

Illinois Wrestling Coach Jim Heffernan Awarded 5-Year Extension

Enters 10th Season as Leader of Illini Program

CHAMPAIGN, IL – Illinois wrestling coach Jim Heffernan was awarded a five-year contract extension that will keep him as head coach of the Fighting Illini program through the 2023 season.

“As much as perhaps anyone, Jim Heffernan embodies the values we espouse within our athletic program,” said UI Athletics Director Josh Whitman. “He cares first and foremost about his students. He stresses loyalty, work ethic, and competitiveness. All of this while leading one of our most successful and tradition-rich programs. We are excited to reward Jim for his tremendous leadership and look forward to many future years of wrestling success with him at the helm.”

Heffernan enters his 10th season as head coach at Illinois after serving as the top assistant under Mark Johnson for 19 years.

“I am extremely grateful for Josh to offer me this extension” Heffernan said. “Josh has proven to be very supportive of our program and the dedication and commitment shown by our student-athletes.”

During Heffernan's time in Champaign-Urbana, the Illini have finished in the top-10 at the NCAA championships on 13 occasions, and in the top-15 in 19 of the last 21 seasons. Heffernan has also mentored nine individual national champions in the last 18 seasons. With back-to-back national titles in 2015 and 2016, 157-pounder Isaiah Martinez joined Jesse Delgado (125), Matt Lackey (165), Adam Tirapelle (149, 2001), John Lockhart (heavyweight, 2001), Carl Perry (141, 2000), Eric Siebert (150, 1998), Ernest Benion, Jr. (158, 1995) and Steve Marianetti (150, 1995) in earning NCAA titles since 1995. In 2005, Heffernan assisted Illinois in bringing home its first Big Ten Championships team title in 53 years.

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Kent Brown

Associate AD/Media Relations

University of Illinois Athletics

1700 S. Fourth St. | Champaign, IL 61820

Office: 217-244-6533 | **Cell:** 217-493-9795

Fax: 217-333-5540

Email: kwbrown3@illinois.edu

Website: FIGHTINGILLINI.com

Twitter: @KentBrown