

DRUMMER Magazine and LEATHER HISTORY
PREVIEW: Final Draft for Reading, Research, & Quotation
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I'll have the Leather—with the oil on the side...
and the back, and the chest...

OLIVE-OIL WRESTLING
Young Turks in Leather
Special Issue, *Son of Drummer*

Written October 1977 and published in *Drummer* 20, January, 1978, and again in my special issue, *Son of Drummer*, September 1978, because—to fill in fast for some of the original material censored out of *Son of Drummer*—I'd come up with some photographs from the national Kirkpinar grease-wrestling at Erdine, Turkey. In the "Gay Sports" paste-up in *Drummer* 20, part of this Turkish bit was missing, so this was also a chance to lay it out correctly as well as promote some heavy breathing regarding the alternative ethnicity of hunks—Ottoman style. —Jack Fritscher, March 17, 1999
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If you saw the movie, *Topkapi*, you know about leather breeches, close-shaved hair, and olive-oil grappling. Brawn and breeches (which stand up on their own) are the uniform of an ancient, yet modern, race of heroes: the olive-oil wrestlers.

If an affair with the Turkish army is a good fuck-fantasy, a bout with a young Turkish wrestler is an even better reality.

Each August in Gallipoli, 500 male wrestlers pair off, slap their leather thighs, clasp each other to rub the olive oil into their naked torsos and into their leather breeches. The breeches, fit like American football pants from waist to mid-calf. They are made from forty-five pieces of leather and 200 yards of cotton, cost \$30, and last two years. They are soaked in water, sweat, and oil to soften the leather.

Each wrestler, stripped to the waist, usually sporting a heavy dark moustache and a crewcut, lavishly coats his leather breeches and his torso, arms, head, and feet with olive oil. He knots tight his breeches' waist cord, and the ritual, dating back to ancient Greek vases, begins.

Over the centuries, Turkish olive-oil wrestling has become more than a sport. It is a macho ritual woven from the stuff of young men's wet dreams. Immensely popular as a tourist attraction today, Turkish wrestling peaked 100 years ago when Sultan Abdul Aziz, a massive athlete and himself a wrestler, under his imperial blessing, added the refinement of swabbing the marble floors of his palaces, as well as the bodies of his wrestlers, with oil—a baroquely sensual, murderous, hardon touch.

Olive-oil wrestling has few rules. Anything goes in the free-for-all of 500 men, oiled, sweating in the sun, identified only by silver studs spelling out their names on the back waist of their leathers. There is much man-to-man macho chivalry and little shame in losing a match that goes on for hours and sometimes days. The only real shame is when a handsome young wrestler loses his leather breeches and is left standing oiled and naked in the sunswept field of brawling men. To him it's shame. To a tourist it's a prime Turkish Delight.

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SON OF *Drummer*