


  
**2004 Master-of-Wrestling Award**
  
 MAGAZINE

## Bill Tomaras Washington

**T**he high school basketball coach told the scrappy, 5 foot 3 inch tall that wrestling might be a better sport for him. Bill Tomaras found out that it was. With three years of high school wrestling under his belt, Bill entered the then powerful University of Illinois wrestling program in 1939. His college career was interrupted by the war, but he returned in 1946 to complete his political science major and final year of wrestling eligibility.

While most wrestlers of the time cut 15 to 30 pounds, Bill was only 118 pounds dripping wet in the lowest 121-pound weight class. Bandaged like a Civil War hero with a severe cauliflower ear Bill lost in the NCAA semifinals to the eventual champion in an overtime split decision, but he came back to secure the third-place medal. After college he had to make a decision to go into political science or wrestling. He chose sports over politics and took the head wrestling coaching position at Washington State College (now Washington State University) for \$3,500, an outstanding salary in 1949. Bill packed up his pregnant wife, Dolly, their two kids and headed west.

Bill was not only a wrestling coach, but also a promoter. His second year at WSC he started the Pacific Coast Championships and they formed a league of 10 four-year colleges called the



Pacific Coast Intercollegiate Wrestling Association. In 1953 he started the high school state wrestling tournament. In 1956 Bill took a year off to complete his doctorate degree at the University of Oregon. He left Washington State in 1959 to coach and teach at the University of California at Berkeley. He was placed on the NCAA Rules Committee where he played an active role in making wrestling more of a spectator sport.

Western Washington State College (now WWU) hired Bill to coach and teach in 1961. A year later he was appointed Western's Athletic Director and Chairman of the Physical Education Department. Bill resigned from coaching in 1965 and brought in Jim Smith to coach at Western. While at Western he once again hosted the State High School Wrestling Tournament in 1968 and again in 1972. That was the year he was inducted into the National Helm's Wrestling Hall of Fame, at that time, the only Hall of Fame. Bill Tomaras left Western in 1973 and retired from the City of Everett in 1983.

However, bored with retirement Bill volunteered his time to assist Cedar Heights Junior High in the South Kitsap School District for three years, and he was selected to take over the Washington State Cultural Exchange All-Star High School Wrestling Team to China in 1986.

Bill Tomaras started his high school career in 1936 and ended his active participation in high school wrestling in 1986. While we celebrate 51 years of Washington Wrestling, we congratulate and appreciate his 51 years of involvement in the sport of wrestling.

*Wrestling USA Magazine* congratulates Bill Tomaras for his many years of service to the sport of wrestling.