



2008 Master-of-Wrestling Award

DR. BILL WELKER Wheeling, West Virginia

Dr. Bill Welker has been involved with the mat sport for over 50 years in many capacities. He lives in Wheeling, West Virginia, where he has promoted wrestling as a coach, official, clinician, speaker and mat sport writer since 1970.

The "Mat Talk" columnist since 1978 for the *Wheeling News-Register* and Martins Ferry (Ohio) *Times-Leader*, Welker has received the "West Virginia Wrestling Media Person of the Year" award an unprecedented six times from the state's wrestling coaches association. His wrestling column is the oldest in West Virginia. Many of his writings, referred to as "West Virginia Mat Thoughts," can be found and copied at www.wvmat.com.

Welker has penned over 500 articles on the art and science of the mat sport since 1974, including numerous writings in various state and national publications such as *The West Virginia Wrestler*, *The Pennsylvania Wrestling News*, *Wrestling USA Magazine* and *The Officials Quarterly*. For his efforts, Welker was selected as the "1987 National Wrestling Sportswriter of the Year" by *Wrestling USA Magazine*.

Welker has also published a computer-assisted, instructional manual for wrestling officials entitled "Wrestling: Sports Officials Applied Skills and Knowledge Program". Moreover, Welker was commissioned as a wrestling consultant for the American Sport Education Program's Officiating Wrestling On-Line Course. In this position, he edited the on-line course and developed three simulated videotaped matches for wrestling officials, providing them with real match experiences on "making the correct calls."

In 2005, Welker published *The Wrestling Drill Book* for Human Kinetics Publishing, which he served as the editor and a chapter author. It is being marketed nationally and has been widely accepted by the wrestling community throughout the country with over 13,000 in book sales.

Welker's understanding of wrestling goes far beyond his writing endeavors. He started wrestling in 1955 as a third grade youth wrestler in Shamokin, PA, and his family name is synonymous with Pennsylvania scholastic wrestling. Welker is a former Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) State Champion (1963) and PIAA State Runner-up (1965) under coaching legends Mal Paul and Lyman "Beans" Weaver. The last "Greyhound" wrestler to compete for old Shamokin High School (1913-1965), Welker was the all-time winner during the school's era with 83 victories.

His cousin Harold Welker was a state champion in 1938, the inaugural year of the PIAA



State Tournament. And his older brother Floyd was also a PIAA State Champion (1959) and PIAA State Runner-up (1960). All three were honored in Series 2 of the "PA Legends of Wrestling" sports cards, created by Pennsylvania's WUSA state editor, Tom Elling.

Furthermore, Bill and Floyd Welker were the first brother team to win states in District Four, a "hotbed" of PA wrestling. Bill wrestled in college as a varsity performer for the University of Pittsburgh, while Floyd competed at the varsity level for West Point.

Welker coached wrestling at the high school level for 10 years in Wheeling. He also directed many junior high and high school tournaments in the Wheeling area.

To further promote the sport, Welker was co-founder of the Greater Wheeling Small-Fry Wrestling League in 1977. His wife Peggy even served as one of the League's first commissioners. The League is still in existence, exposing youngsters to the fundamentals of the mat sport.

In 1979, Welker was selected as one of the nation's outstanding high school coaches by *Scholastic Wrestling News* (now known as *Wrestling USA Magazine*). As head sophomore coach at Wheeling Park High School, he was instrumental in producing three West Virginia AAA State Championship teams.

Over the years, Welker has promoted the sport as the keynote speaker at wrestling banquets and as a feature clinician in West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. In fact, this June he will be making a DVD on his signature take-down in "The Pancake Series." Welker has also directed clinics in which he brought to the

Wheeling area such wrestling greats as Ed Peery, Bobby Weaver, and most recently, Bobby Douglas.

Welker was an outstanding wrestling official as well. He was the "1989 West Virginia Official of the Year." He was later honored as the "2001 Section II Distinguished Official of the Year" by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), being one of only eight officials chosen annually from all sports nationwide.

In addition, Welker was selected as the "2002 National Wrestling Official of the Year" by *Wrestling USA Magazine*. He was also chosen by the wrestling coaches of the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference (OVAC) as the "2003 OVAC Official of the Year."

Welker retired from officiating in 2005 after 25 years of overseeing the mats. That summer his officiating career was featured in the July issue of *Referee Magazine*.

Welker has served as the rules interpreter, clinician, and supervisor of state tournament officials for the West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission since 1989. In this capacity, he obtained permission from the NFHS in 1993 to conduct an experiment concerning a five-minute limitation on "blood time" for all West Virginia high school matches during that wrestling season. The study was so well received that the NFHS adopted the procedure into their wrestling rulebook in 1996.

Welker also directed a two-year pilot study (1998-2000) for the NFHS, regarding more innovative approaches for penalizing the ever-controversial area of "stalling" in scholastic wrestling.

Welker is presently a member of the Bernie Romanoski Chapter of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame. He was also inducted into the Pennsylvania District IV Wrestling Hall of Fame. Welker was the 16th recipient of the prestigious OVAC "Mr. Mat" award. In 2001, he was selected as the "West Virginia Wrestling Man of the Year" by *Wrestling USA Magazine*.

Welker received both his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Pittsburgh. He later earned a doctorate in the field of education from West Virginia University.

As a classroom teacher for 39 years, Welker has been the reading specialist at Warwood Middle School (Wheeling) since 1976. Welker also served as the Dean of Students at the school from 1991 to 2000.

Bill and Peggy Welker have 4 children and 11 grandchildren. They reside on Wheeling Island in Wheeling, West Virginia.

Wrestling USA Magazine congratulates and salutes Dr. Bill Welker as the "2008 Master-of-Wrestling" award-winner for his undaunted lifelong dedication to our great sport!

