



MAN-OF-THE-YEAR

CHRIS KALLAI

Wadsworth, Ohio

I came to love the sport of wrestling when I was in junior high and wrestled for Erwin Middle School. My coach was Mr. Cuts and he was an awesome coach and had the love of wrestling in his blood. He taught us the true meaning of wrestling, dedication to the sport, and commitment and that the love of the sport grows with you.

I have three brothers who wrestled and did very well at it – Mike and Charlie were two-time runners-up for Coventry and Gus was a two-time state champion.

My parents were huge fans and came to every wrestling match and tournament that my brothers and I wrestled in. My brother Gus and I would do Sunday practices in Mogadore and the whole Coventry wrestling team would show up and wrestle for an hour and a half. I was able to be a part of a two-time state championship wrestling team.

I have three sons who followed in my footsteps and began to wrestle; Christopher started at 6, Matthew at 5, and Joshua at 3. Everyone asked if I pushed them into it and I can honestly say they came to me and asked if they could wrestle.

My wife, Debbi, would bring our sons to the wrestling matches or tournaments where I was coaching. My oldest and middle sons were state champions (Matthew was 2nd at senior nationals) and my youngest was a two-time qualifier and placed third at state.

I started coaching right out of high school as an assistant coach for Malone College for two years. Then, I coached at Coventry High School for two years. After that, I was a volunteer assistant wrestling coach at Barberton High School and Wadsworth High School. After being a volunteer for one year at Wadsworth I was promoted to freshmen wrestling coach and assistant varsity wrestling coach for 15 years.

Needing something new, I became a volunteer assistant coach at Muskingum



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College for two years and this is where I've been coaching for the past two years.

I was also a coach and team leader for USA-Ohio Cadet and Junior Greco-Roman/Freestyle National teams in Fargo, ND the past 10 years. I've coached a Greco-Roman National team title and have coached individual National Greco-Roman and freestyle champions. I've gone to Kansas City for the Cadet National Dual team in Greco-Roman and freestyle, Oklahoma for the Junior National Dual Team in Greco-Roman and freestyle and last year was there to watch the Junior National team take the title and sportsmanship award as well.

In my coaching career, I've mentored 102 state champions, 210 state placers and eight national champions.

In 2006, I was named the USA-Ohio State Chairperson which is a two-year term and I am going on my third term. I've brought two big national tournaments to Ohio; the Fila Cadet and University and Women Asics National

Greco-Roman and Freestyle tournament at the University of Akron with the support of Cleveland Sports Commission and Alan Hoon, Event coordinator of the Akron University field house. In our first year we had an impressive turnout of over 1,300 participants.

The second national tournament is the Senior and Fila Juniors, which will be held in Cleveland at the Wolfstein Center by Cleveland State University. The Cleveland Sports Commission has teamed up again with USA-Ohio for this big event to happen.

Over the past three years we have hosted the Central Regional down in Columbus for kids, as well as, Cadet and Junior Regional.

The top three Cadet and Juniors automatically qualify to the USA-Ohio National team for Fargo, ND. I could not pull this regional off without the assistance of the Columbus Sports Commission.

My philosophy has always been about the kids and how to help them get better, to get nationally recognized, and help the sport of wrestling grow. I enjoy this sport so much and it has a lot to offer. In wrestling and life it is about how to take the challenges that are given your way and how you handled them. I enjoy being around this sport, the thrill that it gives me. I also enjoy the kids I've met along the way and to be a part of their accomplishment in the sport.

I've been fortunate to be able to surround myself with awesome people who also love the sport of wrestling. My wife, who has been my backbone and right-hand man along with my three sons, who I would not have been able to do all this without their support and backing. Other people are Leo Saniuk, John Cvitic, USA national wrestling office, Cleveland and Columbus sports commission, and all the volunteers that help pull off these big national events.