephsson was growing up. This, too, was also a time when

vaudeville acts such as “Noisy Boy Evans - Black Face Comedy and Music” were still relatively common. Josephsson cared more for how someone fought, however, and the Black boxer Samuel Smith worked with the group of Icelanders, and is seen in several of the staged publicity pictures.

The Glima show must have been quite the curiosity to its audience. These vaudeville houses played shows several times a day, boasting of “5 Star Features on a 10 Act Bill” and admission ranging from 15 to 75 cents, and usually a quarter matinee. It played on bills with such fare as Eva Buck & Sam Wight: Wildcat Comedy Favorites in “Opera vs. Jazz”, The Geraldts “A Nifty Musical Offering”, Edwin George: A Comedian – Almost a Juggler, and “The Girl in the Moon – a Singing Act that’s Different”. It even played alongside animal acts like Herzog’s Russian Stallions and Rayno’s Comedy Bulldogs...

With acts like these, you can see why Glima was always at the top of the bill! The headlines were great:

“A Novelty from the Frozen North”

“The Icelandic Manly Art of Self Defense”

“The Athletic Sensation of the World – Physical Culturists and Public Staggered!”

“Johannes’ Icelandic Stranglers”

Josephsson also toured with the Barnum & Bailey’s circus and while they were in New York City, there arose a disagreement between his troupe and the troupe of Japanese Jui-Jitsu men who also worked with the circus - as is witnessed in this newspaper article.

"Baby’s Cry Stops Wrestling Bout Between Far East and Icy North”

"Little Hekla, of Iceland, Objects to Father Battling with Japanese”

"Gladiators in Coats”

“This Handicaps Man from the North, but He is Declared Winner Nevertheless”



With no Cable TV, you saw the fight Live or on Paper View!

In an exciting wrestling bout on the roof of Madison Square Garden, Johannes Josephsson, of a troupe of Icelanders with Barnum & Bailey's circus, yesterday afternoon scored over Otagawa, a Japanese. Josephsson hurled Otagawa to the mat several times, but did not gain a complete fall. He permitted Otagawa to wear a jacket during the bout, which was the outcome of jealousy between the respective troupes with the circus.

Mrs. Josephsson, with her baby girl, Hekla, who is named after the largest volcano in Iceland, was in the ring of spectators. Mrs. Josephsson did not wish her husband to abandon straps which he usually wears when wrestling, but he told her he would have to concede something to Otagawa, who did not like the looks of his belt.

When Josephsson faced the little brown man, one of the champions of jiu-jitsu in his own country, everybody was keyed up to a high pitch of excitement, for there was fire in the eyes of the man from the North and a smile on the face of the one from the Far East. As Josephsson, with arms extended, approached, Otagawa threw a coat at him. For an instant the spectators thought there was going to be a fistfight, but the man from the

North calmly walked off the mat. Several other Japanese then tried to dissuade their countryman from taking part in the bout.

Josephsson explained he had not been in the habit of wrestling a man with a jacket tied around him with a cloth belt, but finally he was persuaded to take on Otagawa in that way. Norman Selby, “Kid McCoy”, was selected as referee, and Thomas Rankine announced that the men were ready for the bout.

The big fair-haired man had the spectators with him. “Get him, Joe!” and “Mind his leg!” they shouted. Certainly it was no child’s play when the two men came together. Bang! Josephsson looked in a precarious way, but he righted himself, and swept Otagawa off his feet, landing the exponent of jiu-jitsu on one shoulder. Then they struggled for nearly a minute, and finally Otagawa managed to get to his feet.

When the first round was declared over by McCoy, Josephsson asked Otagawa to wrestle with the upper part of his body naked, but the little brown man would not hear of it.

Josephsson then tied the coat around him and strode to the mat. Otagawa struggled to get a hold on the coat near his antagonist’s throat. Josephsson struggled free and hurled Otagawa to the mat. Then a struggle took place near the chairs.

Josephsson picked up Otagawa and pitched him over his shoulder. They clinched and swayed back and forth, but Josephsson could not pin Otagawa’s shoulders to the mat. Just then a baby’s cry was heard. It was from Hekla, two years and four months old, who could no longer bear to see her father struggling. He ceased to wrestle and went to the baby. There was applause when he took the child in his arms and cajoled her to be quiet. “I have given them their way,” he said afterward. “Let Otagawa wrestle me without the coat. I will show him something then.” But Otagawa had much faith in the coat. Thereupon the bout ended with McCoy declaring Josephsson the winner.

Josephsson, in his act with the circus, shows how a man knowing how to use his legs as well as his arms can get the best of three highwaymen. On the opening night of the circus his act elicited so much applause that the Japanese jiu-jitsu wrestlers became jealous. Judging by the noise when a

man falls after having attacked Josephsson, he is as quick in his way as the Japanese are in theirs.

One of the Japanese, A. Tamerki, following the bout, suspended animation. He was choked out by one of his countrymen until Dr. H.G. Grable and Dr. William E Young, who listened with a stethoscope and told the spectators his heart had ceased beating for one minute.



Josephsson and unknown sparring partner from his circus days

This was not the only time Josephsson would pit his Glima against Jiu-Jitsu. Again, in England, he fought a Japanese master named Diabutsu. The fight was set up by a newspaper, with the angle that if Josephsson could not throw Diabutsu within five minutes, he would have to pay 50 pounds sterling. Though we do not have a detailed account of the fight, it is known that Josephsson won it, throwing Diabutsu four times.

“Evening Times” Matches Josephsson and Diabutsu

The Iclander will Forfeit 50 Pounds if Diabutsu is not Thrown Within 5 Minutes

The wrestling match between Johannes Josephsson, the champion Icelandic “Glima” exponent, and Diabutsu, who is recognized as the best at the Japanese style, was definitely fixed up at the “Evening Times” office yesterday.

The contest will take place on stage at the Alhambra on Monday evening, and the considerable interest aroused should mean an exceptionally large audience.

The parties met at midday, Josephsson was represented by his manager, Mr. Henderson, whilst Mr. Neill conducted negotiations for Diabutsu, who speaks little English.

As usual, some time elapsed before the details were settled, the greatest stumbling block being the deposit of the money. Guarantees were required by each side, but after a lot of discussion these were finally arranged to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The two will wrestle in the Icelandic style... (A long listing of the rules for Glima follow, which we will reproduce in part 2 of this article) Diabutsu will be compelled to grip his opponent as if he were about to engage in a waltz with him. Whether this will be a total handicap or not remains to be seen.

In 1927, Josephsson finally returned to Iceland to stay with over \$120,000 US in his pocket. Having traveled for nearly 19 years, perhaps he was looking for some stability in his life when he invested over 1 million Krona of this in a gigantic hotel in the capital city of Reykjavik. He called his place Hotel Borg (fortress) and it opened in 1930, coinciding with the 1000th anniversary of the Icelandic Parliament, which brought throngs of visitors to Reykjavik. A visitor at the opening said “Staying here is as good as being on a cruise”, and with a grand dining hall seating 150, and 70 rooms it must have been quite opulent.

In addition to being a great master of his art, Josephsson was also a master showman of his art. No doubt today, with his Viking looks and fighting skill, he would be working in TV and movies (probably in a “buddy flick” with Van Damme) or still be working on the pro-wrestling circuit.

Like many wrestlers at that time who made their living by touring, particularly in circus setting where every event should seem like “the one you just can’t miss”, there is that fine mix of show and shoot that was essential. Certainly, his leaving the ring to hold his crying daughter Hekla, thus stopping a match, is a great way to finish in any era - and one that speaks to the character of the “Strong, Quiet Man from the North”

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