



2003 Photographer-of-the-Year Paul Swisher Virginia Beach, Virginia

Paul has been a photographer for about 10 years, just 3 of which has he been full time. This year he decided to put all his efforts toward the sport of wrestling. He developed wrestlingpic.com, a website designed to promote wrestling, which has gained national recognition. Paul is excited about its future and his future as a wrestling photographer.

The past for Paul has been quite eventful. As a former college baseball pitcher, Paul suffered a rotar cuff injury that would end his baseball career, he returned home to help his parents who were both ill. His mother past away in 1992 and his father had become legally blind from diabetes. When all seemed to be falling apart, his nephew started wrestling. P.J. Neumann was now in the 6th grade wrestling for the first time at Western Branch Middle School. Paul was the typical family member in the crowd except he was louder than anyone else. Referees, coaches and tournament officials all knew who he was there to support. When P.J. was a freshman wrestling at Western Branch High School in Chesapeake, Paul didn't miss a match traveling all over the country to see him wrestle. Then finally when P.J. went to Great Bridge, Paul stopped yelling and started taking pictures, to the delight of everyone he was finally silenced. Currently, PJ is a sophomore at VMI and is on the wrestling team. Paul has really learned this sport of wrestling from tradition to wrestling styles.

Paul has fallen into the family of



wrestling through many connections. Steve Martin (Great Bridge's head coach) and his family have pointed Paul in the right direction on a couple of occasions. At one state tournament, Paul was looking for a place for he and his fiancée to get married, when David Martin, former Indiana State wrestler, told him about the winery and that a couple of weddings happened there. Paul asked his

fiancée, Blaine, and the rest is history. They were married May 13, 2000, the hottest day of the year (110 degrees).

Paul says Blaine is the driving force behind his photography. She is always positive and really is a great person to have critique his work. Honesty sometimes hurts.... Not many people can say they get to do what they love do for a living, Paul does. He covered The Beast of the East, WVU Open, VA Duals, The NWCA Cape Cod Potato Chips All Star Classic, EWL Championships, NCAA National Championships, many middle school tournaments and high school state championships.

Paul would like to thank these people for making him realize his potential in covering the sport of wrestling. Frank Lipoli founder of Virginia Challenge Wrestling, Wayne Martin former Great Bridge High School coach, Lanny Bryant editor of *Wrestling USA Magazine*, Jason Bryant editor Mattalkonline, any sports information director who he came in contact with, Wes Swisher (father) for slipping him money here and there, Frank Jennings for listening, Rick Armstrong for looking at pictures that he knew nothing about, Keith McBride for his undying friendship, and God, for just being an awesome God.

Paul says, "This award belongs to my wife, Blaine, without her none of this is possible. She lets me drive all over the place chasing a dream, while watching wrestling. Maybe one day I'll make some money."