



2006 Coach-of-the-Year Award

Russ Cozart Brandon, Florida

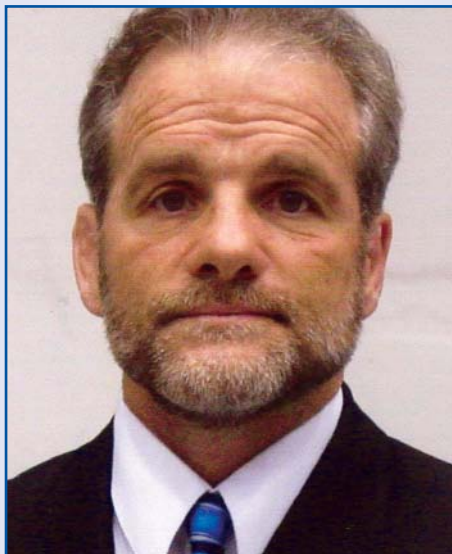
Editor's Note: The selection of the High School Coach of the Year is always a difficult task. The hundreds of nominations we have received over the years have all been for outstanding coaches, some of them nominated because of a long and successful career. The Coach of the Year Award, however, is not based only on longevity. It is the honoring of a coach for a significant accomplishment during the season just completed, often against considerable odds or in spite of significant hardship. Obviously, excellence over time is also a consideration. – Cal

Anyone familiar with high school wrestling recognizes the name Brandon. The Eagles from Brandon, Florida, are considered to be one of the elite programs in the country. They have maintained that reputation consistently for many years.

The 2005-2006 wrestling season was going to be different, however. Some followers considered it to be a rebuilding year. At the end of the 2005 season COACH RUSS COZART'S Eagles had lost four stars to graduation. All four received NCAA Division I scholarships and had helped set a record of eight finalists from one school in the two styles at the USA Freestyle/Greco Nationals in Fargo.

Cozart knew that it would take hard work to keep the Eagles in contention for their sixth consecutive Florida 2A state championship. As he has done for years, he role modeled the work ethic that would need to be followed if the streak of unbeaten dual meets and consecutive state titles was to be continued.

Russ begins a typical day with a one



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Brandon, Florida

mile run to the weight room, then a run home. After a full day of teaching he leads wrestling practice, eats dinner in his office, then coaches the 40-50 Brandon Wrestling Club kids. He finally arrives home about 9:00 p.m.

The "rebuilding year" reflected that work ethic. In December Brandon scored 352 points with nine finalists and five champions in the 50 team Blackwatch Tournament in California. The Eagles won their sixth consecutive Florida 2A state title by scoring 233 points and crowing six state champions. They extended their national record unbeaten dual meet streak to 423 matches.

The key to Brandon's continued success is found in the foundation established by the Brandon Wrestling Club. In 2005 Cozart coached individual athletes from the club to eleven national finals,

five national championships and sixteen All-America honors. This foundation has resulted in continual excellence.

Over his 26 year career he has coached 62 state champions, 137 state placers, 80 national champions and 131 high school All-Americans.

Russ has been recognized numerous times for his dedication to the sport. He is a member of the Florida Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame and was the USA High School Dream Team coach in 2004.

Wrestling USA salutes Russ Cozart for a fantastic season and consistent excellence!

NOMINATED BY:
Tim Norstrem and Stuart Mahler

RUNNER- UP
Scot Davis
757-113-4 Record
Owatonna High School
Owatonna, MN
Nominated by Larry Hovden

HONORABLE MENTION
Jack Holloway
Tower Hill School
Wilmington, DE
Nominated by David Willauer