

1976 OVAC MR. MAT GEORGE E. KOVALICK

George Kovalick was selected as the inaugural recipient of the OVAC's "Mr. Mat" Award in 1976, an honor bestowed annually for outstanding contributions to the sport of wrestling.

George E. Kovalick is recognized as the "father" of high school wrestling in the Ohio Valley. Coach Kovalick has been honored with memberships in numerous halls of fame, including the West Liberty State College (WLSC) Hall of Fame, the Ohio Wrestling Hall of Fame, and the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Hall of Fame.

As a sports mentor, Coach Kovalick produced numerous championship teams in football, wrestling, and baseball. In fact, his 1964 WLSC baseball team won the NAIA Championship, the only national title captured in the school's history.

Among the athletes he coached in high school and college are John Havlicek, Joe and Phil Niekro, and world-class wrestler and coach Bobby Douglas.

George Kovalick was not only one of the founders of the OVAC Wrestling Tournament, but his Bridgeport, Ohio, "Bulldogs" won the first seven Conference championships. Kovalick's 1959 Bridgeport mat team won the Ohio State Wrestling Championship. He is also the only coach in the history of West Virginia wrestling to be named coach-of-the-year in 1974 as an assistant at Weir High School.

The late George Kovalick and his wife, Evelyn, have four children: George, Mike, Will, and Joe. They also have nine grandchildren.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1977 OVAC MR. MAT BILL VAN HORNE

Bill Van Horne was dubbed the “Dean of Ohio Valley Sportswriters” during his legendary newspaper career that spanned 53 years. Van Horne was sports editor at both *The Times-Leader* for 25 years and the *Wheeling News-Register* for 28 years.

His work with the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference (the largest conference in the United States) over the years was especially instrumental in the success and popularity of wrestling throughout the entire Ohio Valley. In fact, Van Horne was the second recipient of OVAC wrestling’s prestigious ‘Mr. Mat’ Award in 1977. His promotion of wrestling in the Northern Panhandle was nonpareil.

His columns, ‘Van Horne on Sports,’ were masterpiece chronicles of the athletic lives of others. His pre-season wrestling previews of local high school mat programs filled nearly two sports pages with detailed wrestler profiles. During the season, Bill Van Horne interviewed numerous wrestlers and coaches, spotlighting their accomplishments.

A giant in his field and a role model for aspiring writers, Van Horne was admired and respected for his integrity, dedication, fairness, knowledge, and compassion.

Numerous awards and honors were bestowed on Van Horne. The Upper Ohio Valley Dapper Dan Club named him Man-of-the-Year in 1993. He was also selected as the West Virginia Wrestling Sportswriter-of-the-Year three times.

The late Bill Van Horne is survived by his devoted wife, Gladys Van Horne.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1978 OVAC MR. MAT JOHN “CORKY” VROTSOS

John ‘Corky’ Vrotsos (Martins Ferry High School, Class of 1946) not only initiated the sport of wrestling at his alma mater, he quickly established himself as one of the premier mat coaches in Conference history.

Vrotsos guided the Purple Rider grapplers from 1957-68, leading his team to seven consecutive OVAC Tournament championships (1961-67) along with six straight Ohio District Tournament titles. His teams finished ranked in the top 10 in the state four times (1959, 1960, 1963 and 1964) and the best finish at the state tournament was a fifth-place effort in 1960.

During his tenure, Vrotsos coached 41 OVAC champions and 41 Ohio State Tournament qualifiers, including 10 state place-winners and one state champion (175-pounder John Scordos in 1964). Ferry’s dual meet record during the Vrotsos years was 85-20-1, including unbeaten seasons in 1964 and 1967.

The initial inductee into the Martins Ferry High School Wrestling Hall of Fame in 1994 and the 1978 recipient of the OVAC Wrestling Tournament’s ‘Mr. Mat. Award’, he served as tournament director for the OVAC, sectional and district tournaments after yielding the coaching post.

The late John “Corky” Vrotsos was truly a student of the game of wrestling. After coaching and retirement, he never missed an OVAC Ron Mauck Wrestling Tournament the rest of his life.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1979 OVAC MR. MAT RICHARD “DICK” EDGE

A 1954 graduate of Wheeling High School, Coach Dick Edge initiated the wrestling programs at Triadelphia High School (1964) and Warwood High School (1967), prior to the two schools consolidating with Wheeling High School to form Wheeling Park High School in 1976.

While serving as the Warwood High School Vikings mat mentor, Dick Edge developed one of the most productive, small-school wrestling programs in the Ohio Valley. In fact, Coach Dick Edge’s 1971 Warwood Viking wrestling team went undefeated in dual meet competition. Furthermore, Coach Edge produced the school’s first West Virginia State Wrestling Champion in 145-pounder Joe Matyskiela.

From there, Coach Dick Edge also launched the wrestling career of Viking wrestler John Vdovjak, who became a two-time West Virginia State Champion and set a since-broken Ohio Valley record for most consecutive wrestling victories.

Coach Dick Edge remembers looking out over the eight mats at the Wes-Banco Civic Center when the OVACs first came to Wheeling thinking “wrestling has come a long way from the days us old coaches had to train our wrestlers in “dungeon-like” facilities.

As one of Dick Edge’s former wrestlers put it, “Coach Edge was my inspiration, not only in wrestling, but also in life. My interactions with people are based on what I learned from Coach Dick Edge.” What a great testimonial on a coach’s influence.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1980 OVAC MR. MAT GEORGE WALLEY, JR.

A graduate of Union High School, George Walley, Jr., former athletic director at John Marshall High School, was an outstanding contributor to Ohio Valley wrestling.

When George Walley was athletic director at Moundsville High School, he worked to initiate the first wrestling program at the school. He organized the mat program with the school's first wrestling coach, Paul Crago. Walley later came to the assistance of Coach George Kovalick at Moundsville. From there he finally began his association with Bill Hinegardner at John Marshall when the school first opened its doors in 1968.

When the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament was moved from Martins Ferry to Moundsville in 1968, Walley became co-director of the meet. From 1969 until 1975, George Walley and Bill Hinegardner were in charge of the OVAC tourney.

Walley also directed and assisted with many invitational and regional tournaments. In 1974, he directed the West Virginia State Championships at John Marshall, and set the pattern by which subsequent state tournaments have been operated. That 1974 tourney was the first in which more than one wrestler qualified for the event, and Walley initiated the first "true consolations."

Of George Walley, Coach Bill Hinegardner said, "George has always been tremendously cooperative with wrestling coaches at John Marshall. Anything that wrestling needed, he was willing to help and give moral support."

by Dr. Bill Welker

1981 OVAC MR. MAT BOB HEDMOND

Robert L. 'Bob' Hedmond was a member of the Follansbee High School, Class of 1948 and a 1954 graduate of Shepherd College.

In coaching, Hedmond met with success at every stop. Hedmond took over at Steubenville in 1981 and directed the Jefferson County squad for two years. His teams compiled an 18-4 record and qualified for Big Red's first two post-season berths since Ohio adopted a playoff system in the 1970s. While at East Liverpool, Hedmond lettered 18 sophomores as the Potters turned in a 3-7 record. The following season, they rebounded to finish at 7-3. Overall, his record as a head football coach was 44-22-5. During his time as track coach with the Potters, his teams went through four straight seasons without losing a dual meet.

Successful as he was with a coaching whistle around his neck, Hedmond was even more effective as an administrator. Within the OVAC, he served as a class representative, was a long-time member of the OVAC Foundation Executive Board and, for several years, he directed the giant OVAC Wrestling Tournament.

Hedmond served as Athletic Director at Steubenville High School and later was the Building and Grounds Superintendent with Steubenville City Schools.

Among his numerous honors were the Carl Hamill Memorial Award, presented by the Upper Ohio Valley Dapper Dan Club; Ohio Eastern District Coach of the Year; Eastern District Athletic Director of the Year; and an Outstanding Achievement Award, also from Dapper Dan. Before his passing, Hedmond was inducted into the Ohio Athletic Administrators Hall of Fame.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1982 OVAC MR. MAT PAUL CRAGO

A 1939 graduate of Wheeling High School, Coach Paul Crago was considered the man who did the ground work which resulted in Marshall County becoming a hotbed of high school wrestling in the Ohio Valley.

Acquiring both his bachelor's and master's degrees at West Virginia University, Paul Crago launched the wrestling program at Moundsville High School in 1960, since absorbed in the John Marshall High School consolidation. In a short span of years, Coach Crago built the Trojan program into a contender for Ohio Valley wrestling honors.

His 1966 mat squad won the regional championship and also placed 3rd in the West Virginia State Wrestling Tournament. Coach Crago retired from coaching at the high school level in 1966 with an impressive dual meet record of 53-19-1.

Becoming the county's physical education coordinator, Paul Crago set up the junior high wrestling program in Marshall County. It was developed into an excellent feeder system that contributed in producing four state championships for the John Marshall Monarchs.

As an administrator, "Coach Crago made sure to place qualified coaches in our junior high wrestling programs, which helped to develop our powerhouse mat program at the high school level," asserted Coach Bill Hinegardner, John Marshall's head wrestling coach at the time.

During his tenure, Paul Crago made it his mission to see to it that the wrestling program in the Marshall County school system received the respect it so deserved.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1983 OVAC MR. MAT DR. VINCE MONSEAU

Coach Vince Monseau began his association with West Liberty State College (now West Liberty University) when he enrolled as a freshman student in 1958. Coach Monseau earned letters in wrestling, track, and football as a Hilltopper athlete. Vince Monseau received his bachelor's degree in 1962. Coach Monseau furthered his education, earning both master and doctorate degrees from West Virginia University in 1964 and 1977, respectively.

Over the years, Vince Monseau has coached at Oak Glen High School (1963-68), Charleston High School (1968-69) and Weir High (1969-72). His Oak Glen Golden Bears wrestling team won the West Virginia State Championship in 1967.

Coach Monseau returned to his college alma mater in 1973 and put the Hilltopper wrestling program on the national map for over 30 years. He produced 72 All-American wrestlers, including five national champs: Dave LaMotte (1979 NAIA), Brian Davis (1995 NAIA), Scott Shipman (1996 NCAA DII), James Branch (1997 NCAA DII), and Nick Spencer (2001 NCAA DII).

Coach Vince Monseau takes as much pride in having worked with 28 Academic All-Americans. In fact, his 2002 WLSC squad was the "Academic National DII Runner-ups." And not surprising, Coach Monseau's 2003 Hilltopper mat team was the "Academic National DII Champions."

by Dr. Bill Welker

1984 OVAC MR. MAT BILL HINEGARDNER

Bill Hinegardner, a 1960 graduate of Meadow Bridge High School, received his BS degree from Concord College in 1965 and master's degree from WVU in 1968.

During his 14 years as head coach of the John Marshall High School wrestling program, he became one of the most successful coaches in OVAC and state history. Hinegardner's teams won four W. Va. Class AAA championships (1972, 1973, 1974, and 1979). The Monarchs were also runners-up four times and finished lower than sixth place only once in the W. Va. State Tournament.

The Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament saw Hinegardner's John Marshall powerhouses take the overall team championship four times (1972, 1973, 1974, 1977) and finish second five times. The Monarchs also earned five OVAC Class 4-A titles and emerged as Class 4-A Dual Meet winners five times. From December of 1971 through December of 1976, Hinegardner's wrestlers went through 41 straight dual matches without sustaining a defeat. His overall dual meet record was an impressive 133-29-1. Hinegardner's wrestling program produced 20 individual state champions, including a pair of two-time winners.

The numerous awards to Hinegardner included: National Wrestling Hall of Fame Lifetime Service in Wrestling Award (2004), National High School Coaches Association District 3 Coach of the Year (1976), OVAC Coach-of-the-Year (1974), W. Va. Wrestling Coach of the Year (three times), and the John Marshall High School Wall of Fame (First Class , 2005).

by Dr. Bill Welker

1985 OVAC MR. MAT DENNIS BOWMAN

Dennis Bowman has been associated with Ohio Valley wrestling as a competitor, coach, official, and over-all promoter of the mat sport.

Coach Bowman's participation in wrestling began at Bridgeport High School, a school that developed many great mat men under the tutelage of George Kovalick. Bowman was on Coach K's 1959 Ohio State Championship squad. Moreover, Coach Bowman was a two-time OVAC Champion in 1960 and 1961 for the Bulldogs.

Dennis Bowman then matriculated to West Liberty State College. While there, he continued to wrestle for Coach K, where he lettered all four years and was the team captain his junior and senior seasons.

After college, Coach Dennis Bowman reinitiated the St. John's High School wrestling program in 1965. In fact, his 1971 Fighting Irish squad won the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament.

Coach Dennis Bowman then moved right across the street to serve as mat mentor for the Bellaire High School Big Reds. While there, Coach Bowman produced many fine wrestlers, including Mike Kovalick, who became the school's first Ohio State Championship at 185 pounds in 1975.

Since then, Denny Bowman has played many roles for wrestling in the Ohio Valley. He spent some time as a very competent official, and co-sponsored the recognition of the 25th anniversary of past OVAC champs. His ultimate claim to fame was editing the book: **Ohio Valley Wrestling: 50 Years of Growth** in 1985.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1986 OVAC MR. MAT RON MAUCK

Ron Mauck (Bridgeport High School, Class of 1958): educator, administrator, community leader.

Mauck has been director of the OVAC Wrestling Tournament, one of the largest high school events of its kind in the entire country, since 1979. This highly-regarded championship was renamed as the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament in 2006.

A Bridgeport High and West Liberty State College graduate, he began his coaching career in 1965 at Follansbee High School where he started the school's varsity wrestling program, coaching the school's only individual state champion (Lou Daly).

When the consolidated Brooke High School opened in 1968, Ron was named to coach the wrestling team where he tutored the Bruins' first West Virginia mat champ in Jim Suddoth. Before retiring after a 34-year career in education, Mauck served Brooke High School as director of the school's Driver's Education Department, Physical Plant Director, Assistant Athletic Director, and Athletic Director.

Over the years, Mauck was named the W. Va. Wrestling Coaches Man-of-the-Year (1987); and received recognition awards from the Upper Ohio Valley Dapper Dan Club (1985 and 1997); W. Va. Athletic Director of the Year (1995). For his community efforts, Mauck twice was selected Warwood Lions Citizen of the Year, and is a member of the Brooke County Wall of Fame (2006).

by Dr. Bill Welker

1987 OVAC MR. MAT ERIC CARDER

A graduate of Triadelphia High School (1967) and West Liberty State College (1972), Eric Carder's intensity as a wrestling coach was second to none. And he had the best of teachers to groom him – Coach Dick Edge – his mat mentor at his high school alma mater.

As assistant coach under Dick Edge at Warwood High School, Eric Carder developed into a master of strategy, which was demonstrated time and time again during dual meets and tournaments. Taking over the helm after Coach Edge retired as the Vikings wrestling coach, Eric Carder raised the program to another level.

In 1975, Coach Carder's "little school" wrestling team surprised everyone by winning the gigantic OVAC Wrestling Tournament. His 1976 Viking squad went on to win the first AA state championship in West Virginia with five state champions. But it didn't stop there.

As the first wrestling coach at the newly consolidated Wheeling Park High School in 1976, Eric Carder began a coaching dynasty equaled by only a few other Mountain State wrestling mentors.

Coach Carder became the first coach ever to win OVACs and states (one of two coaches) at both the small school and big school levels, winning two WPHS OVAC tournaments (1978, 1979) and three WV AAA state team championships (1977, 1978, 1981).

During his ten-year tenure, Eric Carder was named OVAC Coach-of-the-Year three times (1975, 1978, 1979) and WV Coach-of-the-Year four times (1976, 1977, 1978, 1981).

by Dr. Bill Welker

1988 OVAC MR. MAT DAVE KOVALICK

Always a smile on his face, Coach Dave Kovalick has often been referred to as OVAC wrestling's "Mr. Nice Guy."

Coach Dave Kovalick began his wrestling career at Bridgeport High School and also was a varsity performer at West Liberty State College. He received the best training at both schools under the tutelage of his older brother, the legendary George Kovalick.

After college, Coach Dave Kovalick took over the coaching reins of the Barnesville High School Shamrocks in 1967, and molded them into a team of major-sport status at the school.

Over the years, Coach Dave Kovalick produced numerous OVAC champions and Ohio state qualifiers. In fact, he coached the third Bierkorte Award winner in 1973, Don Claugus.

Under Kovalick's tenure as coach, the Barnesville Invitational Wrestling Tournament was established in 1970. Since then, the wrestling competition has become one of the premiere mat events in the Ohio. Furthermore, two of Coach Kovalick's Shamrock teams won the Barnesville Invitational in 1975 and 1976. Dave Kovalick was also recognized as one of OVAC wrestling's finest officials.

After ten highly successful seasons, Coach Kovalick stepped down as head coach only to further develop the program as its junior high wrestling mentor. In fact, he was instrumental in the school's future victories on the mats, winning both the Ohio AA state team title (1984) and OVAC championship (1985).

by Dr. Bill Welker.

1989 OVAC MR. MAT STEVE KISH, JR.

Steve Kish, Jr. was a man of many hats, but his two favorite domains were coaching and officiating – and he was outstanding in both arenas.

Coach Steve Kish was at the helm of the Martins Ferry Purple Rider wrestling team from 1970 to 1976. During that time, Coach Kish's squads garnered an impressive 33-16-1 dual meet record, never encountering a losing season. In fact, Coach Steve Kish produced the first David Bierkorte winner in the OVAC's history, Don Blum.

Coach Kish's 1973 Purple Rider squad won the Eastern Ohio District Championship, with five individual titlists. And in 1974, Steve Kish was named the Eastern Ohio Coach-of-the-Year.

Over his six-year coaching tenure, Kish produced 26 OVAC place-winners, four OVAC Champions, 13 sectional titlists, 10 district champions, 15 Ohio state qualifiers, and two state place-winners.

As a wrestling official, Steve Kish was nonpareil. He refereed the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament for over three decades, and has been honored to officiate nearly 30 Ohio State Championships held yearly in Columbus. During this period, he even found time to take on the duties of OVAC President twice, and has also served as president of the Ohio Valley Wrestling Officials Association.

For his dedicated efforts overseeing the mats, Steve Kish has been named the West Virginia and Ohio Official-of-the-Year as well as the OVAC Official-of-the-Year. In 1999, Steve Kish was inducted into the Ohio Officials Hall of Fame.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1990 OVAC MR. MAT CARL FODOR

Carl Fodor, who coached Weir High School to two state championships back in the 1960s, is the 15th Mr. Mat recipient.

After graduation from West Liberty State College (now a university) in 1958, he joined the Weir High staff as head wrestling coach, and assistant in track and football. He was line coach under Jim Carey when the Red Riders won two state championships in football, and Coach Fodor also directed his mat men to a state crown in 1961.

Subsequently, Fodor served as head coach in three sports – football, wrestling and track – at Weirton. His 1966 mat squad presented him with another state crown, and his 1967 wrestlers were nosed out by one point by Oak Glen, then coached by Dr. Vince Monseau.

Coach Carl Fodor produced eleven individual wrestling state champions and racked up an impressive dual meet record of 77-29. In fact, his 1965 wrestling team had an unblemished dual meet record of 17 victories.

Fodor obtained both his master's degree and principal and superintendent certificate from West Virginia University.

After coaching, Carl Fodor served as principal at Weir Junior High. He then took over the responsibility as Hancock County assistant superintendent for ten years before retiring.

The late Carl Fodor and his wife, Marlene, have three beautiful children: Mary Beth, Carl, and Nancy.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1991 OVAC MR. MAT DR. BILL WELKER

Since 1970, Dr. Bill Welker has promoted wrestling in West Virginia and Ohio as a coach, official, speaker, clinician, and author.

A former Pennsylvania State Champion and State Runner-up, Welker coached wrestling in Wheeling from 1970-1980 at old Wheeling High, Central, and Park. He then officiated wrestling from 1980-2005 and is the WV state rules interpreter.

Over the years, Welker has received many wrestling awards, including:

- 1979 SWN National Assistant Coach-of-the-Year Runner-up
- 1987 WUSA National Sportswriter-of-the-Year
- Seven-Time West Virginia Sportswriter-of-the-Year
- 1989 West Virginia Official-of-the-Year
- 1990 Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame (Romanoski Chapter)
- 2000 Pennsylvania District Four Wrestling Hall of Fame
- 2001 West Virginia Man-of-the-Year
- 2001 NFHS Mideast Section Distinguished Official-of-the-Year
- 2002 WUSA National Official-of-the-Year
- 2003 OVAC Official of the Year
- 2008 WUSA "Master of Wrestling" Award
- 2008 National Wrestling Hall of Fame (WV Chapter)
- 2010 Pennsylvania Wrestling Hall of Fame

Bill and his devoted wife, Peggy, have four children and twelve grandchildren. They reside on Wheeling Island.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1992 OVAC MR. MAT LARRY DEATON

An outstanding wrestler and 1964 graduate for Martins Ferry High School, Larry Deaton has dedicated his adult life to the promotion of wrestling in the Ohio Valley (Eastern Ohio and Northern West Virginia). Over the years, he has worn many wrestling hats, but his greatest love is officiating.

Since 1966, Deaton has refereed 3 NAIA National Championships, the NCAA Division 2 Regional Tournament, 8 Ohio State Championships, 15 West Virginia State Tournaments, 33 Ohio Valley Athletic Conference (OVAC) Championships, 11 Medina (Ohio) Invitational Tournaments, and 3 National AAU Wrestling Championships.

Larry Deaton's "devoted longevity" over the last 42 years has not gone unnoticed. His numerous accolades include: 1992 OVAC Mr. Mat Award, 1994 Charter Distinguished Member of the Ohio Wrestling Officials Hall of Fame, 1997 WV Official-of-the-Year, Martins Ferry High School Wrestling Hall of Fame, and the 2004 Ohio High School Athletic Association Hall of Fame.

In 2009, the OVAC Official-of-the-Year award was named in Larry Deaton's honor. It is now the "Larry Deaton OVAC Official-of-the-Year" award, due to his total dedication to the improvement of officiating throughout the Ohio Valley.

A plant foreman at Weirton Steel for 37 years, Larry Deaton now works for the City of Martins Ferry as an electrician. Larry Deaton and his devoted wife, high school sweetheart, Sylvia, are the parents of two children: Teri (Deaton) Taylor and Bill Deaton. They are also the proud grandparents of seven grandchildren.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1993 OVAC MR. MAT JOHN STEPHENSON

A product of the wrestling-rich state of Pennsylvania, John Stephenson's dynamic coaching style put the Cadiz Cardinal wrestling program on both the OVAC and Ohio state maps.

In 1981, the Cadiz wrestling team was a gigantic underdog for winning the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament held at the WesBanco Arena nipped past the Wheeling Park Patriots to win the OVAC Wrestling Tournament Over-All championship. It was a huge upset since Wheeling Park went on to win the West Virginia AAA Wrestling Team Championship that same year.

During Coach John Stephenson's coaching tenure at Cadiz, his Cardinal-wrestling squad won numerous small school "OVAC Dual Meet" titles as well as winning their team division throughout the years at the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament.

Coach Stephenson also considered academics as a very important part of his athletes' lives. He took great pride in knowing that two of his protégés won the George Kovalick Memorial Wrestling Scholarship: Darrin Heavilin and Reed Case. Coach Stephenson also had a David Bierkorte Award winner in Randy Davia.

In 1987, Coach John Stephenson's team accomplished the unbelievable, they won the Ohio DIII State Team Title. For that and his many other mat triumphs, the new gym at Harrison Central is named in his honor – Coach John Stephenson.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1994 OVAC MR. MAT JOE BATES

Joseph G. “Joe” Bates – who wrestled in the OVAC tournament, coached in the OVAC wrestling tournament, and officiated in the OVAC tournament – is the 19th Mr. Mat award winner.

Coach Bates’ original involvement in wrestling predates the OVAC tournament. In 1953, as a sophomore at old Wheeling High School, he was a member of a West Virginia state high school team. The following year, Bates was third in the state at his weight class. He also competed in the first OVAC Tournament, which was held at Bridgeport High School. Joe Bates was runner-up in the 157-pound weight class.

Appropriately for Coach Joe Bates, the Mr. Mat award came just 25 years after he coached the Bellaire St. John Central mat team to an OVAC Championship in 1969 at Moundsville Junior High School Fieldhouse.

After graduating from WLSC in 1966, Joe Bates became head wrestling coach at St. John, which had only been sponsoring the sport for one year. In just three seasons, Coach Bates built the team that won the OVAC Championship.

Bates, who also served as line coach under both Dennis Bowman and Dan McGrew, left St. John in the fall of 1970 to work in the Switzerland of Ohio district. In 1988, Coach Bates established the first wrestling team at Woodsfield. He later became an official and worked most of the major tournaments in the area, including the OVAC Championships.

Leaving the educational field to farm, Joe Bates and his wife, Loretta, have one daughter, Felicia, who attended Syracuse University.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1995 OVAC MR. MAT BOB BRUNEY

Robert “Bob” Bruney, who wrestled, coached, and officiated at the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament, is the 20th Mr. Mat award winner.

Bob Bruney was an outstanding Martins Ferry Purple Rider wrestler under John “Corky” Vrotsos (another Mr. Mat). In 1960, Bruney was not only an OVAC and district champion but also finished third in the Ohio State tournament at 154 pounds. At that time, Ohio schools were not divided into divisions by enrollment for wrestling as they are now, so Bruney was among the very best within the Buckeye boundaries. He finished his senior season with a 22-1 record.

Upon graduating from Ohio State, where he was a defensive lineman for the late Woody Hayes, Bruney began his coaching career at Wilmington (Ohio) High School. He was an assistant in football and baseball and initiated the wrestling program.

After three years at Wilmington, Bruney moved on to Ironton as head football coach. He spent six years there and was then at Brookfield (Ohio) for two years before returning to his high school alma mater, Martins Ferry in 1974 as gridiron mentor. Bruney was also the Purple Rider’s mat coach for one season.

Retiring from coaching, Bob Bruney continued to stay active in wrestling as a referee. In all, he officiated 18 years and become a fixture at the OVAC Wrestling Tournament.

Coach Robert “Bob” Bruney and his wife, Judy, have three sons – Tommy, Bobby, and Freddie.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1996 OVAC MR. MAT LARRY CHAMBERS

Larry Chambers, who coached wrestling in the Marshall County School system from 1966 until 1996, is the 21st recipient of the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference's prestigious Mr. Mat Award.

Coach Chambers was the wrestling coach at Union High School from 1966 to 1969. While there, his 1968 wrestling team placed fourth in the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament, placing five wrestlers, including an OVAC finalist.

In the 1969-70 school year, Coach Chambers took over the newly established Moundsville Junior High wrestling program. During his tenure in this capacity, Larry Chamber's teams won numerous OVAC Junior High titles and turned in many undefeated dual meet seasons. For his efforts, Coach Chambers was named the first OVAC Junior High Coach-of-the-Year.

Coach Chambers was truly a maker of champions. Eleven of his Moundsville Trojans went on to win OVAC individual titles at John Marshall High School. Furthermore, ten former Moundsville Junior High School wrestlers became eventual West Virginia State Champions.

Not only has Coach Chambers directed numerous OVAC Junior High Tournaments, he also directed the first PAC-8 Junior High Wrestling Championships in 1976.

Ultra-successful John Marshall Monarch coach, Bill Hinegardner, once stated, "Coach Larry Chambers' training and motivation of his wrestlers provided the 'backbone' of the John Marshall High School wrestling program.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1997 OVAC MR. MAT GARY DAVIS

Gary Davis, often referred to as the “father” of wrestling at Beallsville High School, has joined the select group of Ohio Valley wrestling dignitaries as the 22nd Mr. Mat honoree.

Coach Gary Davis wasn't a high school wrestler himself. The only varsity sport he played at Sarahsville (Ohio) High School was basketball, lettering all four years. He initially became interested in the mat sport after transferring to Ohio State from Columbus Business College, spending two years practicing with the Buckeye wrestling team.

Upon graduating from Ohio State, Davis became wrestling coach at Columbus East. The following year he accepted a teaching position at Beallsville, and got the go ahead to start the high school's first wrestling team.

During his career as the Blue Devils wrestling coach, Davis tutored 10 state qualifiers of which six placed. The highlight of his coaching career came during Davis' final season (1980) at Beallsville when Bob Furr, his senior 132-pounder, was crowned the Ohio Division III state champion.

Coach Gary Davis' teams won two Class A division championships at the OVAC Tournament, a duo of OVAC Dual Meet Titles, and were Ohio Eastern District Class AA runners-up twice. They also won three team titles at both the Beallsville Invitational and the Pioneer Valley Conference tournaments.

Retiring from teaching to work on his family farm, Gary Davis and his wife, Carol, have two daughters: Kristen and Garen.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1998 OVAC MR. MAT CAL POKAS

Cal Pokas (Bellaire High School) was another giant in the sportswriting profession who cut his eye teeth under Bill Van Horne and developed into one of the area's true newspaper greats in his own right.

Pokas, who died in 2000, was employed for 40 years at **The Times Leader**, including 29 memorable years for Ohio Valley sports fans as the sports editor. He also was assistant sports editor, a courthouse and political reporter, and Martins Ferry City Editor. Pokas also personally saw to it that many of the so-called "minor sports" such as wrestling, received their share of coverage in his newspaper.

Pokas was deeply interested in the OVAC throughout his career and he devoted much of his spare time to serving on committees for the Rudy Mumley Charity Football All-Star Classic, along with compiling standings for the football and basketball championship races. He also served on a media relations committee for the bi-state league. Pokas had a term as president of the Ohio Prep Sports Writers Association, and was commissioner of the Ohio Valley Baseball League for 23 years.

Pokas' honors were numerous. In 1960 he was presented a Community Service Award by the UPI. The Ohio Prep Sports Writers Association named him Sports Writer-of-the-Year in 1976 and he was given a Distinguished Service Award from the Ohio Association of Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches.

Cal Pokas was selected to the Ohio Prep Sports Writers Hall of Fame, the UPI Sports Editors Association Hall of Fame, and Bellaire High School's prestigious Wall of Fame.

by Dr. Bill Welker

1999 OVAC MR. MAT TOM LACKMAN

Tom Lackman, a “pioneer” in Ohio Valley wrestling circles, is the 24th recipient of the prestigious OVAC Mr. Mat award.

Lackman was a stellar wrestler at both Bridgeport High School and West Liberty State College. In fact, he was the first sophomore Bulldog wrestler to win the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament since the legendary Bobby Douglas. Lackman won the OVAC’s his senior year as well.

Upon graduating from West Liberty, Tom Lackman initiated the first mat sport program at Jefferson Union High School, now a part of the Edison Local School District. Steve Kish, another Mr. Mat, said of Lackman, “He was very intense and very knowledge. Lackman was a pleasure to coach with and against. He was a coach who always kept the best interest of his wrestlers in mind.”

Coach Lackman’s teams at Jefferson Union enjoyed a good measure of success under his tutelage, considering he started from scratch. His 1976 team was Class AA champion of the OVAC Wrestling Tournament. Furthermore, in 1977 one of his wrestlers, Rich Davis, was accorded the Dave Bierkorte Award, symbolic of being named the outstanding performer of the OVAC Tournament.

Lackman then officiated the mat sport for a number of years. Officiating numerous OVAC Wrestling Championships, he demonstrated his prowess as a referee.

Tom Lackman and his wife, Sherry, are the proud parents of two sons who also wrestled: Andrew and Jacob.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2000 OVAC MR. MAT EDWARD “BUZZ” EVANS

Edward “Buzz” Edwards, a highly successful wrestler at St. John Central and West Liberty State College, is regarded as one of the finest wrestling coaches in the Ohio Valley.

After a brief stint at Bridgeport High School, Buzz Evans took over the coaching reins at Wheeling Park High School and never looked back. During a tenure that spanned three decades (1982-2007), Coach Evans produced 15 OVAC Champions and 20 West Virginia AAA State titlists.

Two of Coach Evans’ wrestlers – Vinnie Monseau and Jason Taylor - received All-American status and also received the highest wrestling honor in the Mountain State, the Dutton Award. In fact, Jason Taylor was the first Wheeling Park Patriot matman to win three consecutive West Virginia AAA State Championships.

Producing winning team after team, Coach Buzz Evans’ teams won two OVAC Tournament Over-All Championships (1990 and 1994) as well as two West Virginia State AAA Team Titles (1986 and 1987). For his efforts, Coach Evans received two OVAC Coach-of -the-Year laurels and two West Virginia AAA Coach-of- the-Year accolades those same years.

The crowning moment of the Park wrestling program occurred in 1986 when the Patriot mat squad was ranked 25th in the nation by Amateur Wrestling News.

Even after retiring from coaching, Coach Edward “Buzz” Evans continued to conduct wrestling clinics throughout the Ohio Valley.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2001 OVAC MR. MAT WILLIAM E. “BILL” McELDOWNEY

William E. “Bill” McEldowney has been dubbed the “Founder of Wheeling’s First ‘small-fry’ Wrestling Program,” which was initiated in the early 1950’s.

A graduate of Elkins High School and Davis College, Bill McEldowney joined the Wheeling YMCA in 1952. As physical director, he immediately opened the gym doors to initiate wrestling instruction for boys of all ages.

Interest in wrestling grew immensely throughout those early years. The youth program was expanding. Furthermore, some of the area’s most famous wrestling personalities began to assist Bill McEldowney in his quest to champion the mat sport in the Ohio Valley: George Kovalick, John “Corky” Vrotsos, Bill Floyd, Bobby Douglas, Dick Lightner, and Steve Kish.

Since wrestling began to blossom in the area during McEldowney’s tenure, there became a need for mat officials. Bill McEldowney and George Kovalick created the first school to train mat officiating legend Joe Stora. Stora went on to certify hundreds of referees over the next few years.

Prior to his retirement from the YMCA, Bill McEldowney had always gone out of his way to help many wrestling coaches who didn’t have a facilities in which to train their young mat men. Not only that, McEldowney served as a promoter of sport by finding mat positions for aspiring young mentors the likes of Bill Welker in the early 1970’s.

Bill McEldowney loved the sport of wrestling, he loved its coaches and officials, but most importantly, he loved the athletes who dedicated themselves to wrestling.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2002 OVAC MR. MAT JOHN CRAIG

John Craig (Follansbee High School, Class of 1967) enjoyed an illustrious 26-year career as a head wrestling coach, including two seasons at Hillsboro (Ohio) High School, 18 years at Steubenville Big Red, and five years at Indian Creek High School in Wintersville.

While at Big Red, his teams earned six overall championships in the OVAC Wrestling Tournament. Steubenville also captured seven divisional titles and finished in the top three a total of 13 times at the Conference championship event. Thirty-one of his Big Red matmen earned individual Conference titles. He had 87 qualifiers for the Ohio state meet, five of whom earned individual championships, and 23 who were state place-winners. His 1998 team finished 2nd at state.

Craig was named OVAC Wrestling Coach-of-the-Year on five occasions and was presented the prestigious 'Mr. Mat Award' in 2002. He is a member of the Ohio Wrestling Coaches and the West Liberty State College Athletic Halls of Fame. In 1989, he was selected as the East-Southeast Wrestling Coach-of-the-Year and the Ohio Division II Coach-of-the-Year.

For 21 years, Craig served as a wrestling official on the youth, junior high, high school, college, and open levels. As a principal at Indian Creek, he was one of the founders of the Buckeye 8 Athletic League.

In 1972, Craig was the runner-up in the NAIA national championships, where he earned All-American honors.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2003 OVAC MR. MAT ED DUGAS

Coach Ed Dugas is a graduate of Bishop Donahue High School and West Liberty State College (now West Liberty University), where he lettered in wrestling, football, and track. At West Liberty State College, Ed Dugas was crowned a West Virginia Conference Wrestling Champion.

Coach Ed Dugas began his coaching career in 1968 as an assistant wrestling coach under ultra-successful Coach Bill Hinegardner at John Marshall High School. Often referred to as a “good cop, bad cop” team, Coach Dugas played the role of the latter. During their tenure together, Coach Dugas and Coach Hinegardner produced four West Virginia AAA State Wrestling Championship Teams (1972, 1973, 1974, 1979). In 1982, Coach Dugas took over the reins as the head coach of the John Marshall Monarch wrestling squad.

At the Monarch helm, Coach Ed Dugas produced 11 individual state champions, two All-Americans, and finished in the top 5 at the West Virginia State Wrestling Championships seven times. In 1982, Coach Dugas’s team won the gigantic Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament. He followed it up with a runner-up finish at the 1983 West Virginia State Wrestling Championships. Coach Dugas’s teams won a phenomenal 217 dual meets.

A member of the National Wrestling Coaches Association for 29 years, Coach Ed Dugas was named the 1982 OVAC Wrestling Coach-of -the-Year.

Ed Dugas and his wife, Mary Jean, reside in Moundsville and have three children.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2004 OVAC MR. MAT JEFF OBERDICK

Jeff Oberdick, Martins Ferry High School's ultra-successful mat mentor, is the OVAC's 29th recipient of the coveted Mr. Mat Award.

A 1976 Martins Ferry graduate, Jeff Oberdick was an outstanding Purple Rider wrestler. In fact, Oberdick placed in the top four of the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament all four years of his high school mat career, winning an individual OVAC title in 1974.

In 1984, Jeff Oberdick took over the helm of the Martins Ferry wrestling program, a post he held for 15 years. During that time, Coach Oberdick produced two over-all OVAC team championships in 1993 and 1999.

Throughout the years, Oberdick's teams won seven OVAC Class AAA titles, six sectional championships, two district team titles, and finish in the top ten at state on five occasions.

Coach Jeff Oberdick's crowning achievement may be the fact the he mentored two individual Ohio state champions: Babe Sidon in 1989 and Lamont Tucker in 1995. Furthermore, he coached 20 state place-winners and several OVAC Champions.

Oberdick was Division III state coach-of-the-year in 1999, four-time district coach-of-the-year (1991, 1994, 1996, 1999), and six-time OVAC coach-of-the-year (1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1999).

An administrator in the Martins Ferry School District, Jeff Oberdick and his wife, Jodie, have two children: Jeffery and Shaina.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2005 OVAC MR. MAT DAN DOYLE

Dan Doyle, Buckeye Local's highly-successful mat mentor, is the 30th recipient of the prestigious OVAC Mr. Mat Award.

A 1973 graduate of Wheeling Central Catholic High School, Dan Doyle posted an outstanding career on the mats. He was a three-time place-winner in the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament, winning an OVAC individual title in 1972. He capped his scholastic wrestling career by being crowned the 1973 West Virginia State Champion at 112 pounds.

Doyle also had a stellar four-year mat campaign at Allegheny (PA) College, where he became a Division III national qualifier and graduated in 1997.

After college, Doyle's first coaching post was at Jefferson Union High School, succeeding fellow Mr. Mat, Tom Lackman. There he kept the school's proud wrestling tradition going until moving to Buckeye South in 1985.

At Buckeye South, which then became the Buckeye Local High School consolidation, Coach Dan Doyle had to start from scratch. Within only a few years the Buckeye wrestling program shined, winning back-to-back OVAC overall team championships in 1996 and 1997, two OVAC Dual Meet Titles, and an appearance in the Division II Dual Meet Tournament.

For his efforts, Coach Dan Doyle was named twice as both the district coach-of-the-year and the OVAC coach-of-the-year.

Dan Doyle and his wife, Cindy, have three children: Sean (who wrestled for his father), Erin, and Megan.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2006 OVAC MR. MAT NOLAN VAN GILDER

Coach Van Gilder's love of the mat sport was unprecedented. He was the head wrestling coach at Brooke High School (1989-1997), where he produced five state champions and three OVAC titlists.

Van Gilder also directed numerous West Virginia AAA Regional championships and OVAC freshman and JV tournaments at the school. He has also been instrumental behind the scenes at the OVAC Wrestling Championships in his position as head scorekeeper for years.

As the mechanical drawing instructor at Brooke, Van Gilder also created the various name and pass tags, forms, and bout sheets at the OVAC tournament. He also designed the wrestling wall of fame in the Brooke High School wrestling room.

Coach Van Gilder is not only a master of the mat sport but also a master teacher and coach in various sports. His expertise in athletics also involved coaching tennis for 25 years, and Nolan served as assistant golf coach for 15 years at Brooke High School.

He is not only totally dedicated to developing students into competitive athletes, but also boys and girls into young men and women who will be successful in the adult world. A retired teacher with 32 years of experience, Van Gilder always enjoyed education because of his love for the students he taught from 1967 until 1999.

Nolan Van Gilder and his wife, Shirley, are the parents of two sons: Donald Nolan, and Doug. They also have three grandchildren.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2007 OVAC MR. MAT RICK LINK

A 1972 graduate of St. John High School, Rick Link set his sights on becoming a master of the mats as a wrestling coach at Union Local High School, and he brilliantly accomplished his goals. During his 22-year coaching tenure (17 years at the helm of the Jets' wrestling team), Link coached three undefeated dual meet squads.

He also coached five OVAC individual champions, and his teams won five OVAC AAA Championships. At the state level, Rick Link's wrestlers demonstrated their prowess on the circled mats as well. His best team-performance at the Ohio state tournament was tenth place in 1987. He also boasts nine place winners in the Ohio State Championships.

To top it off, Coach Link produced three individual Ohio Division II Champions. They include John Gibeaut in 1992, Jim Bob Lewis during the 1995 season, and Travis Clark in 1998.

Coach Rick Link even turned heads at the national level in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In front of college scouts from across the country, Link produced Union Local's only National High School Champion, John Gibeaut. Gibeaut later competed at the Division I level, matriculating and wrestling at Pitt.

Rick Link has been a Health and Physical Education teacher at Union Local High School for 31 years. He is also a 35-year member of the Wheeling YMCA.

Coach Link and his loving wife, Linda, have two sons: Christopher and Patrick.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2008 OVAC MR. MAT JIM POTTS

Coach Potts graduated from Buckhannon-Upshur High School, where he was a member of the 1963 West Virginia State Championship football team. He then attended Glenville State College, and graduated with a BA degree in 1967.

Potts began coaching wrestling at Cameron High School in 1974, and the rest is history. Potts' teams over his 31-year coaching tenure garnered a dual meet record of 363-94-4. His Dragon squads won four consecutive West Virginia A-AA State Wrestling Championships (1991-1994). He also had three state runner-up teams, and a trio of 3rd place finishes at states.

Coach Potts coached a total of 34 individual state champions, which ranks him as one of the top 10 coaches in West Virginia for most state champs.

Coach Potts has earned a plethora of coaching citations throughout the years (1974-2005). At the state level, Potts was named the West Virginia A-AA Coach-of-the-Year on five different occasions.

His accomplishments in the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference are even more staggering. Coach Potts' teams have won 15 OVAC Class A Dual Meet Championships. Furthermore, his teams were also crowned champions in 14 OVAC Class A Tournaments. For these coaching conquests, Coach Jim Potts was named the OVAC Class A Coach-of-the-Year fifteen times.

Coach Jim Potts has two children, son Eric and daughter Jaime. He is also very proud of his four grandchildren.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2009 OVAC MR. MAT PAUL BILLIARD

A graduate of Wellsburg High School (1959) and West Liberty State College (1964), Coach Paul Billiard began mentoring wrestling as an assistant coach at Wheeling Central Catholic High School. His motivational techniques undoubtedly aided in recruiting wrestlers and promoting the mat sport at Central.

After coaching at Wheeling Central, Paul Billiard accepted teaching and coaching positions at Brooke High School. Coach Billiard had the innate ability to instill pride in his wrestlers, as well as all the athletes he has come in contact with over the past five decades.

Not only did Coach Billiard produce powerful wrestling teams, he was also the “maker of champions.” He produced three state champs and six OVAC titlists.

Paul Billiard resigned as head wrestling coach at the end of the 1978-1979 season to take over the reins of the Brooke football program. Back then a teacher in Brooke County could not be head coach in two separate sports. The following year the Brooke Bruins were AAA state champions in wrestling.

Coach Paul “Bud” Billiard and his loving wife, Carol, have three children: Paul, Kim, and T.J. They are also the proud grandparents of Kyle (presently a sophomore on the Brooke wrestling team), Kody, Cross, Bode, Gianna, and Angelo.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2010 OVAC MR. MAT JEFF CARROLL

Coach Jeff Carroll began his wrestling career at Avella High School (Avella, Pennsylvania), where he was an outstanding mat competitor. After graduating from high school in 1973, he decided to matriculate to West Liberty State College (now West Liberty University).

As a Hilltopper wrestler, Jeff Carroll was under the tutelage of ultra-successful WLSC Coach Vince Monseau. Carroll had an outstanding stint as a wrestler at WLSC. In fact, Jeff Carroll earned runner-up status at the NAIA national wrestling tournament at Washington State College (Washington) at the 142-pound weight class his senior year in 1977.

Jeff Carroll began his teaching and coaching career under another outstanding mat mentor, Coach John Stephenson at Cadiz High School in 1977. In 1980, Jeff Carroll began his head coaching tenure at the helm of the Cambridge Bobcat wrestling program and never looked back.

At the 1984 Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament, Coach Carroll produced a rare "Hat Trick" by producing three OVAC champions in a row: Dennis Daugherty (119), Heath Beardmore (126), and Tim Pontius (132). He also produced Ohio state placers: Brian Duff (5th in 1982), Jamie Price (5th in 1983), and Tom "Tank" Moore, 3rd in 1988, as well as being an OVAC champion.

Jeff Carroll is now a guidance counselor at Cambridge Middle School. He and his lovely wife, Leslie, have two children: Jeff, who is a pre-law student at OSU, and Madison, who attends Cambridge High School.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2011 OVAC MR. MAT RICH GREGOR

Coach Rich Gregor began wrestling competitively at Springfield High School, where he was an outstanding varsity performer on the mats for four years. After graduating from high school in 1959, Rich Gregor decided to matriculate to Ohio University.

At the university, Gregor wrestled under legendary mat mentor Harry Houska for four years, graduating in 1963. Later, Rich Gregor earned his masters degree from Central Missouri State in 1965.

Over five decades (1960's to the 2000's), Gregor has coached in Florida, Maryland, and Ohio at both the collegiate and scholastic levels. But his true home has always been Springfield High School (now Edison Local High School), where he began and ended his coaching stint.

Rich Gregor's overall coaching record is 326-162-3, winning 69-percent of his dual meets. His 1980 Springfield High School squad won the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference Class A Team Championship. As well as coaching many OVAC and state placewinners, he also produced one of the OVAC's greatest wrestlers – Kelly Shields. Shields is one of only six elite wrestlers to have won four Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournaments.

Rich Gregor is now retired and resides in Amsterdam, Ohio, with his devoted wife, Jan. They have three daughters – Annie, Holly, and Meredith – and eight grandchildren: Ryan, Hannah, Mark, Madeline, Zoe, Roman, Taylor, and Kennedy.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2012 OVAC MR. MAT ART HEHR

A 1959 graduate of Bridgeport High School, Hehr began his mat career under the tutelage of legendary coach George Kovalick. After a stint in the U.S. Army (1959-1962), Hehr acquired his bachelor's degree in education at West Liberty State College in 1966. He later earned a master's degree from the University of Dayton in 1985.

As a Bridgeport High School Bulldog wrestler, Art Hehr excelled on the mats. He was a three-time OVAC Champion (1957, 1958, 1959). Hehr placed third in the 1957 Ohio State Tournament as a sophomore. He was undefeated his junior and senior years, winning back-to-back individual Ohio state championships.

Hehr, as a Hilltopper wrestler, was a two-time West Virginia Conference titlist for West Liberty State College. Unfortunately, a serious injury prematurely ended his competitive days on the collegiate mats.

Upon graduation, Art Hehr began his teaching career which lasted over a 35-year span. During the 1967-1968 school year, Art Hehr was at the helm of the Martins Ferry High School wrestling program. In this capacity, he guided his Purple Rider matmen to an OVAC team championship in 1968. Hehr's wrestlers were also crowned team victors at both sectionals and districts that same year.

Furthermore, Art Hehr offered his services as an Ohio High School Athletic Association wrestling referee from 1970 to 1986.

Art Hehr and his devoted wife, Carol, reside in Woodsfield, Ohio. They have three children – Edward, Stephen, and Gretchen – and five grandchildren.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2013 OVAC MR. MAT DAVE LaMOTTE

Dave LaMotte finished his coaching career as the head wrestling coach at Payson High School in Payson, Arizona. During his 26-year coaching tenure, LaMotte has produced 18 individual state champions, 53 state place winners, 28 district titlists, and 3 high school All-Americans.

LaMotte began his coaching career at Wheeling Central Catholic High School in 1979. In the fall of 1980, Dave returned to his high school alma mater in Bridgeport, Ohio, where his 1988 team captured the Division III State Championship. He also was head mat mentor at Buckeye Local High School during the 1996-97 wrestling season before returning to Arizona.

For his efforts, Coach LaMotte was voted by the upper Ohio Valley media as the OVAC Coach-of-the-Year, and by area wrestling coaches as the OVAC AAA Wrestling Coach-of-the-Year. LaMotte was also selected as the Ohio Division III Eastern District and State Wrestling Coach-of-the-Year in 1989.

In 1993, LaMotte earned Coach-of-the-Year honors when his Gilbert High School (Arizona) squad won the 5A Arizona State Wrestling Team Championship. LaMotte also coached his two sons, who were both Arizona state champions and NCAA Division II All-Americans at West Liberty State College (now West Liberty University).

As a competitor, Dave LaMotte had a scholastic record of 59-5 as a Bridgeport High School "Bulldog." An OVAC champion, LaMotte was a three-time Sectional and District Champion. He completed his senior year on the mats as an Ohio All-State wrestler finishing 5th in Columbus. In 1979, Dave LaMotte was inducted into the Bridgeport High School Wall of Fame.

After a two-year stint in U.S. Army (1974-1976), LaMotte returned to the Valley to matriculate and wrestle at West Liberty State College under the tutelage of Coach Vince Monseau, a member of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, for West Liberty State College (West Virginia). He was also a two-time National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) All-American, finishing 3rd in 1978 and winning an NAIA championship in 1979, which was held at the WesBanco Arena.

In 2004, he was inducted into West Liberty University's Athletic Hall of Fame.

LaMotte and his wife, Vickie, reside in Payson, Arizona.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2014 OVAC MR. MAT DARRELL DAVIS

Coach Darrell Davis graduated from Dover High School in 1968 where he excelled in track, wrestling, and football. His senior season in football the Dover Tornadoes went undefeated with Darrell starting at tackle. He matriculated to Dakota State College in Madison, SD. He was a 4-year starter at offensive tackle and his team won the Boot Hill Bowl in 1971.

He graduated in 1972 with a degree in education. In August of that year he accepted a position at Barnesville High School where he taught and coached for 35 years, retiring in June of 2008.

Darrell enjoyed tremendous success as Barnesville High School girls' track coach and the offensive line coach of the football program. He served two separate stints as assistant wrestling coach and nine years as head coach of the Shamrocks.

As a mat mentor, Davis coached no less than 42 OVAC place winners including 9 champions. He also produced 53 district place winners, 20 district champs, 13 state place winners, and two state titlists. His teams were OVAC division champions or runners-up in 6 of his 9 seasons as head coach.

The pinnacle of his coaching career came during the 1984 and 1985 wrestling seasons. Coach Davis' 1984 team won the Ohio AA State Title and he was named the Ohio State AA Coach-of-the-Year. In 1985, his Shamrock team won the Overall title at the Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament. He was also honored that same year by the Upper Ohio Valley Dapper Dan Club for his coaching achievements in wrestling and track.

Three of Darrell's wrestlers went on to excel at the college level. Alan Logan (current head football coach at Muskingum University) placed 6th at the NCAA Division 3 National Wrestling Tournament. Don Moxley went on to wrestle at Ohio State University and won the Big 10 heavyweight championship his senior season. Tim Moxley, two-time State Wrestling Champion, went on to play football at Ohio State where he was a starting offensive tackle for 3 years, including 2 Bowl teams.

Darrell Davis was also the tournament director for the Barnesville Invitational Tournament and the Eastern District – Sectional Tournament for 25 years.

His family includes: son Bryce, daughter in-law Angie, grandchildren: Brooke and Kirkland of Cambridge. Daughter Ammie, son in-law Darrin and grandson Jacob live in Barnesville.

For his contributions to Ohio Valley wrestling and its student-athletes, Coach Darrell Davis has been selected as the 2014 Mr. Mat award winner.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2015 OVAC MR. MAT GENE MONTELEONE

Coach Gene Monteleone graduated from Warwood High School in 1973 where he excelled in wrestling. His coach was OVAC Hall of Famer Dick Edge. Gene earned his Bachelor's degree from West Liberty State College (now West Liberty University). He then acquired a Master of Arts degree from West Virginia University.

Though Gene dreamed of being a teacher and coach, he had to wait for an opening to occur in the Ohio County Schools System. During that time before his teaching opportunity became a reality, Monteleone worked for the Ohio Coal Company.

It was in the 1982 that he was hired to teach and coach at Bridge Street Middle School. His teaching assignments included social studies and physical education. Monteleone was also appointed as the head wrestling coach and assistant coach in football and track.

As the school's wrestling coach, he won three PAC-8 Middle School Wrestling Championships. In the fall of 1988, he was reassigned to Wheeling Park High School where he taught social studies and driver education. He assisted Coach Edward "Buzz" Evans in wrestling for nine years and also served as assistant football coach for six years.

In 1996, Coach Monteleone took over the helm of Park's wrestling program for one year. He again returned as the head wrestling coach from 2002 to 2007, where his teams were a force to contend with in West Virginia and the upper Ohio Valley. His teams during his tenure recorded a dual meet record of 85 wins and 21 losses.

Coach Monteleone's squads won three OVAC Dual Meet Championships, three OVAC Division 4A Championships, and an over-all OVAC Ron Mauck Tournament Team Championship in 2006. For his outstanding efforts as the Wheeling Park mat strategist, Coach Monteleone was honored three times as an OVAC Wrestling Coach-of-the-Year.

In 2006, Coach Gene Monteleone's mat squad capped the season with a West Virginia AAA State Championship at Huntington. He was also named the West Virginia State Coaches Association Coach-of-the-Year in 2006.

During his years at the Park mat team's helm, Monteleone produced numerous OVAC and West Virginia State wrestling champions. But just as important, he had the utmost respect from his coaching colleagues.

Since retiring as Park's mat mentor and as an Ohio County Schools teacher for 33 years, he then served as assistant wrestling coach at St. Clairsville High School from 2009 to 2013.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2016 OVAC MR. MAT JIM CROSIER

Coach Jim Crosier graduated from Steubenville High School in 1967 where he was an OVAC runner-up at 175 pounds under OVAC Hall-of-Fame and Mr. Mat head coach Bob Hedmond. He later earned his bachelor's degree from Ohio University in 1971.

Jim was an outstanding educator for 40 years, retiring in 2011. Crosier taught and coached at Steubenville High School for two years (1971-1973). The next 38 years he taught, coached wrestling, and was an athletic director and administrator at Union Local High School. Jim Crosier was also a wrestling official for 29 years.

As head coach for nine years, Crosier's mat teams won two AA OVAC team titles and one AAA OVAC team championship. He produced four OVAC champions: Mike Gregg, Kelly Wallace, Randy Simpson, and Jeff McCormick. Kelly Wallace placed 5th at states in 1975.

Jim Crosier was named OVAC AA Coach-of-the-Year in 1974 and 1975, as well as OVAC AAA Coach-of-the-Year in 1980.

Coach Crosier also founded the Ohio Valley Junior High Championships in 1976. The event has often been referred to as the junior high/middle school OVAC tournament, though not affiliated with the Conference. Many middle schools in the Valley consider it the premiere event of the season, with the competition still going strong today.

But most mat enthusiasts in the Ohio Valley know him as an arbiter of the mats. As a member of the Ohio Valley Wrestling Officials Association, Jim Crosier has refereed many, many Ohio Sectional, District, Regional, and State tournaments. He was also invited to officiate the 1979 NAIA National Wrestling Championships held at the Wheeling Civic Center (now Wesbanco Arena).

In 2001, Jim Crosier was named the Larry Deaton OVAC Official-of-the-Year by the OVAC Wrestling Coaches Association for his exceptional efforts as an overseer of the mats.

Crosier's most recent honor was his induction into the Ohio Wrestling Officials Hall of Fame in 2014.

Jim Crosier was married to Deborah Crosier for 41 years before her passing in 2013. They have two wonderful sons: Brian and Fritz.

The Ohio Valley Athletic Conference takes pride in honoring Coach Jim Crosier as the 2016 Mr. Mat recipient.

by Dr. Bill Welker

2017 OVAC MR. MAT ANDREW “CHICK” LaMOTTE

A 1965 graduate of Bridgeport High School, Chick LaMotte was a two-time OVAC and Eastern District Champion. In fact, his senior year as captain of the Bulldogs, he reached the Ohio State Wrestling Tournament semi-finals during a time when there were no divisions. Today, he would have placed at least 6th in the championships.

Upon graduating from Bridgeport High, Chick enlisted in the United States Marine Corps during the Vietnam Conflict. Coach LaMotte was seriously wounded in Vietnam and spent 10 months at Bethesda Naval Hospital recuperating from his wounds. For his bravery in combat, LaMotte received the Purple Heart, the National Defense Ribbon, the Combat Action Ribbon, and two Campaign ribbons. After four years of service, he was most honorably discharged from the Corps as a Sergeant.

Returning home, Chick initiated the Bridgeport Bulldog Youth Program in 1979, which complimented his brother Dave LaMotte’s scholastic mat program at Bridgeport High. As a matter of fact, Coach Dave LaMotte was quoted as saying, “My older brother Chick had so much to do with introducing many members of our 1987 Ohio State Runner-up and 1988 Ohio State Championship teams to the sport of wrestling as youngsters.”

While coaching at Bellaire’s St. John Central Catholic High School, Coach LaMotte won two OVAC Division Titles in 2004 and 2006. His 2006 squad won the Eastern District Team Championship where Chick was named District Coach-of-the Year. Not only did this team place in the top 10 at the Ohio State Tournament, LaMotte also produced the school’s first and only State titilist in Joseph Skoff at 135 pounds as a senior.

Later, Chick produced a State champion, Wheeling Central Catholic High School’s Zach Basich at the West Virginia State Championships in the 145-pound weight class during the 2008 wrestling season.

Chick LaMotte’s efforts as a high school wrestling coach for 29 years was by no means unnoticed by those who love the mat sport. In 2011, Coach LaMotte was inducted into his alma mater, Bridgeport High School’s Athletic Hall of Fame. Most recently in 2014, Coach Andrew “Chick” LaMotte received the “Courage Award” and was inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, Ohio State Chapter. His accomplishments are enshrined at the Hall’s museum in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Andrew “Chick” LaMotte and his devoted wife, Joyce, reside in Bridgeport. They have two wonderful children: Lynette and Chick, Jr., and five beautiful grandchildren: Shane, Madison, Amber, Haleigh, and Chickie.

By Dr. Bill Welker

2018 OVAC MR. MAT LARRY SHAW

Larry Shaw was the ultra-successful head wrestling coach at Oak Glen High School (New Cumberland, West Virginia) for 31 years, retiring in 2010. He led his “Golden Bears” squad on an incredible run of 13 consecutive West Virginia AA state championships from 1997 to 2009.

In fact, this feat is unmatched by any other wrestling program or any other sport in West Virginia, and ranks fifth among wrestling programs across the country, tied with St. Edward’s, Lakewood, Ohio. Shaw also posted five straight West Virginia AAA runner-up finishes (1987-91).

His “Golden Bear” squads have won five Ron Mauck OVAC Wrestling Tournament overall team titles. He finished with a career dual meet record of 330-96-4. Shaw coached 51 individual state champions and more than 160 others who earned all-state honors.

For his efforts, Shaw was named the West Virginia AA Dix Manning Coach-of-the-Year seven times. He is the only wrestling coach to be selected as the West Virginia All-Sports Coach-of-the-Year by the West Virginia Sports Writers Association in 2000. Shaw was also honored as the National Wrestling Coach-of-the-Year in 2008 by ***Wrestling USA Magazine***.

A past president of the West Virginia Wrestling Coaches Association, Shaw has promoted wrestling throughout the state and continues to do so. He assisted in producing an instructional video for wrestling officials for the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Officiating Wrestling On-Line Methods Course. He was a chapter contributor of **The Wrestling Drill Book**, which has sold over 30,000 copies nationwide. Shaw has been a clinician at countless wrestling clinics in West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

He has been elected into five wrestling and sports halls of fame, including the National Wrestling Hall of Fame (West Virginia Chapter) in 2010 and the very prestigious NFHS National Sports Hall of Fame in 2011.

Shaw and his devoted wife, Cindy, reside in New Cumberland, West Virginia.

By Dr. Bill Welker

2019 OVAC MR. MAT JOHN GRINCH

John Grinch is a 1970 graduate from Dubois High School in Dubois, Pennsylvania. After high school, he attended Clarion University and graduated with a degree in education. John began his teaching and coaching career at Wintersville High School where he coached both football and wrestling. He was the junior high wrestling coach under Dick Edge in 1975, and then served as varsity assistant under Gus Huber in 1976-77.

He became the head wrestling coach at Wintersville from 1977 through the 1980 wrestling season. In 1980, John took a teaching and coaching job at Shadyside High School. Along with coaching football, John was an assistant under head coach Terry Brinker for the 1980-1981 wrestling season. John took over the Shadyside wrestling program in 1981. He remained head coach for 11 seasons through 1992.

During his time as head wrestling coach, John coached 30 OVAC Placers, 3 OVAC Champions, 21 Ohio State Qualifiers, 11 Ohio State Placers, and 2 Ohio State Champions. John's teams won three class A titles at the OVAC Wrestling Tournament. His 1986 and 1989 teams both finished in the top 10 in Division 3 at the Ohio State Wrestling Tournament.

John resigned from the head wrestling job after the 1992 wrestling season to become Shadyside's head football coach. He served as head football coach for six seasons before resigning. In 1999, John came back as head assistant for Shadyside's head wrestling coach, John Haswell. He served as assistant wrestling coach from 1999-2004. After John Haswell resigned in 2004, John took over the reins of the Tiger program again for two seasons from 2005-2006.

All together, John Grinch has coached over 30 years of wrestling along with 42 years of football. At the age of 65, John still remains as defensive line coach for the Shadyside high school football team. Over the past 35 years, John has run many wrestling tournaments at Shadyside for the high school, junior high, and Shadyside's youth program. He has influenced many young men on and off the mat by being a positive role model who led by example. Currently, John is employed by Shadyside Local Schools as their Technology Coordinator and EMIS Coordinator. He resides in Shadyside with his wife, Penny.

By Dr. Bill Welker

2020 OVAC MR. MAT KEN ROBISON

As a sophomore at Canton McKinley High School, the late Ken Robison had a tremendous desire to compete athletically. His opportunity came when saw a sign on the library door that read: “WRESTLING SIGN-UPS AFTER SCHOOL.”

He knew he had arrived at the Hiram College Invitational. Hitting a reverse switch, he defeated a senior wrestler who had beaten him in his first high school wrestling match. He went on to win the tournament with a standing switch in over-time against another senior wrestler.

He qualified for the Ohio State Wrestling Championships both his junior and senior years. The highlight of his wrestling career was 16 straight pins in the first period as a senior and he had an unblemished record of 26-0 during the regular season. Ken Robison’s most memorable mat moment was a 9-0 victory over a two-time OVAC champion at the state tournament.

Ken’s coaching career began in 1970 when he joined the coaching staff of a small-school, West Virginia powerhouse – Warwood High School. He learned much about coaching under the tutelage of legendary, hall-of-famer Coach Dick Edge, also a former Mr. Mat inductee in 1979.

In 1980, he was asked to start a pee-wee wrestling program at Woodsfield, and was instrumental in initiating the first wrestling program at Woodsfield High School. Ken became the head coach of Woodsfield High School in 2004.

Ken and his wife, Maryrose, have three sons: Dino, Paul, and Dustin. Dino did not have the opportunity to wrestle since Woodsfield did not have a wrestling program at the time. But Paul and Dustin had the privilege to wrestle for their dad.

For his contributions to the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference, Ohio Valley wrestling and its student-athletes, Ken Robison will be missed by all Ohio Valley wrestling enthusiasts. May God bless Ken Robison and his family.

By Dr. Bill Welker

2021 OVAC MR. MAT PETE CUFFARO

In high school, Pete Cuffaro was involved as a wrestler and promoted the mat sport at Linsly Military Institute for many years. Cuffaro has been instrumental in supporting and promoting our nearly 50 teams at the OVAC Ron Mauck Wrestling Championships.

For over 25 years, Cuffaro has served as a volunteer clock operator and official scorekeeper at the OVAC Wrestling Championships, as well as various other invitational wrestling tournaments in the upper Ohio Valley.

Over the years, Pete has authored numerous wrestling articles in the Wheeling (WV) **News-Register's** award-winning Mat Talk Column. For decades, Cuffaro has been the featured speaker at various high school wrestling banquets in the upper Ohio Valley.

When a Wheeling Park wrestler – Daniel M. Burke - was killed in an automobile accident in 1983, Pete Cuffaro initiated, and has annually presented, the Daniel M. Burke Memorial Wrestling Scholarship at the OVAC's Spring Banquet since 1984.

In June of 1983, Pete Cuffaro suffered a spinal cord injury in a freak diving accident which left him permanently confined to a wheelchair. Still, Pete did not let the injury keep him down. He has been deeply involved with wrestling and many other athletic events for decades, as well as with numerous civic organizations in the Wheeling area and throughout the Ohio Valley.

Pete Cuffaro lives by the following motto: *"No matter how bad you think you have it, look around. You can always find someone else who has it worse than you do. Count your blessings!"*

Pete Cuffaro, 1992 Distinguished West Virginian Award recipient, resides in Wheeling with his wife, Erin, and stepdaughter, Jessica.

By Dr. Bill Welker

2022 OVAC MR. MAT JEFF CROSIER

Jeff Crosier, a Steubenville High School 1976 graduate with a college degree from Ohio University in 1980, has been a fixture of OVAC wrestling for over four decades.

Crosier began his coaching career at Mingo High School, where he produced one State qualifier in 1981. He then relocated and became the head wrestling coach at Barnesville High School, where he spent 15 years mentoring the mat sport for the Shamrocks.

During his coaching tenure at Barnesville, Coach Jeff Crosier produced 52 OVAC Ron Mauck Tournament Place Winners, 32 Ohio State qualifiers, and 11 Ohio State Placers.

Crosier's teams were always a force to reckon with. He produced four Ohio Sectional Team Champions (1993, 1994, 1995, 1998). Coach Crosier's 1994 squad won the Ohio District Championship.

Crosier's OVAC team accolades include three OVAC AA/AAA Dual Meet Championships (1993, 1995, 2000). In fact, his 1993 wrestling team went undefeated (12-0). In 1994, Coach Jeff Crosier was named the Ohio Division III District Coach-of-the-Year. In 2000, his final year as the Shamrock mat mentor, Jeff Crosier was named the OVAC AA Coach-of-the-Year.

One would think Coach Jeff Crosier had contributed enough to OVAC wrestling, but he had more to offer as a behind-the-scenes mat sport administrator. To date, Crosier has served as tournament director and also assisted in many capacities at numerous local wrestling tournaments at the high school and middle school levels.

Over the years, many wrestling aficionados have observed Coach Crosier working at the OVAC Ron Mauck Tournament, the Barnesville Invitational, the St. Clairsville Invitational, numerous OHSAA Sectional Championships, Union Local's OVC Junior High Tournament, and many Ohio Junior High State Qualifying Tournaments at Steubenville High School.

In 2006, Jeff served as an Ohio Board member for the OVAC Executive Board. He also served as Vice-President of the OVAC Executive Board from 2011 until 2014, and from 2018 until 2020, was President of the OVAC Executive Board.

Jeff Crosier resides in Barnesville with his wife, Jill, of 33 years. They have two sons – Shane and Clay.

By Dr. Bill Welker

2023 OVAC MR. MAT MERLE TOURNAY

A four-year varsity performer and two-year captain under the tutelage of West Liberty University's iconic OVAC Hall of Famer, Coach Vince Monseau, Merle Tournay also made his mark as an outstanding mat coach and nationally renowned wrestling official.

Also a three-year soccer letterman on the Hilltop, Tournay won a WVIAC wrestling championship in 1976 and was voted Mr. Hilltopper in recognition of his athletic achievements. He immediately entered the coaching profession and had successful runs at Brooke (W.Va.) and Montour (Pa.) High Schools. Originally attracted to the valley because of the West Liberty mat program, Tournay went on to spread his wrestling knowledge at Brooke High School for 12 years. The veteran wrestler and rookie coach quickly built a Bruins' powerhouse capturing the school's only West Virginia state title in 1980, and was also named the 1980 West Virginia AAA Wrestling Coach of the year. During his coaching career at Brooke, Tournay produced four state champions: Chuck Taylor (1980), Larry Mazzella (1981), Phil Milantoni (1982), and Sal Jafarace (1988).

Leaving Brooke, Merle restarted the wrestling program at Montour in 1988. He was head coach at Montour for 16 years. After that, Tournay served as assistant coach for 17 seasons, helping both the varsity and junior high programs. He now assists his son, Zachary, who is the current head wrestling coach at Montour High School.

At Brooke, Merle Tournay taught Physical Education and Driver's Education. He always respected the teaching and coaching advice of the late OVAC Hall of Famer, Ron Mauck. As a teacher at Montour, Merle Tournay served the students as a Physical Education and Health educator.

Merle Tournay also loved officiating wrestling. He quickly ascended to the top of the profession. The 2002 Wrestling Official-of-the-Year in the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference was voted the 2004 National Wrestling Official-of-the-Year by **Wrestling USA** magazine and was selected as the top official at the 2005 NCAA Division II Nationals.

A nationally acclaimed mat official, Tournay worked seven NCAA Division II Nationals, two NCAA Division I Nationals and numerous NCAA Division I and NCAA Division II national qualifying tournaments.

"The guy who got me started in officiating – Bill Welker. We have kept in contact with throughout the years," Tournay said about his officiating mentor.

Like most officials, Merle Tournay didn't start off doing large high school tournaments or even the OVAC. It was a long process which started as he put on the stripes to officiate the Cameron Open. Since his initial seasons as a referee, Merle Tournay's reputation as a mat official has gone far beyond the Ohio Valley over the years. This was proven in 2003 when Tournay was awarded the NCAA Official-of-

the-Year across all college wrestling divisions.

“It was a great honor to get,” Tournay said. “I think coaching and being a wrestler, myself, has helped me to know the rules giving the tools to be a good official. I have tried to stay consistent over the years and that has a lot to do with it, staying consistent.”

Merle Tournay is now retired from officiating, but he still stays deeply involved in the tri-state wrestling community. Most recently, Merle Tournay serves as the liaison for the Pennsylvania Midwestern Athletic Conference (MAC) All-Star wrestling team. The OVAC vs. MAC All-Star Meet annually takes place after the completion of the Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia state wrestling tournaments.

Merle Tournay is a member of three Halls of Fame: West Liberty University Hall of Fame (2007), MAC Hall of Fame (2009), and Southwestern Pennsylvania Wrestling Hall of Fame (2018).

Merle Tournay and his loving wife, Dee Tourney, reside in McKees Rock, Pennsylvania. They have three beautiful children: Zachary, Danielle and Lucas – and grandson Austin.

By Dr. Bill Welker

2024 OVAC MR. MAT ED WEST

Ed West is a graduate of John Marshall High School, where he was a 1973 West Virginia State Champion, compiling a record of 58-11-1. He was a member of two state championship teams (1972, 1973).

West earned his BA degree at West Liberty State College (now West Liberty University), and later acquired an MA degree from West Virginia University.

While coaching five years at Moundsville Junior High School (1978 –1982) with Larry Chambers, West produced four undefeated teams. In 1982, he started his scholastic coaching career as assistant coach under Ed Dugas at John Marshall High School.

In 2001, West took over the reins of the John Marshall “Monarchs,” continuing the legacy of the school’s outstanding mat program. During his tenure, his wrestling squads compiled a 136-57-1 dual meet record. His 2002 team was the OVAC AAAA Dual Meet Champions and placed third at the state tournament.

Under West, three of his squads placed in the “Top-Six” at the state tournament. Ed coached five OVAC champions and five West Virginia State Title-ists. Furthermore, he coached the school’s only three-time state champion (Dustin Richey), two OVAC Outstanding Wrestlers (Ryan Muldrew and Derek George), and one Dutton Award winner (Ryan Muldrew).

In 2008, West was inducted into the West Virginia Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame for his Lifetime Service to wrestling.

After coaching wrestling at John Marshall High School, he coached the “Monarchs” girls’ softball team to state prominence and was named the softball Coach-of-the-Year on a number of occasions.

He then came back to the mats to coach wrestling at Moundsville Junior High School and his “Trojans” wrestlers won the PAC-8 Championship in 2021.

Ed resides in Moundsville with his wife, Colleen. They have three daughters: Shilo, Shannon, and Abby. They are also the proud grandparents of four grandchildren: Brock, Blake, Breyden, and Ethan.

By Dr. Bill Welker