


2008 Man-of-the-Year Award

TOM WOKASCH

Cottonwood, Arizona

This year's selection for Man-of-the-Year goes to Tom Wokasch, head wrestling coach at Mingus Union High School in Cottonwood, Arizona. After reviewing Coach Wokasch's credentials, it was evident that he was much more than just a coach. The impact he has had on the Cottonwood community and the state of Arizona goes beyond this great sport of wrestling. - Cody

Longevity has played a vital role in Tom Wokasch's success as the head coach at Mingus Union High School in Cottonwood, Arizona. Tom has spent 18 years in the wrestling room at Mingus teaching, coaching and motivating any kid that walks into the wrestling room. He has guided 23 state champions, 105 state placers and three straight state team championships. He has had two wrestlers earn All-American honors at Embry-Riddle University and one at Phoenix College.

When Tom came to Mingus Union High School 18 years ago, the teams hadn't scored a team point in the state tournament the previous two years. He brought with him great coaching and wrestling success as a high school wrestler and coach from Minnesota. At Mingus Union, Tom started to incorporate these building blocks at the low-level elementary program to develop the younger kids first and then worked his way up through the Jr. High and the high school. As the seed was started, the program grew into a top five at both the Cottonwood Jr. High and Mingus Union High School.

Tom implemented the first All-Arizona freshmen tournament in 1997 with 110 freshmen participates. Since then the tournament has grown to over 450 wrestlers and 50 teams from all over the state of Arizona. He is the Mingus Mountain club coach with a Bronze certification and has been honored as Grand Canyon Region Wrestling Coach of the Year 10 times. You can see Tom coaching kids at all ages and levels including the Kids & Cadets Western Regionals, Rocky Mountain Nationals tournaments, Brute-Adidas Nationals and the Cadet & Junior Nationals.

The Mingus wrestling team has had for the past 10 years a team GPA of 3.2 or higher. Last year his state championship team became the first Arizona wrestling team to win a state title and the scholar-athlete award in the same year. Tom has played a major factor in this motivation to excel in the classroom and on the mat. His encouragement of excelling in



the classroom has helped 70% of the graduating Mingus wrestler's to enroll in four-year colleges. Three of his wrestlers have gone on to become Academic All-Americans in college.

All of this hard work for the Mingus wrestling team to excel has been scheduled between his teaching, Arizona Republic newspaper liaison for Arizona high school wrestling, Editor of the only wrestling publication in Arizona *The Inside Trip* and parenting of three kids. Travis, his oldest son became a 4X state placer and 2X state champion and currently is wrestling at the Colorado School of Mines. Daughter Kelsey excels in volleyball, basketball and softball. His youngest son Anthony is excelling in swimming, baseball, cross country and wrestling at the age of 10. Tom's wife Laura can be seen at all the tournaments taking tickets and working the concession stand. Her expertise in finance helps balance the family and the Mingus Mountain Wrestling Club for wrestling trips.

Tom Wokasch has been very instrumental coach, teacher and motivator for the Mingus wrestling program, community and the state of Arizona for the past 18 years. The Mingus wrestling program will continue to benefit from Coach Wokasch's passion for the sport that will go way beyond winning state titles. These kids will provide communities with great advocates with an enthusiasm not only for the sport of wrestling but the importance

of an education.

"I believe Tom is driven in this endeavor to have the privilege to witness accomplishments of young men both on the mat and off. I know of no other sport that lends itself to such hands on year round mentoring by an individual leader. Tom Wokasch is that leader. I believe he is a great fit to be a great coach. There is no doubt that Tom is a tremendous asset to the wrestling community of Arizona;" Ted Goettl, Goettl's High Desert Mechanical, Inc.

"What impresses me the most about Tom and the wrestling program is how he stresses the three 'A's' of High School - Attendance, Attitude and Academics in his wrestling team. He is passionate about the work he does in the classroom, with his fellow teachers and the out-of-the-ordinary work he does for his wrestling program," Marc J. Cooper, Principal, Mingus Union High School.

"Tom has developed and sustained a positive program. He demands excellence of his participants as athletes and students, as well as young community members. They not only practice as a team, but jointly participate in activities not related to school, thus forgoing relationships among these young people beyond the aspect of being teammates," Mike Casson, Fire Chief, City of Cottonwood.

"Tom has taken a small town with little to offer children and given many of our youth a reason to work hard, stay in school and ultimately succeed. If we had a few more coaches like Tom Wokasch in my community, and around the country, there would be less need for Police Officers. I can honestly say that my high school and college years in sports I have never met a coach with more dedication, integrity and just plain selflessness than Tom Wokasch," Jody Fanning, Interim Chief of Police.

"Needless to say, Coach Wokasch has essentially donated his life to ensuring the success of the wrestling program at Mingus. He is highly respected throughout the community and has shown himself as highly capable and ethical while inspiring Verde Valley youth to participate and excel in wrestling programs. He sets the highest example of excellence for the community's young wrestlers, and is a great overall example for the young people of the community," Diane Joens, Mayor of Cottonwood.

Wrestling USA Magazine commends Tom Wokasch not only for his dedication to the great sport of wrestling but the development of young men to thrive and have a positive impact in the communities they live in. Congratulations for our selection as 2008 "Man-of-the-Year!"