

National Wrestling Hall of Fame and Museum Florida Chapter

NEWSLETTER

Volume 10, Issue 1 Summer 2026



The President's Podium

Gary Townsend, Class of 2015
President, NWHOF Florida Chapter



This year's National Wrestling Hall of Fame State Conference and 2026 Induction Ceremony was a great conference paired with an excellent induction ceremony. Jane and I, along with Don and Trish Weekley, were in attendance representing the Florida Chapter. The event also marked the upcoming retirement of Executive Director Lee Roy Smith, who is stepping down in July after 21 years of outstanding service. Throughout his tenure, Lee Roy provided excellent leadership, remained very approachable, and guided the organization through major growth.. His contributions have left a lasting impact, and he will truly be missed.

Looking ahead, the Florida Chapter Board is actively working on plans for its Honors Weekend, scheduled for August 28th and 29th. Preparations are underway to make this a meaningful and memorable occasion that celebrates the accomplishments and contributions of those being recognized. The Board remains committed to organizing an event that reflects the values and traditions of the Florida Chapter while bringing members and supporters together for a special time of fellowship and recognition.

Friday night's social reunites family, friends, and coworkers—some for the first time in years. Saturday morning begins with a Testimonial Breakfast, where we listen to speakers reminisce about the past with both laughter and tears. That evening, we will enjoy a wonderful meal and hear from the inductees as they share how wrestling has affected their lives. You don't want to miss this great event honoring these deserving individuals.

Visit for nwhof.org/flchapter for tickets and hotel information.

Gary Townsend

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2027 NOMINATIONS

Bob Burns. Class of 2007, hofwrestle07@yahoo.com
Alumni and Nominations Director for the Florida Chapter

Dear Wrestling Community,

Thank you for your continued support of our voting process. It is the wrestling community and the Florida Chapter alumni that are responsible for helping us find and recognize those men and women that have dedicated their lifetime to the sport of wrestling. We are now accepting nomination applications for the 2027 Induction Class.

Unfortunately, because of some scheduling conflicts, our annual retreat is being moved forward. Therefore, the application submission date has been moved up from August 30th, 2026, to August 15th, 2026. "Fillable" applications can be downloaded from our website. The website address is nwhof.org/state-chapters/florida. The "Fillable Application" is located at the bottom of the web page in the left-hand column.

In the event that you have any trouble with the "Fillable" application, you may also get a nomination application from me. My email address is located above, and my cell number is 954-235-9726. We greatly appreciate all of your help.

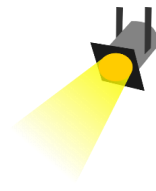
Thank you for your time and effort finding next year's deserving nominees.
Bob



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

James Hazewinkel

Class of 2010



James and Judy have been married for 53 years this coming July, and have three children Robert, Nathan and Kari. Both boys have followed their father into wrestling. Each of his sons, like their father have won a variety of National Championships.

James was born and raised in Anoka, Minnesota. He and his twin brother, Dave, graduated from high school in 1962. Both young men didn't begin to wrestle until their Junior year because of their small size. James attended St. Cloud State University in Minnesota but took a break from school for a stint in the Army. While in the Army, both he and his brother were assigned to coach the cadets at West Point Military Academy. During this time, they also wrestled on the All Army Team. James was able to earn six senior national championships in Greco-Roman wrestling while being named the Outstanding Wrestler three times along with winning "Most Fall" award twice. In 1968, while still wrestling on the All Army Team, he earned a spot on the Olympic Team in Greco-Roman. After the Olympics he wrestled in the World Games for the next three years. After his tour in the Army, he returned back to college and graduated in 1971. He again earned a spot on the 1972 Olympic Team and placed seventh at the games. Following the games he retired from competition to begin coaching at the college level.

James's coaching career took him to three different colleges. He coached for 20 years at Pillsbury Baptist Bible College in Owatonna, Minnesota, fifteen years at Pensacola Christian College, and ten years at Marion Military Institute (a two-year college) in Alabama.

James is a devout Christian and has taken the opportunity all though his wrestling career to witness to other wrestlers, bringing many of them to the Lord. He feels that saving young men's souls was and is a very important part of his life.

Today James is retired and his family activities are walking with his wife every day, spending time with his three grandchildren when possible, doing yardwork, and his church. As for hobbies, James likes to work on jigsaw puzzles. At 81, he is still in good health.

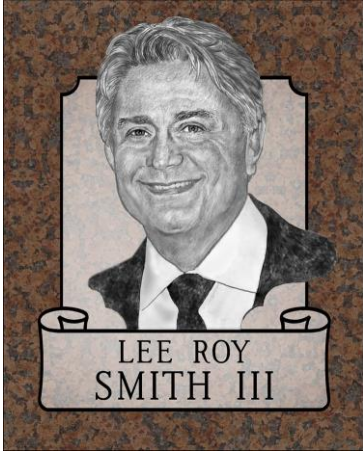
Some of James's wrestling accomplishments are:

- member of the 1968 and 1972 Olympic teams.
- member of five World teams
- 4x NAIA champion
- 6x Masters national champion
- member of nine Wrestling and Athletic Halls of Fame.

"Wrestling is a sport of control, but the hardest opponent to control is yourself."

– Anonymous

WRESTLING HISTORY



Lee Roy Smith III



July 27, 1958 – Present

Lee Roy Smith began wrestling in the fourth grade, beginning what would grow into a family sports dynasty in the state of Oklahoma and across the globe. He was the first two-time Oklahoma state champion from Del City High School, compiling an overall record of 71-3 and being named Outstanding Wrestler at the state tournament as a senior. The first Oklahoma wrestler to win two National Junior Freestyle Championships, Smith was an NCAA champion, three-time All-American and four-time Big Eight Conference champion for Oklahoma State University. He was the first wrestler in OSU's storied history to reach 100 wins and was named OSU Athletics Athlete of the Year in 1980. Smith won three National Open Freestyle Championships, twice being named Outstanding Wrestler, and won the 1984 Olympic Trials. After being unable to compete at the 1982 World Championships due to injury, he was a silver medalist at the 1983 World Championships and the 1983 and 1984 World Cup.

An assistant coach at OSU from 1984-1987, Smith helped recruit his younger brother John and coached him to two All-America finishes and his first NCAA title in 1987. He was a member of the Swiss Wrestling Federation national coaching staff and head coach of the Martigny Wrestling Club from 1987 to 1989. Smith played an instrumental role in the Swiss National Team having its best finish ever at the Freestyle World Championships in 1989, and he led Martigny to a runner-up national finish in 1988, its first top-three finish in over 10 years.

Smith returned to America to become USA Wrestling's National Freestyle Coach, a position he held from 1989 to 1992. He coached six World champions, three Olympic gold medalists, 10 World silver medalists, two Olympic silver medalists, a World bronze medalist and an Olympic bronze medalist. In 1992, with younger brother John and fellow Oklahomans Kendall Cross and Kenny Monday on the team, Smith led the United States to its best Olympic finish with three gold medals, two silver medals and a bronze medal while all 10 wrestlers finished in the top seven. He coached the U.S. to its first dual meet victory on Soviet soil in Mogilev, Belarus on January 20, 1990, and led American teams to two championships and a runner-up finish at the World Cup.

Smith became the head wrestling coach at Arizona State University in 1992, a position he held until 2001. He had a career record of 91-58-1 with three NCAA champions, 28 All-Americans and 27 Pac-10 Conference champions. Smith led ASU to five Top 10 finishes at the NCAA Division I Championships and five Pac-10 Conference team titles. He was named National Rookie Coach of the Year in 1993 and Pac-10 Conference Coach of the Year four times. During his tenure, the wrestling team achieved the highest graduation rate of any sport at ASU. A member of the broadcast team for the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and 2000 Sydney Olympics, Smith also served as a color commentator for Big 12 Conference Championships and Oklahoma State broadcasts.

The executive director of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame since 2004, Smith has steered the organization from the brink of bankruptcy to financial solvency, including the acquisition of the Dan Gable Museum in Waterloo, Iowa. In the last decade, he has spearheaded capital campaigns for state-of-the-art renovations for the museums, \$3.8 million in Stillwater and \$1.5 million in Waterloo. Smith helped create the Hall of Fame's Endowment Fund in 2007 and oversaw its growth to \$1 Million. He was instrumental in creating the current Power Beyond campaign for the endowment fund, which has received commitments for \$4.4 million of its \$5 million goal by end of 2026. He was inducted into the Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame in 2022 and received the Gallagher Award from Oklahoma State wrestling in 2007.

HONORS WEEKEND 2026

If you are a former wrestler, family of a wrestler, a friend of a wrestler, or part of the wrestling community, come join in the festivities to honor the coaches, officials and contributors who have dedicated their life to the sport of wrestling. Friday and Saturday, August 28th and 29th, is Hall of Fame Weekend for the Class of 2026 — Pat Ancil, Dave Arter, Travis Gray, Louis Kachiroubas, Drew Meyerowich, Mike Schyck, and John Severe.

Beginning Friday evening, August 28, at 8:00 PM, people will gather for a **Meet the Inductees Social**. There you can enjoy hot and cold hors d'oeuvres, and beverages from a cash bar. This social time turns into a reunion of family and friends, or a reuniting of former wrestlers and coaches. It's a night of reminiscing, storytelling, and laughter, where the emotions of the past evolve.

Saturday morning brings the next chapter of the celebration. You won't want to miss the **Testimonial Breakfast** at 9:00 AM. A bountiful breakfast buffet will be offered to attendees, then two individuals will have the opportunity to honor each inductee, possibly their former wrestler, coach or associate, sharing how the inductee impacted their life through the sport of wrestling. Each speaker has four minutes to express their feelings. It is impossible not to feel the emotion during these two days. You will hear laughter and see tears of joy as each speaker tells their story and connection to the inductee. As the speakers share, you get that deep feeling of pride and gratitude, which will help you understand why these individuals are being inducted.

After the breakfast's outpouring of emotion, the afternoon offers a welcome chance to relax and recharge before the evening's main event. You will have free time until the evening Induction Banquet, with multiple options on how to spend your afternoon. The hotel has a pool area with a very good bar and grill, as well as a relaxing hot tub. Disney Springs is another option as it is an easy walk from the hotel.

Honors Weekend's final event, the **Hall of Fame Induction Banquet**, is the moment for which we have gathered together. The evening begins at 5:00 PM with a pre-banquet social, where stories of the past continue. Each inductee has an area for displaying their history through newspaper articles, awards and artifacts from their wrestling careers. You should also spend some time touring the Florida Wrestling Mobile Museum. Exhibits on the history of The Florida Chapter and Wrestling in Florida over the past 55 years will be located in the Solar Room on the Mezzanine level.

When the doors to the banquet room open, you will be seated near the inductee you have come to honor. The opening ceremony includes the inductees passing through a tunnel of well-wishing Florida Chapter Alumni and then being introduced to all attendees of the evening event. The celebration continues with a delicious dinner buffet. Finally, it is time to hear from the inductees how the sport of wrestling impacted their lives. We watch as the inductees receive their plaques and medals, and we view the Class of 2026 pose for pictures in their new HOF Green Jackets.

It is in moments like these that the true spirit of the Florida Chapter shines through. The Florida Chapter has a saying: "When we do it, we do it with class, for we are honoring the best of the best." This is the weekend where that maxim comes to life, and one you should not pass up. We look forward to seeing you during Honors Weekend!

Florida Chapter Hall of Fame Weekend

August 28 and 29, 2026

Honoring the Class of 2026

Tickets for the Friday evening Social, the Saturday morning Testimonial Breakfast, and the Saturday evening Induction Banquet must be postmarked by August 1st, or purchased online August 10th.

Friday evening **Social** - \$30.00

Saturday morning Testimonial **Breakfast** - \$35.00

Saturday evening Induction **Banquet** - \$110.00

Full page banquet program congratulatory ad - \$155.00

Half page banquet program congratulatory ad - \$100.00

Click this link for hotel reservations and event tickets:

<https://nwhoffl.ticketspice.com/2026fl>

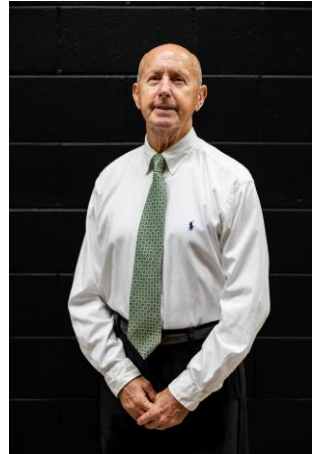
NWHOF Florida Chapter Honors Weekend August 28-29, 2026



CLASS OF 2026

PAT ANCIL- Lifetime Service to Wrestling

Coach Ancil brings decades of experience as an athlete, competitor, and leader to the Lakewood Ranch wrestling program. A native of Kettering, Ohio, Pat was a standout wrestler at Fairmont East High School, becoming the school's first state qualifier and earning team captain and MVP honors. Pat later attended Sinclair Community College and founded a YMCA wrestling program for underserved youth in Dayton. Pat enjoyed a rewarding 30+ year career in retail loss prevention leadership, as a Director for Federated Department Stores and American Retail Group Divisions.



In 2005, Pat returned to competitive wrestling, winning multiple medals at the Veterans National Championships and earning a bronze medal at the 2012 World Championships in Budapest, Hungary as a member of the USA Veterans Wrestling Team. Pat joined the Lakewood Ranch High School wrestling team as a volunteer coach in 2005, was promoted to Assistant coach in 2006 and became head coach in 2007, a position that he currently holds. Under Pat's leadership, the Mustangs have compiled a 368-114 dual meet record, captured multiple district titles, produced 35 State qualifiers, 16 State Place winners, 3 State finalists and 7 wrestlers who went on to wrestle in college.

Off the mats, Pat has instilled the importance of excellence in the classroom by setting up mentoring programs for all wrestlers. Pat has guided the Mustangs to two State GPA titles, while the team has placed in the top team each year, for the last 12 years.

Coach Ancil's coaching philosophy is rooted in three core pillars:

"Paying It Forward Tradition," This is the cornerstone of his program- community involvement.

"Academic Excellence" Grades come first! Wrestling is a sport, but grades follow you for life

"Student-Led Leadership" Empowers the seniors to foster a culture of leadership with all the underclassmen passing on the life skills they have learned throughout their time as a Mustang!

DAVE ARTER – Lifetime Service to Wrestling

Dave Arter has dedicated much of his life to the sport of wrestling, first as a competitor, and then for 46 years (and counting) as a respected official in both Ohio and Florida. A native of Euclid, Ohio, Dave is the son of David and Helen Arter and grew up in a loving household with sisters Diane, Susie, Barbie, and Patty. He began his wrestling journey in the eighth grade, before completing a successful career at Euclid High School, graduating in 1975. He continued at Lakeland Community College, earning NJCAA All-Academic Team honors twice, and went on to Ashland College, where he was a two-time letterman.

After his competitive and successful college career, Dave moved into officiating, where he became known for his steady presence, fairness, and respect for the sport. He has always taken pride in being an effective communicator and working hard to improve his skills. Over the years, he had the opportunity to officiate seven Ohio State Championship Tournaments, five State Dual Meet Championships, eight NHSCA National Championships, and the 2013 Florida State Championship Tournament. His experience includes



DAVE ARTER – Lifetime Service to Wrestling (continued)

served as nationally ranked teams, including two that determined the High School National Championship, proving time and again he could pin down the biggest moments with confidence and fairness.

Beyond officiating on the mat, Dave has been a dedicated mentor and leader. He served as Vice President of the Southwest Florida Wrestling Officials Association and spent 12 years training and supporting fellow officials. He was voted Official of the Year four times by two Greater Cleveland associations and also received the Award of Merit.

Dave always felt it was important to give back to the sport he loved. As chairperson of the Greater Cleveland Wrestling Coaches and Officials Association's East West All Star Banquet and Match, he helped grow the event and raise over \$40,000 in scholarships for student-athletes. As a result, he earned a Special Appreciation Award for his dedication, time, and service. He remains involved in the wrestling community as a founding and active board member of the Wrestlers in Business Network Southwest Florida chapter.

Through many years of steady involvement, Dave has been extremely grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the sport and to the people who make up the wrestling community. He credits his early days as a wrestler in building a strong work ethic which led to his success in business. Furthermore, he feels fortunate to be a high school wrestling official and see so many fine student athletes grow into successful individuals.

Dave resides in Fort Myers, Florida and lives very close to his son, Bill, and daughter, Beverly. He is also the proud grandfather of Katie and Kennedy, who he visits every day.

TRAVIS GRAY – Lifetime Service to Wrestling

Travis Gray's wrestling journey began in Owatonna, Minnesota, where he joined the local kids' program at age 5 in 1984. He wrestled through high school under the leadership of Hall of Fame coach Scott Davis, an experience that provided a rigorous foundation for his future in the sport. While he initially planned to hang up his headgear after graduation, he was encouraged by Coach Davis to pursue coaching while he was studying at the University of Minnesota. Travis began his coaching career as an assistant at Bloomington Jefferson High School for four years before moving to Florida. In 2005, he became the Assistant Coach at Wellington High School, before taking the helm as Head Coach in 2006.



Over more than two decades, Travis has become a pillar of the Florida wrestling community. As both Head Coach and a School Counselor, he has made character development and academic excellence the heart of his program. He established a team motto of Think Like A Champion (TLAC) and the **DREAM** philosophy – **D**iscipline, **R**esponsibility, **E**njoyment, **A**cademics, and **M**ental Toughness as the core values for the Wellington program. For Coach Gray, wrestling is a vehicle for these life lessons. He holds his athletes to elite standards in the classroom, believing the discipline found on the mat is a cornerstone for personal success in life.

Travis has led the Wellington Wolverines to twelve consecutive district championships

TRAVIS GRAY – Lifetime Service to Wrestling (continued)

and multiple regional titles, consistently placing Wellington among the top-tier programs in Florida. His teams have advanced to the FHSAA State Dual Championships for six straight years, including deep runs as regional champions and State runners-up. Travis has mentored 135 state qualifiers and 51 state placers; and he was instrumental in pioneering the Wellington girls' wrestling program, which has flourished under his guidance to become a competitive force and a model for the growth of the sport in Florida. His service extends deep into the grassroots of the sport as President of the Wellington Wrestling Club, where he has fostered an environment for youth development.

Among his proudest moments has been the honor of coaching his two sons on the mat. His son Tucker won a youth state championship at age 7 before transitioning his focus to soccer, while Tyler won his first youth state championship at age 9 and continues to excel in the sport today. Knowing firsthand how much the sport shaped his own life, a primary motivation for Travis was to ensure that his own children, and the youth of his community, benefited from a program rooted in strong core values and an environment of elite preparation. This personal connection fueled his drive to build the Wellington club and high school teams into the premier programs they are today.

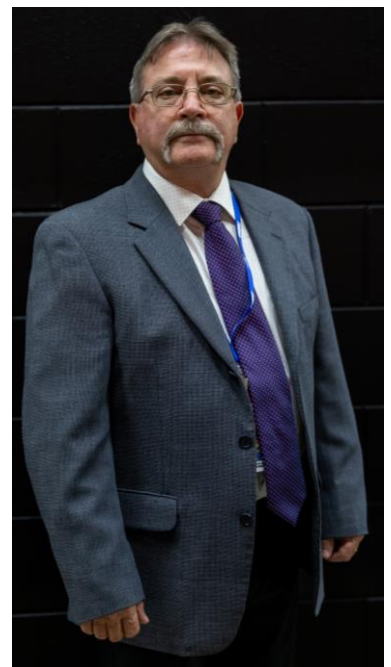
LOUIS KACHIROUBAS – Lifetime Service to Wrestling

Louis B Kachiroubas was introduced to wrestling at an early age by his father, Louis Kachiroubas, a 2X Big Ten Champion and 2X All-American for the University of Illinois. As a youth, he wrestled for both the Franklin Park Raiders (East Leyden HS, IL) and the Riverside Brookfield youth wrestling program. The head coach for the RB team at the time was Otto Zeman, a Northwestern University stand out and All-American.

In high school Louis wrestled two years for RB, then finished his high school career at Hudson High School in Pasco County. After graduating, he joined the Army and wrestled Freestyle and Greco-Roman at a club level for his base while serving in Germany.

In 1996, Louis along with another wrestling parent and longtime assistant coach Chris Soto, took over Springstead's youth program from Bob Levija. Since then Louis has worked with several head coaches to create a seamless transition from the youth program into the Springstead High School program.

Since 1996 Louis has helped instruct countless wrestlers, District and Regional Champions, State Qualifiers, Placers and Champions.



COLONEL DREW R. MEYEROWICH, U.S. Army (Retired) – Outstanding American

Long before his distinguished military career, Drew Meyerowich's foundation was built on the high school wrestling mat, where he learned the values of toughness, discipline, humility, and perseverance—values that would define his life of leadership and service.

A 1987 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, Drew served 28 years as an Infantry Officer in the United States Army, leading soldiers and large organizations in some of the most demanding and complex environments imaginable. A wounded warrior, he twice led troops in combat. While wrestling was only one chapter of his life, its lessons never left him. In the face of adversity and the demands of leading soldiers in combat, Drew often found himself relying on the same discipline, resilience, and mental toughness first forged on the wrestling mat.

He was awarded the Silver Star—our nation's third-highest award for valor—for his extraordinary leadership as a Company Commander during the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu, where he played a critical role in the rescue of Task Force Ranger, an operation later depicted in *Black Hawk Down*. He later commanded a battalion task force of more than 1,200 joint and civilian personnel during a 15-month combat deployment to Iraq from 2006 to 2008, at the height of the insurgency.

Colonel Meyerowich's distinguished career includes numerous awards and decorations, including the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, two Bronze Stars, and the Purple Heart. He earned both the Combat Infantryman Badge (with star) and Expert Infantryman Badge, along with the Ranger Tab, Master Parachutist Badge, and German Jump Wings.

Following his retirement in 2014, Drew brought his leadership and team-first philosophy to the private sector, where he serves as President and CEO of Sprague Excavating Company in St. Joseph, Missouri, continuing to build strong teams grounded in accountability, safety, and performance.

Drew holds a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from the United States Military Academy and a Master's Degree in Strategic Studies and Communications from the U.S. Army War College.

Wrestling was not the path he pursued beyond high school, but it became the foundation for the perseverance that shaped his success.



MICHAEL SCHYCK – Lifetime Service to Wrestling

Mike Schyck has dedicated more than 50 years to the sport of wrestling, both as an athlete and a coach. His journey began at just five years old in Michigan and continued through high school at Lemon Bay under 2012 Hall of Fame inductee, Walt Ragan. He went on to compete at The Ohio State University under another Hall of Fame member, Russ Hellickson – Class of 1989, on a full athletic scholarship, establishing himself as one of the program's top performers.

Following his competitive career, Mike transitioned into coaching, beginning at The Ohio State University, where he spent three years on staff. During that time, while also competing in freestyle for the New York Athletic Club, he helped coach several Buckeyes to All-American honors and NCAA Championship podium finishes. Among them was his roommate, Charlie Becks, who finished as NCAA runner-up. Mike also spent two years at Georgia State University during the program's early years at the Division I level.

MICHAEL SCHYCK – Lifetime Service to Wrestling Continued)

In addition to his collegiate coaching experience, Mike began his high school coaching career at Franklin Heights High School in Ohio. There, he coached heavyweight Larry Angles to an undefeated season and a state championship. Angles later went on to play football at Army and professionally with the Houston Oilers/Tennessee Titans.

In 2000, Mike returned to his alma mater, Lemon Bay High School, to give back to the program that helped shape his career. Over more than two decades, he served as both an assistant and head coach, developing one of the most successful programs in the region. During that time, he coached over 30 state place-winners, 15 state finalists, and seven state champions including his son, Lance Schyck, a two-time state champ, three-time finalist, and Florida Dairy Farmers Wrestler of the Year.

As head coach beginning in 2016, Mike led Lemon Bay to seven consecutive district championships, four regional titles, and three top-10 finishes at the state tournament. The team also excelled in the Florida State Dual Championships, reaching the Final Four four times in the event's first seven years.

In 2023, Mike transitioned to lead the Lemon Bay girls wrestling program, where he continued his success by coaching Ailee Briggs to back-to-back state championships. Briggs completed her career as a four-time state finalist and three-time state champion, becoming the first girls state champion in school history.



JOHN SEVERE – Lifetime Service to Wrestling

John's wrestling journey began in eighth grade, when he met Coach Sam McWoodson, his first role model. He lost his first match in 30 seconds. Coach McWoodson reassured him that he would be a state champ if he worked hard.

Entering high school, he grew under Head Coach Joe Gicobbe and Assistant Coach Eric Phillips, a former UT Chattanooga wrestler fresh out of college. Coach Phillips took a special interest in John and took him to wrestling camps outside the local area. It was his first time travelling outside of Miami since arriving from Haiti. These experiences also, crucially, revealed to him the world beyond his hometown. This later became a tradition for him as a coach to expose young wrestlers to more of the country.



During his senior year, John suffered a setback when he broke both the tibia and fibula in his right leg during football practice. With his season and scholarship hopes in doubt, he committed fully to recovery. By December, despite pain, he returned to the mat. Five weeks later, John won the Florida State Championship at 152 pounds. He went on to represent Team Florida at Dapper Dan and Fargo, earning opportunities to wrestle in college with scholarships.

John chose UT Chattanooga, where he wrestled for five years while earning a degree in Business Management with a minor in Human Resources. After graduation, he returned to Miami and became an assistant alongside Coach Phillips at Dr. Krop High School.

What was supposed to be one year as an assistant became a legacy. John became a math teacher, a head coach at North Miami Beach High School and eventually his alma mater North Miami Senior High, where his mission has always been to help wrestlers become productive citizens. He has coached state champions, 34 state placers, and more than 50 state qualifiers, including his children, Adonis and Isis. Among his proudest achievements are Daniel Leon, North Miami's first state champion since John in 1994, and Mya Bethel, Florida's greatest female wrestler, a four-time state champion with a 105-0 career record.

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Thank you, Frank Pettineo, Class of 2006,
for your continued support!

Media Services Matters

Bob Thomas, Class of 2017

Recognition is the controlling purpose of the Florida chapter. The process begins when you recommend a hero from your wrestling community. Qualified individuals may reside in your home, at your school, or even in your neighborhood. You might know people who have devoted a lifetime to our sport or have used wrestling to rise in their field of expertise. Legend Louis Kachiroubas will be inducted as a Class of 2026 member from the Springstead community. His years of dedication to the area's developmental programs resulted in his nomination. A former high school teammate of Colonel Drew Meyerowich at Cardinal Newman wanted Florida to know that he became an American hero while serving in our military.

Our museum shows you where these stories originated and let's you see the faces that create the rich history of Florida wrestling. During our two-day, three event, Honor Weekend, the Hall elevates these individuals through a format designed for us all to hear their story with the meet and greet on Friday night, testimonials Saturday morning and speeches Saturday night. Alumni attending are recognizable by the Green Jacket that they wear.

The Florida chapter is prepared to recognize the hero whose name you placed before our Board of Directors. Thank you for doing your job so we can do ours. Join us at the Wyndham for Honors Weekend 2026 on August 28 and 29.



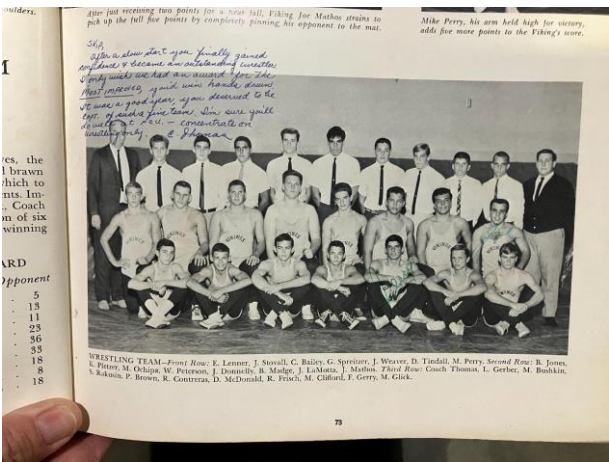
"Wrestlers compete as individuals yet the sport builds comradery like no other. Friendships among teammates are for life." — Cael Sanderson

Museum Memo

Bob Thomas, Class of 2017

We thought we would take this opportunity to share some of our museum 's posters and artifacts that are on display twice a year. You can see a large sampling at our setup during the FHSA state wrestling championships and the complete display during Honors Weekend.

We are always looking to increase our collection with items from your memorabilia.



Official Position

Alan Solomon, Class of 2016, and Don Weekley, Class of 2023,
Officials Representatives on the NWHOF Florida Chapter Board

Greetings, Fellow officials.

The 2025-26 season is under our belts a hopefully everyone is looking forward to next season. I've spent some time looking up the rule changes for the 2026-27 season. Here is a list of some of the new rules.

The **minimum body fat percentage for women** has been raised from 12% to 19%.

Rule 5-28-3 If injury or bleeding occurs from an illegal hold/maneuver, unnecessary roughness, unsportsmanlike conduct, or false start the wrestler is entitled to two minutes recovery time. If the bleeding cannot be controlled during this time the wrestler is declared the winner. The committee felt that the wrestler should not have to wait the full five minutes.

The **out-of-bounds in the neutral position** should be met with the following calls for one of the wrestlers.

Stalling for pushing/pulling the opponent out-of-bounds

Stalling for backing out

No call if the wrestling action is taking place

Properly fitted **tooth and mouth protection**.

The opportunity to **weigh in by team**.

The **referee should signal and vocalize** the 5 second count when the defensive wrestler is broken down with the heel of his/her foot pinned to the buttocks. This was a silent count before.

Byes do not count as a match and is not counted toward the minimum number of matches in a day. They are no longer counted towards a wrestler's record.

These are just a few of the changes for this coming season.



“One of the things I noticed in war was how difficult it was for our soldiers, a first, to realize that there are no rules for war. Our men were raised in sports, where a referee runs a football game, or an umpire a baseball game, and so forth.”

- - Dwight D. Eisenhower

Please support the NWHOF Florida Chapter sponsors



The Florida Wrestling Room is the only website in the state covering all levels of wrestling from youth and high school and now even college wrestling, as we have three colleges in our state who compete in the NAIA.

Thank you to
Jim and Jan Cummings
for sponsoring the
Girls' Scholarship.

"Wrestling teaches you nothing comes without hard work, and you must keep grinding to get where you want to go."

-- Jordan Burroughs, Olympic Gold Medalist 20

Memories of Great Matches Involving Florida Wrestlers

Ira Fleckman,

Class of 2006, Contributing Writer

Editor's note: We will all miss Ira and his stories, but he left a few more for us in the archives.



North Miami Beach VS North Miami at the District meet in 1987.

I was at Norland, serving as coach. We had developed a nice little team but nothing to threaten the big dogs. We did have a great 112 Andy "Admiral" Anderson and a 220, who was an excellent wrestler and a great team leader as well. I am ashamed to admit that I cannot recall his name. Finishing third in the District was a great finish for our Norland group.

The District Tournament was certainly a toss up between North Miami and North Miami Beach which both had powerful teams. I can't remember which team won. I can't recall the names of the wrestlers. But I will never forget "THE SPEECH"! I believe one of the referees was Mark Hewitt. Mark is a close friend and one of the best referees in Florida. He was also an excellent coach with the program at Miami-Sunset. Mark wrestled up in Maryland and then came down to wrestle for the new college program at Florida International. Mark has admitted he was the referee who did the match that led to "THE SPEECH"!

In one of the early matches, North Miami had a pretty fair wrestler going head-to-head with a North Miami Beach wrestler. The coaches, fans, boosters had already figured the possible score seven ways from Sunday and each school thought they could take the District title.

In order to ensure total fairness, Joe Gicobbee, of North Miami, who was hosting the event, had made it an in-school special. The stands were filled to capacity with North Miami students who had paid a dollar or two to escape Algebra.

As this match progressed, the underdog, who was the North Miami wrestler, was outwrestling the North Miami Beach wrestler, who was favored to win. When the bout ended in a victory for North Miami, the wrestler's father, who was a slight gentleman who always appeared in a guayabera shirt and a wide brimmed straw hat, came rushing onto the mat to hug his son, who apparently had just wrestled the match of his life. The fans in the stands were rowdy, but the official took a team point for daddy disrupting the end of mat proceedings.

At this point Joe Gicobbee dashed across the mat, took the microphone from the announcer and said the following: "When Angel Soto wins the next match, stay in your seats because we already lost a team point." Maybe I shouldn't quote it, but I know that this is just about what Coach Joe blurted out over the public address system.

The students who were totally quiet couldn't guess what behavior of theirs had caused the loss of the team point. Of course, their behavior had nothing to do with the loss of the point.

The official didn't say anything. That was a surprise because this interruption of the tournament was certainly more flagrant than the act he had just penalized by the one-point deduction.

I am sure the daddy felt bad. I doubt Angel much noticed the increased pressure of the expectations placed on his up-coming performance. I can't begin to imagine what went through the mind of the opposing coach or the next wrestler. I was laughing so hard that tears were streaming down my face.

I certainly will never forget that incident. "THE SPEECH" will always remain a benchmark in Florida wrestling. Joe Gicobbee remains one of my favorite coaches. There is no question about his commitment and involvement with each aspect of his team.

The mission of the Florida Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame is to pay tribute to those coaches, officials, and contributors who represent the best qualities of what the sport of wrestling has to offer and who share those characteristics with young people day in and day out.

About the Florida Chapter

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

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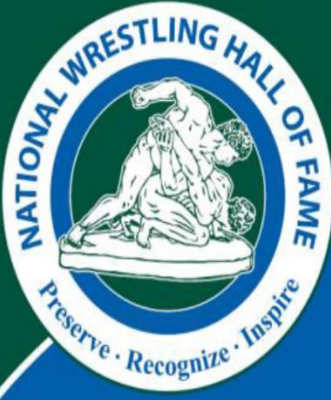
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