

Kevin Jackson named National Freestyle Developmental Coach for USA Wrestling

Olympic champion, two-time World champion and respected coach Kevin Jackson has been named National Freestyle Developmental Coach for USA Wrestling, the national governing body for wrestling in the United States.

He will work within USA Wrestling's National Teams Department, and on the staff of USA Wrestling's National Freestyle Coach Bill Zadick and alongside newly hired Manager of Freestyle Programs Joe Russell. Jackson will be working with USA Wrestling's elite age-group freestyle wrestlers, including launching the new Elite Accelerated Program at the U.S. Olympic Training Center. He will also assist in coaching U.S. freestyle wrestlers on the Senior level. Jackson will start with USA Wrestling after the July 4 holiday.

"It's my pleasure to announce and welcome Kevin Jackson and his family to USA Wrestling's freestyle staff. Kevin comes back to USA Wrestling with a mountain of experience including three gold medals as a competitor, having coached World and Olympic champions, as well as several years as a head coaching experience in collegiate and international roles. His knowledge and experience will deepen the pool of thought from which to grow the National Team Developmental and Senior athletes, our Elite Accelerated program at the Olympic Training Center, as well as bring additional philosophies to bear. It's a great opportunity when I'm able to add someone of Kevin's caliber to our staff," said National Freestyle Coach Bill Zadick.

It will be Jackson's second stint on the USA Wrestling National Coaching Staff. Jackson previously served as USA Wrestling's National Freestyle Coach from 2000-2008, and as the National Freestyle Resident Coach from 1998-2000.

"We are excited to welcome Kevin Jackson back to the USA Wrestling family. Kevin's character and reputation in the sport is impeccable. We are confident that he will have a huge influence on the establishment and continued development of our Elite Developmental Program," said USA Wrestling Executive Director Rich Bender.

"I am excited about the opportunity to come back to USA Wrestling. They were some of the best years of my life, in regards to my family, and some of the most fun times, being in Colorado Springs and coaching Team USA with USA Wrestling. I have many friends there and family in the area. In the big picture, I had to make a decision where I could make the biggest impact on wrestling in this country. USA Wrestling is where I believe I can make the biggest impact," said Jackson.

As National Freestyle Coach, Jackson coached the USA at the 2004 and 2008 Olympic Games. At the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece, Jackson led the USA to three medals, with Cael Sanderson winning gold, and silver medals won by Stephen Abas and Jamill Kelly. At the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China, the USA was led by Olympic champion Henry Cejudo.

In the five World Championships under his leadership as National Freestyle Coach, the USA won 11 World medals, including a gold medal from Bill Zadick at the 2006 World Championships, plus four silver medals and six bronze medals. The USA did not compete in the 2002 World Championships in Iran due to a specific safety

six bronze medals. The USA did not compete in the 2002 World Championships in Iran due to a specific safety threat to the team if it attended. As a team, the USA won two World Championships trophies in men's freestyle under Jackson, placing second in 2003 and third in 2006. The team also finished fourth, fifth and eighth in the other World events.

As National Freestyle Resident Coach, Jackson served as the primary coach for 2000 Olympic gold medalist Brandon Slay.

"I had a great opportunity last year to work with the Cadet World Team as its volunteer coach along with Brandon Slay. I was able to work with that Cadet World Team in training camps all summer and take them to the World Championships. It was refreshing to see a group of young athletes, with the positive attitude, the energy and the passion and the love they have for the sport. We saw them put it on the line, and we had a great World Championships. I can see the potential we have at the Cadet and Junior level, as well as the Senior level," said Jackson.

He returns to USA Wrestling after serving eight years as the head coach at Iowa State University. Jackson coached four Cyclone NCAA champions, 14 All-Americans and nine Big 12 champions at Iowa State. His first ISU team finished third at the NCAA Championship and boasted two national champions (Jake Varner and David Zabriskie). His other two national champs were Jon Reader (2011) and Kyven Gadson (2015). While at Iowa State, Jackson coached numerous top wrestlers in freestyle with the Cyclone Wrestling Club.

Prior to joining Iowa State, Jackson was the freestyle coach for the Sunkist Kids. Early in his coaching career, prior to his first stint with USA Wrestling, Jackson also served as an assistant wrestling coach at Iowa State and at Arizona State.

Jackson is considered one of the greatest wrestlers in U.S. history, winning a gold medal at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, Spain. He also won a pair of World Championship gold medals, in 1991 and 1995. He is one of only six U.S. men's freestyle wrestlers to claim three career World-level titles.

Jackson competed on four U.S. World Teams, also taking fourth at the 1993 World Championships. He was a member of both U.S. Freestyle World Teams which won World Team titles in 1991 and 1993. Jackson won three World Cup gold medals, two Pan American Games titles and two Pan American Championships gold medals.

He was an NCAA runner-up for Iowa State Univ. in 1987. He was also a three-time All-American for Louisiana State Univ. from 1983-85, before transferring to Iowa State after LSU dropped wrestling. Originally from Lansing, Mich., Jackson won two state high school titles for Lansing Eastern High School and was a Junior National Greco-Roman champion.

Jackson is a Distinguished Member of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, the UWW International Wrestling Hall of Fame, the Iowa State Athletics Hall of Fame, among others. Jackson has won many major awards, including the 1995 John Smith Award as USA Wrestling Freestyle Wrestler of the Year.

"I think Bill Zadick is a great guy. We have a great relationship and rapport. As an athlete, he made the decision to leave Iowa City and come train with our resident program to put himself in the environment that he felt would make him the best wrestler in the world. It happened for him, and I was extremely proud of him for that. I have spoken with Bill about his vision for USA Wrestling and what he sees as my role in that. We can communicate at the highest of levels. I will assist Bill in any way he needs me to assist him. His vision is strong, and he has a plan to lead our athletes to perform to their highest potential," said Jackson.

Jackson is committed to helping lead the USA to the top of the podium as a team at the World Championships and Olympic Games.

"You have to be really good to win a medal at the World Championships and Olympics. Wrestling is as strong and as competitive as ever. Iran has stepped up its competition to a higher level. Turkey is coming on like they used to

be and Russia is Russia. You also have the former Soviet-bloc countries investing in the sport to get champions. The world has gotten better. I have been on a couple of World Teams which won World Championships. I have also been on teams with three or four gold medalists. If you look up and down our lineup now, when you look at Logan Stieber, Jordan Burroughs, Kyle Snyder, James Green and J'den Cox, and some of the young wrestlers, you have a team where half of them have a World or Olympic medal. The potential is there. The credentials are there as well. It is all about putting it together and getting them to operate at a high level. Now it is about fulfilling that potential and bringing home those medals," said Jackson.

When considering the USA Wrestling position, Jackson had the opportunity to remain in Iowa State as an administrator, or pursue a freestyle coaching position with Regional Training Centers in New Jersey and in Minnesota. Jackson wants to formally thank those wrestling leaders for their support and for offering those opportunities to him.