



2002 OFFICIAL-OF-THE-YEAR

Bill Welker
Wheeling, West Virginia

Dr. Bill Welker is well known to our readers. He has written "Mat Thoughts" and "Officials Corner" articles for *Wrestling USA Magazine* since 1974.

Bill received the Section Two "Distinguished Active Official Award."

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) selects eight officials nationally from all sports throughout the country each year to receive the honor.

Section two includes the District of Columbia and the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. A 22-year veteran wrestling official, who was "West Virginia's 2001 Wrestling Man of the Year," Welker was elected for his efforts to improve wrestling at the state and national levels.

Welker has been the West Virginia high school rules interpreter and clinician since 1989. In this capacity, Welker conducts clinics for coaches and officials in the fall, and offers rule interpretations throughout the season. He also supervises the officials at the state tournament held in Huntington, West Virginia.

Back in 1991, Welker authored SOASK, the first computer-assisted instructional program for wrestling officials. It was distributed nationally and earned critical acclaim from the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

Welker wrote, directed, and pro-



duced a video entitled "A Baker's Dozen of Difficult Calls," a teaching aid for all wrestling officials across the state of West Virginia to promote official consistency in 1992.

Welker, obtained permission from the NFHS in 1993 to conduct an experiment concerning a five-minute limitation on "blood time" during West Virginia high school matches. The study was so

well received that the NFHS adopted the procedure into the national rule book in 1996.

Welker recently completed a two-year pilot study revision on how "stalling" is called. The results of that investigation are now under review by the NFHS wrestling committee. He presented the final results at the NF Interpreter's Meeting in Indianapolis on September 26, 2001.

Welker has also been writing about wrestling for more than a quarter of a century. His "Mat Talk" column has become the voice of scholastic mat news-during the high school wrestling season since 1978. He has been honored by the West Virginia Wrestling Coaches Association as the "Wrestling Sports-writer of the Year" an unprecedented five times (1981, 1985, 1989, 1996, and 2000). Welker was also selected as the "National Wrestling Sportswriter of the Year" in 1987 by *Wrestling USA Magazine*.

Dr. Bill Welker is the reading specialist at Warwood Middle School. He and his wife, Peggy, reside in Wheeling, West Virginia. They have four children and eight grandchildren.

Thanks Bill for your lifetime dedication to the development and growth of wrestling as a writer as well as a top official who is always looking for new ways to improve the sport.