



The Florida Chapter of The National Wrestling Hall of Fame and Museum

NEWSLETTER

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Board Members

The Florida Chapter for the National Wrestling Hall of Fame was established in 2000.

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The President's Corner

*"I had no idea." "The highlight of my wrestling career."
"The highest honor I could ever receive." "Unbelievable."*

These are just a few of the statements I heard from the Class of 2017. This past August we inducted six individuals into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame and Museum through the Florida Chapter. The presentation took place at the Wyndham Hotel in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

Honors Weekend started early Friday morning with a golf outing at Remington Golf Course. Later that evening, the Florida chapter hosted a social for the Inductees, their family, friends, co-workers and former wrestlers. It was an evening of food, adult beverages, renewing relationships, laughter and emotion. As the celebration continued into the night, the Florida Chapters Board of Directors were hard at work preparing for the next morning.

Saturday morning was the Testimonial Brunch, where two individuals close to each Inductee had the opportunity to speak on the impact the inductee had on their lives. It is the most emotional part of the weekend and my favorite portion of the weekend. It highlights the influence these individuals have on the lives of so many and brings home the real reason why these Inductees are receiving this high honor for their Lifetime Service to the Sport. We do not just induct coaches. Officials and contributors who also give a lifetime of service to this great sport are eligible for inclusion.

After the Brunch, the Inductees and their Team Leaders set up memory boards, plaques, and scrapbooks for display at the Saturday evening banquet. The Florida Chapter also displays for its nineteen-year history and a history of Florida Wrestling. At 4 pm the Florida Chapter Alumni meet in the Hospitality Room for a social, and at 6 pm the doors open for a social hour prior to the Induction Banquet.

The main event of the weekend leads off with the parade of our past inductees and then the introduction of the Class of 2017 - Fidel Abelo, Allen Held, Henry Jackson, Dan Kelly, Russell Mauger

Jr. (Barabra Mauger), and Bob Thomas. After the opening ceremonies, all in attendance were treated to a wonderful meal. Then, the moment was here, the honoring of each individual and listening to the effect the sport of wrestling has had on their life. Terry Shockley, the Executive Director of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame and Museum, welcomes everyone and congratulates the Inductees. After the speeches are presented by each inductee, they receive "the Green Jacket". The Green Jacket is presented to all inductees nationwide and signifies that these individuals are in the National Wrestling Hall of Fame. If you have never been to a Florida Chapter Induction Ceremony, we encourage you to attend next August and share a part of Florida's Wrestling History. You will not regret it.

I personally want to thank our Board of Directors, Ambassadors, Volunteers, and Team Leaders who work all year to make this event the success that it is. This could not be done without their unconditional hard work.

***"When you do it, do with class,
for we are honoring the Best of the Best."***

Gary Townsend



**The Florida Chapter
of the
National Wrestling Hall of Fame
FOLK STYLE TOURNAMENT**

Saturday, November 4th

**Coral Springs High School
7201 West Sample Road
Coral Springs, Florida, 33065**

On Site Registration the morning of the tournament:

\$15.00 Entry Fee for One Division

\$5.00 for each Additional Division

Weigh - Ins Times

8:00 A.M. - 9:00 A.M.: Bantam, Intermediate, and Schoolboy

8:00 A.M. - 10:00 A.M.: Cadet and Juniors

Wrestling Begins

10:00 A.M.: Bantam, Intermediate, and Schoolboy

11:00 A.M.: Cadet and Juniors

Medals for the top 4 place winners

T - Shirts will be available for a \$ 5.00 donation

For any questions or concerns, please contact Robert Burns:

954-426-6457 or at hofwrestle07@yahoo.com



Steve Sentes - Class of 2013

Steve began wrestling in Middle School in 1971 and has continued to be involved in the sport since then. Steve and his wife Cindy have made wrestling a family affair including their three children, Steve II, Tayia and Scotti. He started their children wrestling at a very young age in Michigan. Both Steve II and Scotti went on to compete in Division 1 wrestling and today coach high school and college wrestling.

After moving this family to Okeechobee in 1989, Steve became involved with Okeechobee High School and hosted USA tournaments. He always carried his whistle and arm bands so he could referee if needed when he wasn't coaching or announcing. He would help pair the wrestlers and do whatever else needed to be done. Steve was a USA Official for years. He wanted to build Florida wrestling and was soon active in the FAWA, serving as South Director for two terms. In 1996 Steve led Okeechobee High School to its first regional wrestling title in school history and set a school record by qualifying 13 wrestlers for the Florida State Championship. Coach Sentes was the Palm Beach Post Coach of the Year in 1996. At the time Steve built the largest wrestling club in Florida with over 150 members of all ages. He started the Okeechobee Big Lake Wrestling Classic which is still run today by Okeechobee High School.

When his wife Cindy was nominated by the FAWA as the first women's development director, Steve formed a girls' team at Okeechobee High School. He held the first women's national level freestyle tournament in Florida and when some coaches were against girls wrestling, Steve would say "it's time we think outside the box and help this sport grow". Steve's daughter, Tayia went on to win the Appalachian Mountain National Championships, which was one of the first national level female events at the time.

When asked, Steve put together a guide book for tournament directors, he came up with a comprehensive handbook that dealt with everything from registration and weigh-ins, having emergency telephone numbers handy to clean-up after the tournament. USA Wrestling thought so much of it that they developed a similar book and sent it to every club. Steve coached on several USA Team Florida Freestyle and Greco Teams over the years.

In 1998, Steve helped coach the Fort Myers High School Wrestling team to the Florida State 5A Championship. In 1999 the team finished as state runner-up. He helped coach a total of 14 individual state champions and numerous place winners. Steve helped coach high school teams that perennially finished in the top ten in the state.

In 2000, Coach Sentes was founder and CEO of the Team Florida Foundation that developed a program to provide scholarships for wrestlers to attend national events that couldn't afford to go without financial assistance. He also built the Team Florida Foundation National Training Center to train athletes year around. In 2001 Steve was team leader and head coach for Team Florida that won the NHSAA National Open Team Championship, which was the first national team title in Florida Wrestling History. In 2001 Steve established the Pinnacle Wrestling Tournament. Former state champions and runner-ups were invited to compete, offering the caliber of talent that would help open the doors for college scouts to recruit athletes to further their wrestling careers and higher education. In 2002 Coach Sentes was selected as Florida Man of the Year by USA Wrestling.

Steve came out of retirement to coach with his oldest son, Steve II, which he calls one of the most rewarding experiences in his life. He enjoys following his sons who are coaching at high school and college.

Now, Steve is a grandfather with eight grandchildren and, needless to say, he is busy coaching them in wrestling and spending time with his grandchildren. Unfortunately for the Florida wrestling community, Steve is no longer a resident. Please read on to see what experience awaits him!

To Board Members of the Florida Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame and Museum,

It is with a heavy heart that I am announcing my resignation from the Board. Cindy and I are both retiring from the Florida Retirement System and moving to Southern California. I have accepted the position as Executive Director of the Chino Basin Water Conservation District. It is a wonderful opportunity to manage a state agency and develop a shared vision with staff and the governing board and to focus on taking the agency to a higher level of excellence.

We will miss our friends on the Board and wish all of you the best of luck. It was exciting to be a small part of all the great things you do for the wrestling community. Cindy and I plan to stay involved as much as possible in the future but the distance is too far to remain active on the Board. We are looking forward to our new adventure on the West Coast but we will still have memories of all the good times we had together. God Bless.

Steve Sentes

We are saddened by the resignation of Steve Sentes from our Board of Directors. Jane and I have been acquainted with Steve, Cindy, and their family for over 25 years. We have worked together working Tournaments for many years and became good friends, or, I should say, a wrestling family. Steve has been a dedicated coach and contributor to the sport.

Steve and Cindy joined the Board of Directors for the Florida Chapter three years ago. In that short time, he updated many of our inductee bios, developed the newsletter, and built databases of over 600 coaches, officials, and contributors. Steve has been a major factor in the success of this organization.

Steve and Cindy, on behalf of the Florida Chapter Board and the Alumni, we wish you the very best life has to offer. You will be missed!

Gary Townsend

Correction for

Randy Jessee -Class of 2005

Two numbers were omitted from the Spring article: 1981 and 42. Randy was FACA Coach of the Year in 1981, and he and Vicki have been married for over 42 years. Please accept our apologies for this omission.

My Hall of Fame Journey

Courtesy of the Florida Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame

by Coach Bob Thomas

In the fall of 2016 I received a heads up call from Gary Townsend that I was one of the nominees for the Florida Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame. My immediate reaction was feeling not worthy. How could a kid who first took the mat for the Chagrin Falls High School JV Wrestling team, in 1966, wearing canvas Converse wrestling shoes, be in anyone's hall of fame? It took a journey to change my mind. Not the one that started in 1966, but the one that began with Gary's phone call.

When I made the cut I participated in a process culminating in the Hall of Fame Honors Weekend on August 11 and 12, 2017. In March we were introduced at the FSHAA State Championships. Fellow inductees Fidel Albelo, Allen Held, Henry Jackson, and Dan Kelly received our marching orders to select a team leader and show up at the Townsend's home later that month. (Russel Mauger, Jr. was inducted posthumously.) We met board members and received instructions. Here we learned our responsibilities; a seven-minute speech (given while wearing a tuxedo), prepare a mailing list (for invitations) of 125 guests, make a collage for a memorabilia display, and select two friends to say nice things at the Honors Weekend Testimonial Brunch.

Meeting the responsibility of each task along the journey is what morphed my feeling of belonging. Compiling a guest list so large resulted in countless conversations with people I had not had contact with in years. This included my high school coach who shocked me with his attendance and my high school chum, who recruited me in 1966, was a participant in my induction. I had started work immediately on my acceptance speech and after endless edits and rehearsals I came to view my voluminous experiences (most ending up on the editing floor) as solid evidence of my wrestling history. Assembling material for a collage allowed me to revisit the 37 teams I had been a part of and connect with past experiences, many

I share with Hall of Fame alumni. More evidence to me that, indeed there was a place for me in the Hall.

The Board of Directors, in advance, shared with us just how meaningful the Hall of Fame Honors Weekend ceremonies would be. They were right in a big way! An early arrival at the Wyndham Lake Buena Vista brought me together with family and friends poolside that added a layer of excitement.

The Friday night social opened the weekend festivities



Teeny and Don Smith manning the ticket table

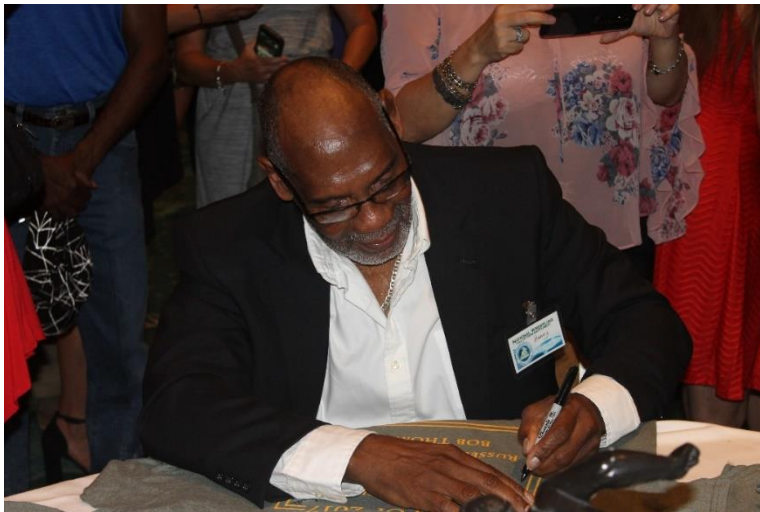
with a spotlight on the inductees:



Inductee Fidel Albelo and friends



Inductee Allen Held and friends



Inductee Henry Jackson autographing the Inductees' t-shirts



Mrs. Russel Mauger, Jr. autographing the Inductees t-shirts



Dan Kelly with family and friends

The Saturday morning brunch included a delicious meal and kind words from two friends who usually make it their business to point out my flaws.



Bob Thomas and friends

Saturday, noon, there was a rehearsal for the crowning event, a Heisman moment, praised by the NWHOF chairman as the premier state chapter induction.

The evening was indeed a center of the universe experience, as we and the sport of wrestling were elevated to a lofty perch. We were treated to a special weekend and shown VIP status. By the time my escort and I were introduced I had convinced myself that, as a result of this reflective journey, I was a rightful recipient of the “Lifetime Service to Wrestling” award.



Bob Thomas with friends and his Wrestling Hall of Fame plaque.



The Class of 2017: Henry Jackson, Dan Kelly, Mrs. Russel Mauger, Jr. (for her husband), Allen Held, Fidel Albelo, and Bob Thomas.

I am humbled by the experience and appreciative of the efforts put forth by the Board who took me on this journey. Thank You All.

*Coach Thomas
HoF 2017*



My Memories of Great Matches Involving Florida Wrestlers **by Ira Fleckman, Contributing Writer**

BARRY KELLEY, Cypress Lake HS

There was no question who my team captain was when I got to Cypress Lake HS, as Barry Kelly stood out from all the other wrestlers. He wasn't the toughest wrestler in the room. That title went to Greg Stillwell, a state placer as a tenth grader. (Don't look it up, because he was Greg Tuck and then became Stillwell.) Barry was tall for a 140-145 pound wrestler. He was handsome, had long arms and legs and followed instructions. He could do anything after being shown a move or technique just once. He never argued, raised his voice, or goofed around in the practice room. He had dignity.

These were rough times for high school athletes. Every weekend there were parties. There was a PHD, Dr. Tim O'Leary, who preached drugs, sex and rock and roll. There was war in Viet Nam, and war in the streets in most American cities. Integration took place by court order in 1970 and this was just 1974 and everyone didn't get along. Did these things have an effect on the wrestlers? One would be a fool not to believe they did.

Anyway, here are two memories I have of Barry Kelley.

One: Barry surprised me by dropping a weight class to wrestle Charlotte's tough 137-pound Spurgeon. This was one of the best wrestlers in the area and he was not afraid to draw attention to himself. He wore a wide brimmed straw hat and let you know he thought he was the best guy on the mat.

Barry went after Spurgeon from the opening whistle and was well ahead when he just sort of ran out of gas. It seems that Barry had made the decision to drop a weight class too late and crashed down. Spurgeon won the match. Barry made no effort to change weight classes again.

Two: One day in practice I was explaining why a wrestler must never step over the Wizzer (overhook). I demonstrated that once a wrestler committed to stepping over, his opponent could simply rise up his hips and the wrestler attempting to step over would be on his back.

Barry seemed to think that it was possible to step over. He had the long legs, but I explained that unless he could catch a crossbody ride, he would be dumped on his back. He asked if he could try doing the step over into a crossbody ride and I agreed, expecting that he would do this in practice. To my surprise, he did it going full speed in a match. He attacked with a leg attack. His opponent drove him down to the mat with a Wizzer and Barry stepped over and hooked his leg and had a crossbody ride, which he promptly used to pin his opponent.

I don't believe I have seen Barry too many times since his graduation but his older brother's son now wrestles for Ft. Myers, I think. Look for Blaine Kelley to become a smooth wrestler like his uncle Barry.

More Photos from the 2017 Honors Weekend







**Congratulations to Lisa Burns
2017 recipient of the President's Award**



The President's Award is given to a volunteer that has donated many, many hours and gone above and beyond for the Florida Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame.
Thank you, Lisa!