



# **National Wrestling Hall of Fame and Museum Florida Chapter**

## **NEWSLETTER**

**Volume 3 Issue 2**

**Summer 2019**

## About the Florida Chapter

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

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**VISIT**

**WEBSITE:** <http://nwhof.org/florida/>



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**MAKE YOUR HONORS WEEKEND  
RESERVATIONS NOW!**

**Visit Ticketleap for more information:**

**<https://fl-nwhof.ticketleap.com/>**

## *The President's Podium*

In a few weeks the Florida Chapter will celebrate its 20th year of service representing the National Wrestling Hall of Fame and the Florida Wrestling Community by honoring individuals who have dedicated their lives to this sport. The National Hall of Fame's primary goal is to preserve the history of the sport of wrestling. The Florida Chapter's primary goal is more focused: to preserve the history of Florida Wrestling and honor those individuals who have dedicated their lives to this great sport. When a coach, official, or contributor dedicates their lives to developing young men and woman and Florida Wrestling, the Florida Chapter takes pride in their efforts by honoring these special individuals with a first class weekend and a memory they will carry forever.

Next month we will honor our twenty years of service with a special social for the Florida Alumni and special guests. We will also present and preview the new Florida Wrestling Museum and Chapter History. Over the past few years, we have been collecting memorabilia of Florida wrestling history and the history of the Florida Chapter Hall of Fame Weekend. The collection has grown and we are excited to share with Honors Weekend attendees. I would like to thank Omar Mubaidin for taking a special interest in our Chapter and for his generous contribution to preserve Florida Wrestling History. Thanks also to Pete Collins for his hard work and dedication with the establishment of the Florida Wrestling History Museum and to Bill and Melanie Combs for developing and maintaining the history of the Florida Chapter.

The future of our Chapter is bright with plans for continued support and promotion of Girls Wrestling, a scholarship fund for high school wrestlers, and continued development of the Museums. You will not want to miss this year's Honors Weekend on August 16 and 17 at the Wyndham Lake Buena Vista Hotel and Resort. For more information, please visit our website at <https://nwhof.org/florida>.

***Remember, when we do it, do it with class,  
for we are honoring the best of the best***

*Gary Townsend*

The NWHOF Florida Chapter held two events in May.

Read on for reviews for each event!

The **8th Annual Sporting Clays Tournament** was held on Saturday, May 4,<sup>th</sup> at Quail Creek Plantation. Some clay targets were destroyed, many hoots, giggles, and laughs were shared, and a good time was had by all.





## **NWHOF Florida Chapter Wrestling Tournament**

285 entries combined with all 3 styles = a very busy day!



Tampa Jesuit High School was the perfect venue for the Florida Chapter-sponsored USA tournament, complete with an Ashley Sword Clinic. Thanks to the host Tigers boosters and wrestling coach Sal Basile, the event was special. Three styles were offered for boys and girls, with participants travelling from as far away as Ft Lauderdale to compete. An out-of-the-ordinary coaches' and officials' hospitality room was an amenity rarely - if ever! - seen at an off-season event. With outstanding support from the Florida Chapter Board, we were able to fulfill our mission of hosting a tournament, showcase the Florida Wrestling Museum display, and sell a few T-shirts! Thanks to MyHOUSE, NWCA, and Combs Service for your support. Thank you to Sam Agresti, Bob and Lisa Burns, Pete Collins, Bill and Melanie Combs, John and De Heyman, Don Smith, Jim Smoot, Alan and Cecelia Solomon, Gary Townsend, and Bob Thomas, for your time and dedication to the sport of wrestling. Also, a big thanks to the alumni that stopped by!



Hall of Fame member Father Divine



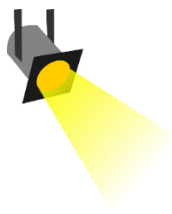
Bill Combs and Gary Townsend



Jesuit Coach Sal Basile



Future high school wrestlers



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

**Russ Cozart**

**Class of 2000**

Russ Cozart and baseball? Not the usual sport connected to him, but on July 1<sup>st</sup> Russ threw a ceremonial First Pitch at the Orioles-Rays game at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg.



Photos curtesy of Alan Solomon



Russ shared that the Tampa Bay Rays gave him a baseball jersey with his name and the number 27 to represent the number of state championships he has won at Brandon High School. Many friends attended the game to support his big pitch!

Coach Cozart was part of the Inaugural Class for the NWHOF Florida Chapter. Alan Solomon caught up with him a day or so after his great first pitch to find out if life has changed for Russ in the last twenty years. The answer is no and yes.

Russ is still coaching at Brandon HS. In the past twenty years, his teams have added to Brandon Wrestling history. Team State Championships now number 28, numerous District and Region championships, a total of 120 individual state champions, and 155 place finishers. He has also taken teams to the Ironman Tournament and the Beast of the East. Russ has coached for 44 years, with 40 of those years at Brandon HS. He plans to teach and coach for a couple more years, as he still is enjoying it.

Coach Cozart's two sons have stayed involved with wrestling. Rocky lends a hand with the recreation programs and camps. Joe is a 2X NAIA champ, teaches at Brandon HS, and is his dad's assistant coach. Russ and his wife Jeanna have travelled a lot with his own wrestling. Coach Cozart has 10 National titles and 7 World titles. The Cozarts plan on becoming tourists after he retires. Mountains and lakes are in their future!



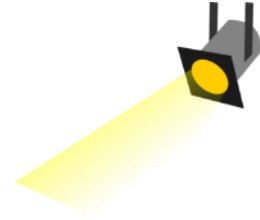
Gold medals aren't really made  
of gold. They're made of sweat,  
determination, and a hard-to-  
find alloy called guts.

---Dan Gable

# **ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT**

**Jim Husk**

**Class of 2000**



I have been at Columbus HS here in Miami since 2004. I started the program at Archbishop Curley in 1965, the year of our first sanctioned State Tournament held at Miami Dade North Junior College, coached then by our friend Rick Tucci. 38 teams and no Qualifier in that very first state championship - how far we have come! After four years I left with a 54-8 dual record and went to Miami Southwest to basically start their struggling program and stayed for eight years (1969-76), going 98-22-1. I then had a chance to start a brand-new program at Miami Southridge, where, from 1977-2004, my coaching record was 541-38-3. I enrolled in the DROP program or wouldn't have left.

It wasn't long before some schools were looking for a coach, and that's when I went to Columbus, an all-boys Catholic high school like Archbishop Curley was. The team has gone 310-48 in that time. My 54-year record is 1,003-118-4, which is more matches than I thought I would be involved in!

As long as I am healthy enough to continue, I would like to, as I always get enthusiastic over teaching and watching new groups of boys develop in our great sport. End of the season Tournament Time is most exciting, of course, but recently I have enjoyed the Disney Duals in June at the Wide World of Sports complex, where we get to compete against teams from other states.

Since receiving the NWHOF Lifetime Service to Wrestling honor in 2000, I have been fortunate and honored to be named to the FHSAA HOF in 2002, the Cliff Keene Dream Team USA coach in 2003, the FACA HOF in 2005, the NFHS National Coach of the Year award in 2006, and Pennsylvania Wrestling Coaches HOF in 2009, where I graduated and wrestled in Waynesburg PA in high school.

My wife Olga and I have a stepdaughter. I have a son, Jim Jr., with whom I am very close, and fortunately he lives nearby. I am also very proud of my two granddaughters. Brittany is a recent graduate of

Villanova, where she was all-Big East softball player. Lizzie is a sophomore at FSU.

My life is full of ups and downs in our daily struggle for survival, but I honestly have to say that sports, and wrestling in particular, teaches us how to deal with such situations.

Thank you all for reading this. Jim Husk





## **ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT**

**Rick Tucci**

**Class of 2000**

Recently, Rick Tucci took a few moments to chat with Alan Solomon about the years since his induction in the Inaugural Class of the NWHOF - Florida Chapter. Rick has been a busy guy!

To begin, he is still officiating internationally, with the World Championships in Moscow in 2010 being one of many places he has been. Rick was an official at the 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 Olympics. He was an International wrestling officials instructor until 2012, when he retired from that position.

Rick was inducted into the Olympic Wrestling HOF during the Games in Rio in 2016. Travel costs limited many of his family members from attending, but they were able to watch through streaming video. Isn't technology wonderful!

Since 2000 Rick has been on the Executive Committee for Officials for this hemisphere. (Yes, all of North and South America!) The committee meets during the Pan- Am championships. He also conducts officials' clinics in NA and SA.

Rick is the President of the USA Wrestling Officials, a group which has approximately 2800 members. Locally, he is a member of the Broward County Wrestling Association, where he has the role of Booking Commissioner. Rick has officiated at many, many District, Region, and State tournaments. He has been an officials' evaluator at State tournament. Rick also directs clinics for athletes with the athletes' POV. Rick will attend the Fargo tournament this summer, with its 26 mats and 3,000 or so wrestlers. There will be international officials and an Officials Convention.



Rick's family is doing well. His wife, Cina, is a runner. She trains for marathons and half-marathons. Son Dominic is a marketing director. Son Nick is an ER paramedic in Pembroke Pines.



The Tucci family

Wrestling is the only sport I've ever competed in that puts you totally in a situation of constant motion without breaks. I could play football or baseball, swim -- but there's always some kind of situation that would break my thoughts, break my concentration.

--Dan Gable

# QUALIFIED CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM IRAS

## RETIREMENT PLANS

Certain IRA holders have the opportunity to make tax-free distributions from their IRAs to qualified charitable organizations. For tax-free eligibility, the qualified charitable distribution (QCD) must be sent directly from the IRA payable to the receiving qualified 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

### Eligibility and Donation Limit

IRA holders must be at least 70½ years of age before the distribution. In addition, beneficiaries of inherited IRAs who meet the age requirement can also take advantage of QCDs.

For those who qualify, the maximum IRA charitable distribution is limited to \$100,000 per tax year. Any distribution in excess of this limit will not qualify for the tax exclusion benefit and will be treated as ordinary income. The provision applies for Traditional, Roth, and inherited IRAs, but does not typically apply to distributions from “active” SEP or SIMPLE IRAs.

### Benefits of a QCD

If a taxpayer makes the donation as prescribed by the IRS, then the distribution will be excluded from gross income and counts toward:

- The taxpayer’s \$100,000 exclusion limitation for the year the distribution occurs and
- The taxpayer’s required minimum distribution (RMD) for the current year

With the increase in the standard deduction for 2018 and future tax years to \$26,600 for married filing jointly age 65 or older and \$13,600 for single filers age 65 or older, more Americans will be using the standard deduction rather than itemizing deductions on their tax returns. QCDs are excluded from taxable income, but do not allow for an itemized deduction. If more individuals age 70 ½ or older use the standard deduction, the QCD is a great way to keep taxable income lower when satisfying an RMD and still get the full benefit of the standard deduction. By using the standard deduction, a taxpayer will receive no benefit for their charitable contribution unless it is processed as a QCD from an IRA. In addition, by not including a charitable donation from an IRA as ordinary income, an individual’s adjusted gross income is not increased, which could affect the ability to:

- Qualify for Roth IRA contributions
- Avoid other potential tax ramifications, such as:
  1. The 3.8% health care surcharge. (Even though distributions from IRAs are exempt from the 3.8% health care surcharge, taxable distributions from IRAs could push income over the threshold amount, causing other investment income to be subject to the surtax.)
  2. Paying more for Medicare Premiums.
  3. Taxation on Social Security Benefits.

### QCD Tax Reporting

Typically, the custodian of an IRA will report a QCD as a normal distribution on the 1099R tax form, while QCDs from inherited IRAs are reported as death distributions. This gives the IRS no notification that an IRA holder intended to make a tax-free distribution from the IRA to a charity. It is the responsibility of the IRA holder or his or her tax preparer to properly report the QCD on a 1040 tax return. It is also strongly suggested that the IRA holder obtains a receipt from the charitable organization.

### Is a QCD the right strategy for you?

Please seek the aid of a competent tax advisor or tax attorney for guidance.



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PCR# 032018-01 Stifel does not provide tax advice. You should consult with your professional tax advisor regarding your particular situation.

**2019 State Chapter Conference  
and National Wrestling Hall of Fame Honors Weekend  
Thursday-Saturday May 30 - June 1, 2019**

**Special Report from Pete Collins**

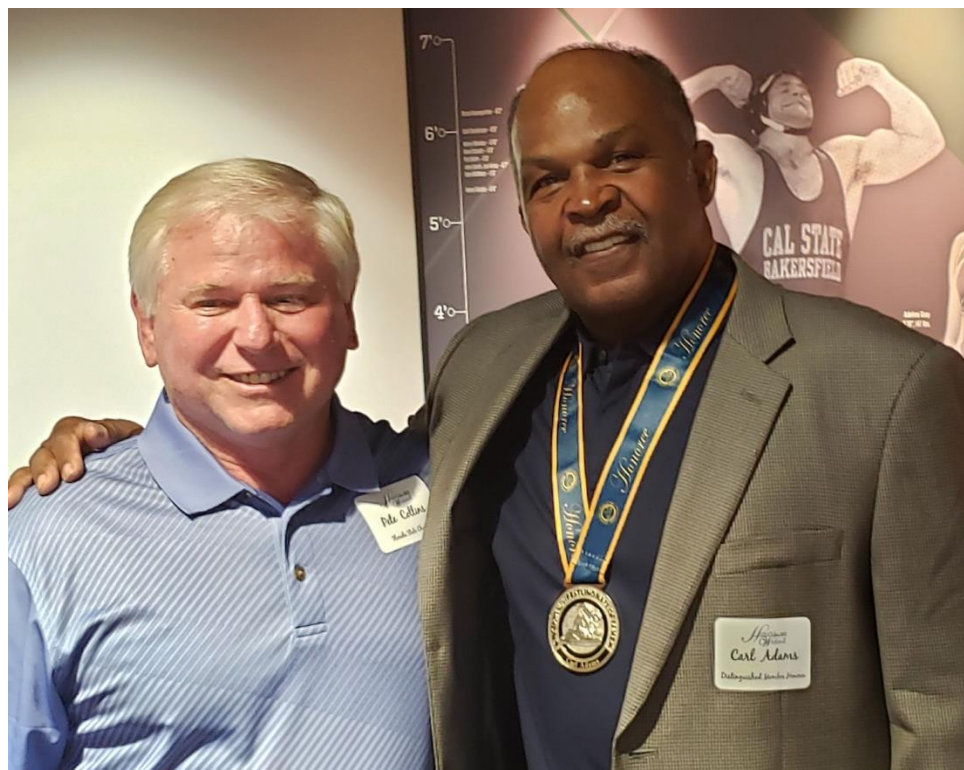
On May 30<sup>th</sup> Don Smith, my wife Debra, and I travelled to Stillwater, Oklahoma, to represent the Florida Chapter at the 2019 State Chapter Conference. The forum was moderated by Leroy Smith, Executive Director of the NWHOF, and Krista Graff, State Chapters Director. Day 1 topics included State Chapter Review, NWHOF Update, Preview of Upcoming Events, Dan Gable Waterloo Museum Renovation, Sanction 50 Women's Wrestling Initiative, and Updating Chapter Websites. Leroy Smith introduced the "Wrestling for All Partners Program" and reviewed program proposal specifications and funding goals to increase interest and participation in wrestling across all generations. Day 2 topics included Chapter and Banquet Promotion/Marketing and Chapter Development and Sponsorship. The Downstate New York Chapter shared how state chapters can become involved through the "Wrestling Takedown Drugs Initiative," a program to involve wrestling as a means to help combat the opioid and substance abuse epidemic sweeping through our communities. To learn more about the Takedown Drugs Initiative, visit <https://wrestlingtakesdowndrugs.org/>

Don, Debra, and I also attended Honors Weekend events for the National Wrestling Hall of Fame Class of 2019 Inductees that included a Welcome Reception and Dinner on Thursday for conference attendees, Presentation of Plaques at the Hall of Fame Museum on Friday evening, and both the Testimonial Brunch and the Honors Banquet on Saturday. Rick Tucci, Florida Chapter and NWHOF Member, spoke on behalf of Dave Errett at Saturday's Testimonial Brunch.

It was a special weekend and an awesome experience to be in the company of so many wrestling legends and to have the opportunity to tour the National Wrestling Hall of Fame Museum.



John Smith and Pete



Pet and Carl Adams





Pete found himself!

The NWHOF Class of 2019 included:

- David Errett, Meritorious Official
- David Curby, Order of Merit
- Jim “Doc” McCloughan, Medal of Courage
- Stephen Cannon, Outstanding American
- Carl Adam, Distinguished Member
- Rich Lorenzo, Distinguished Member
- Brandon Paulson, Distinguished Member
- Townsend Saunders, Distinguished Member

Also honored during the weekend were Emily Shilson, winner of the Tricia Saunders High School Excellence Award, and Cohlton Schultz, winner of the Dave Schultz High School Excellent Award. To see the induction videos and speeches for the NWHOF Class of 2019, visit <https://vimeo.com/nwhof>



## Congratulations!

On behalf of everyone here at MyHOUSE, we would like to extend our congratulations to all of the inductees for making it into the Hall of Fame. While we do greatly apologize that we could not be there to share in your momentous day, know that if we could have come, we would have.



# SUMMER COMBO DEALS

ALL ORDERS MUST BE IN BY AUGUST 1, 2019



**\$78**

**SINGLET / SHORT**

MINIMUM ORDER OF 14 SETS

SC19



**\$119**

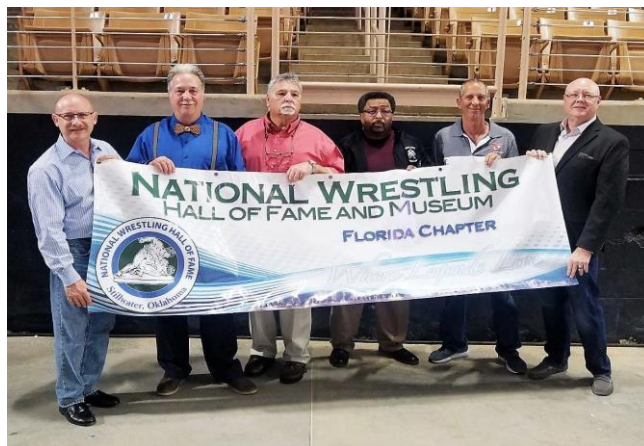
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MINIMUM ORDER OF 14 SETS

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## ***2019 Honors Weekend Events***

### Friday, August 16<sup>th</sup>

9:00 AM - Golf Event

6:00 PM – Alumni Only Event

8:00 PM – Meet and Greet Social

### Saturday, August 17<sup>th</sup>

9:00 AM – Testimonial Breakfast

7:00 PM – Induction Banquet

**Tickets for all events:** <https://fl-nwhof.ticketleap.com/>

**Hotel reservations** for Wyndham Buena Vista Resort, 1850 Hotel Plaza Blvd, Lake Buena Vista, Fl 32830:

Direct contact: 800-624-4109, and tell the reservation clerk you will be attending the National Wrestling Hall of Fame Florida, Honors Weekend August 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>

OR Online reservations:

<https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/groups/hr/national-wrestling-hall-of-fame1>

## *Coaches Corner*

No long article this issue, just a reminder. If you have: changed schools, changed emails, know of a new school opening with a new coach, or know a coach who would like to receive this newsletter, please send the updates to [nwhoffloridachapternewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:nwhoffloridachapternewsletter@gmail.com) Thank you!

## *Officials Position*

Greeting fellow officials!

With the induction ceremony for the Florida Chapter of the Wrestling Hall of Fame coming in August, the start of the high school season is just around the corner.

Registration for Wrestling officials started July 9<sup>th</sup>, and the deadline for registration is October 18th. Register now – do not wait!

Recruitment of new officials should be a focus of every Association. Talk to senior wrestlers and let them know that a great way to stay involved in the sport of wrestling is to become an official. It's also a good way to earn some extra money! The same goes for any college kids who have wrestled. If your association has any good ideas for recruitment, please share! Contact me at [jim\\_smoot@hotmail.com](mailto:jim_smoot@hotmail.com). Your ideas may be part of a future column! This season should be a good one, as a lot of athletes have worked hard over the summer and wrestled in tournaments all over the state and country. The club programs continue to grow and are producing outstanding wrestlers. The future is looking good! To help continue this momentum and growth, officials are needed for local, state, and national tournaments during the spring and summer. Please consider joining USA or AAU as an official during the High School off-season. This is a great way to meet and learn from officials from all over the state and country and a great way to improve your skills with mat time.

I hope everyone has a safe and great season this year.

Jim Smoot



## *The John and Helen Vaughn Award*

This prestigious chapter award was created to acknowledge those deserving individuals who otherwise may not receive recognition for their profound contribution to the sport of amateur wrestling in the state.

### **Kristy Jeffrey**

Kristy began club wrestling the summer after her freshman year at Deland High School after talking her parents into letting her participate. Once she started wrestling, her parents were very supportive.

During her Sophomore year, she had nine wins, including three pins, and placed 6<sup>th</sup> at the Seabreeze Tournament. During her Junior year she celebrated seven wins, including six pins. She was only pinned twice that year. Any loss during her Senior year was not due to a pin. She had eleven wins including four pins, was the Team Captain, and also a Regional Qualifier.

Kristy went on to wrestle for two years at University of Minnesota–Morris. She had several 1<sup>st</sup> place wins during her career including a 1<sup>st</sup> at University Nationals, where she was named Outstanding Wrestler. Kristy was a member of Women's Team USA and ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in her weight class. She traveled to France for her first International competition and went 1–2. During travel in Australia and New Zealand, she won all four competitions. In 1997, Kristy was Minnesota USA Wrestling Woman of the Year. The next year she was Team Captain and had dual 1<sup>st</sup> place titles at the Keystone Open at 136 and 149 weight class. Kristy wrestled for Team USA in the winter tour to Sweden at the Klippan Ladies Cup. That same year she took 5<sup>th</sup> in the US Women's Nationals and won the Most Falls in Least Time award.

For more information on her wrestling career please visit [www.nwhof.org/florida](http://www.nwhof.org/florida)

## *Wrestler Pin Down*

### **The Next Level...My Perspective**

By Jess Liptzin

For the average high school wrestler, the sport can be a grind. Hot, sweaty, grueling practices, drilling repeatedly with no end in sight, and the dreaded dietary demands that seem impossible at times are all rewarded and forgotten when a hand is raised in victory or a team secures a dramatic win. The high school wrestler believes these are some of the hardest moments in their life. Relatively speaking, this is true. However, rarely do they recognize the leniency high school wrestling provides when compared to the next level, college wrestling.

Some collegiate athletes view their high school wrestling experience as fun, some of the best moments in their lives. Even the moderate wrestling fan understands that college wrestling is more challenging than any of the wrestling done in grades 9-12. This is not merely attributed to the consistently increased level of competition or the lengthier season, with doubly intensive work-outs and unspeakable brutality. Long after high school graduation, a wrestler might recognize their grade 9-12 experience was a whole lot more fun compared to the overall college grind. Through high school, wrestlers make sacrifices on a large scale. The average wrestler was able to miss a workout or eat desert or a slice of pizza, even went to parties on the weekend with little attention to a bedtime. These liberties are taken for granted and disappear to some extent for the dedicated athlete as they transition to the collegiate level. In spite of the “increased dedication,” many college wrestlers explained that these factors are hardly noticeable as their love for the sport only grew even through the hardest moments. The high school wrestling season can seem all encompassing. During the season many athletes are completely ‘locked-in,’ wrestling being their main priority. For some there is nothing but wrestling, because their passion is intolerable of other distractions. Several wrestlers from both Division 1 and 3 programs shared that, while wrestling at their respective universities, there is an element of self-discipline that comes with maturity, enabling them to entertain and handle other aspects of life. One wrestler explained, “You can’t just be thinking about wrestling all the time. You have to balance school with wrestling. It can be difficult, especially when considering the rigorous work-outs multiple times in a day, along with cutting weight, and preparation for the next match.” The wrestling could seemingly overwhelm all other aspects of life, but he went on to say that balance in academics, school, and a social life are also a priority that need to have their place. “All of this keeps me busy and that’s something you need, especially to alleviate the mental strain of the long season.”

One of the most significant differences between high school and college wrestling is the accountability for priorities. While speaking to several collegiate wrestlers, they explained that the “hand-holding” is over once you hit the NCAA level. “At first the freedom feels great, then a bit overwhelming.” But, as indicated earlier, maturity helps foment an appreciation for these

new liberties as personal accountability takes over. Several of the wrestlers found new levels of dedication in their independence, including greater attention to nutrition, an actual bedtime, and a schedule for practice and academics.

During a recent interview I asked a D-1 wrestler about his teammates and he explained, “In high school I made some great friends, but in college I made life-long friends that are now my brothers.” He shared with me that one of his biggest fears was not being accepted or liked in the “room.” He laughs at that now because the stress and angst he exhibited were all for naught. He finds the wrestling room to be a completely supportive and fun environment. In speaking to two other former teammates who are currently wrestling in college, they said that the team is like a big family where they can all fight at some points and not like one another at time. But, in the end, everyone always has each other’s back. The simplicity of these responses conveys the intrinsic value inherent in the college wrestling experience. As grueling and rigorous as it might be, the relationships, as well as the previously mentioned independence, seem to enhance the grind. These friendships formed with teammates and coaches is all the result to the countless hours spent with one another training for the same goal, and that is to be at the top when it is all over.

The clearest change in the transition from high school to college is the skill level and work ethic of all competitors. Sam Hazewinkel had an undefeated high school career in the state of Florida, where none came close to defeating him. At the next level it was a little different, where in the first year he recorded five losses. Still, his talents and work ethic allowed him to compete in college for a championship. Obe Blanc from Lely High School captured a state title in his storied high school career. He had to adjust to wrestling at both Lock Haven and Oklahoma State, yet with the struggle of college came an even bigger reward when he captured a 6<sup>th</sup> place finish in the 2007 National Championships. Another wrestler I spoke to about his domination of high school and reality check in college said, “The drill partners you have alone are better than most of your high school competition, so each and every practice I feel I’m growing as a wrestler. I came in placing in the state and now I lose in my own room. It’s only getting me better.”

During a high school wrestling season, you will find some people who can be beaten with relative ease. In college competition you are wrestling athletes with much more preparation and skill level, as well as passion. Most are there for the same reason and with the same goals. A college wrestler competes to break his opponent, a consistent mindset that makes each match a grind, one match after another, in a potentially long and anguishing season. Both high school and college wrestlers step on the mat to win. The goal is similar. However, the means to the end deviates in the time and dedication involved at the secondary level. The simple things like eating right, attending all workouts, and having a reasonable sleep schedule can bring us closer to those goals. Finding that out in high school can bring you a state title. Understanding that in college might not bring you a championship, it will likely guarantee nothing, but it is the simplest step in the process to becoming great goals shared by most college athletes. The transition from high school to college can be difficult but equally

rewarding. The sport appears the same, but the demands are different. There are clearly rewards at both levels, but it is clear that the success in college can also be measured in maturity as well as the relationships you forge.

Note: The writer is a former outstanding high school wrestler in New Jersey and is presently a Journalism major at Montclair State University.

\*\*\*\*\*

THERE IS STILL TIME TO  
REGISTER FOR THE EVENTS  
DURING HONORS WEEKEND!  
[WWW.NWHOF.ORG/FLORIDA](http://WWW.NWHOF.ORG/FLORIDA)



*Please support the NWHOF Florida Chapter sponsors*



**561-245-4722**



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\*\*\*\*\*

You can't ever work too much because there's no such thing as being in too good condition. You can't ever lift too many weights because you can't ever get too strong. You can't ever wrestle too much because you can always do better.

--Dan Gable

# *Memories of Great Matches Involving Florida Wrestlers*

*by Ira Fleckman, Contributing Writer*

## **Henry Geller, North Miami HS**

Anyone who ever saw Henry Geller on the mat saw a wrestler who wrestled as a wrestler is supposed to wrestle. Henry was small--the perfect 105 pounder. He had all the qualities of an Olympian with one exception: Henry didn't seem to believe training was necessary in order to wrestle.

Henry, the son of the late great referee, Mort Geller, won his State Championship back in 1970 at 105. I didn't get to see Henry wrestle until 1974 and after. He was a member of Chuck Almedia's TCAC (Tough City Athletic Club).

Henry would put out his cigarette, which was usually in his hand or in his mouth, when his name was called. He would walk out on the mat and scores would appear in his column. Henry was exceptional on his feet but, when he scored with one move, he had already put his opponent into position to score on him again. In these days prior to the technical superiority fall, these scores could get really silly. Then came the downside of Henry's game. He was usually out of gas within two minutes, and he had to defend his lead while running on empty.

This isn't something I would advise other wrestlers to do. Nor am I holding up Henry Geller as an example for the care and training of an athlete. I am reporting on a wrestler who had mastered his craft technically. Moreover, there was another side to Henry Geller. He was an exceptional teacher/coach when it came to wrestling. For many years Henry Geller was the instructor-clinician at the great Ron Shultz Seahorse Wrestling Club.

One year Henry Geller served as KIDS Director for FAWA and organized the camp and trip for the KIDS. It was a fantastic experience for all who participated. Moreover, the kids learned wrestling skills that many of the older wrestlers wished they could master. Henry was like the leader of the little ones. My own son, Solomon, followed Henry like a puppy dog. He absolutely adored the man.

Too bad that, after the trip, some parents complained that it wasn't right for the bus to stop so often so Henry could smoke. They felt he wasn't a good example for the kids. While I agree that smoking isn't the behavior I would want my son to learn from his coach, the skills and the love that the kids had for Henry certainly made him the MVP of KIDS Coaches. My son never took up smoking, but he certainly mastered freestyle skills at an early age.

Thank you. Henry Geller, Clinician-Coach and teacher of wrestling skills.



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