

Editorial

By Lee Roy Smith, Guest Editor

As a former wrestler, coach, and now Executive Director of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame and Museum in Stillwater, Oklahoma, I have come about as full circle as one can get in the sport. It is an honor to be representing the Hall and Museum from this hallowed ground where the legends of wrestling live. I was privileged to compete and coach at Oklahoma State from 1976 to 1987, which allowed me the opportunity to attend the first 11 Hall of Fame Induction Ceremonies. At that time, only Distinguished Members were honored at the annual banquet.

During my time as a wrestler and coach in Stillwater, I became familiar with those visionary wrestling enthusiasts who established the Hall some 29 years ago this year (2004). It was the intent of these founders to establish a Hall of Fame that would preserve the history and heritage of the sport, recognize extraordinary individual achievement, and inspire the youth of our land to lofty goals. Each year, this mission is showcased with the annual Honors and Induction Ceremony in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Over the past 12 plus years, under the leadership of Myron Roderick and the Board of Governors, the Hall of Fame has broadened the awards presented to include a more diverse and reflective representation of the sport's contributors. Awards like the Outstanding American, Order of Merit, Lifetime Achievement, Lifetime Service, Dave Schultz High School Excellence, and Medal of Courage greatly spotlight how these individuals positively impact sport and life in our society.

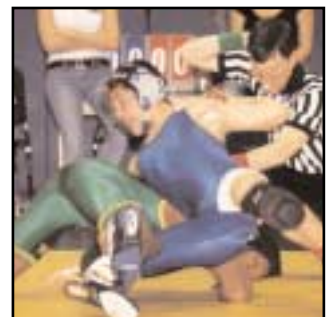
It has also been made possible in recent years for the Hall to extend its mission throughout the country with a State Chapters Program. Each chapter has a chair person to organize an annual ceremony to recognize those who have made significant contributions to the sport with a Life Time Service Award. To date, there are some 26 state chapters across the country with a goal of attaining a chapter in every state that offers wrestling.

With the recent inclusion of FILA into the Hall of Fame in 2003, the Hall is now the official International Hall of Fame for the sport. Now an Olympic sport, Women's freestyle wrestlers are eligible for Distinguished Member Honors and will surely be embraced and inducted among the legends of our sport in the very near future. Equal to the expansion of our awards and recognitions, the physical location has grown from a facility that encompassed 9,700 square feet in 1976 to 16,000 square feet today. Plans for further expansion will be an ongoing focus and priority.

One of the most important priorities the Board of Governors and I have is to ensure that the highest standards of integrity are reflected in our award nomination and selection process. We mean it when we say, "It Is Your Hall of Fame." You may find award criteria and nomination forms to submit a candidate on the awards page of our website at www.wrestlinghalloffame.org.

I invite you to visit the Hall and to explore the wonderful museum. It is a journey that is well worth your time and one that every wrestling fan should make at least once in a lifetime. I also invite you to volunteer your skills and time to either a State Chapter Program or the National Hall. The National Wrestling Hall of Fame and Museum became a reality because of private support and will be sustained through private gifts and support from people like you. We are fortunate to be the beneficiary of such a wonderful showcase of our sport and invite you to join us, however you can, with your talents or your financial resources, to ensure that the sport's legends and legacy will be a viable and inspirational part of our world for generations to come. My contact information at the Hall of Fame is: (email) lsmith@wrestlinghalloffame.org (phone) 405-377-5243 (fax) 405-377-5244.

South Carolina - Chris Humphries of Riverside rides legs on Gerald Turner of Summerville but gets whistled for being potentially dangerous. Turner would win this All-Star match 5-4 in an epic battle of two multi-state champs. Photo by Mark Buford.



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