


2008 Photographer-of-the-Year Award

JOHN JOHNSON

Winthrop, Iowa

John Johnson grew up in Clarion, Iowa, surrounded by legends of wrestling such as Dale Brand, Glen Brand, Les Anderson, Tom Walden, and numerous other standouts, it was only natural to get into wrestling. Johnson, a Clarion, Iowa, prep, wrestled at Iowa Central Community College under the direction of NJCAA Hall of Fame coach Dennie Frederichs and was a member of the first NJCAA national championship team for Iowa Central in 1981. A shoulder injury that required surgery while at Iowa State ended John's competitive years, but opened up an avenue for coaching. John started out as an assistant wrestling coach at Welch and Central Junior High Schools in Ames, Iowa. John has also had coaching stints at Tipton H.S, Springville H.S. where he was the first wrestling coach in the school's history, and coached at East Buchanan Schools with Hall-of-Fame coach Dave Steinkamp.

John was a NJCAA coach from 1984-1993. He served one year at Sioux Empire J.C. in Hawarden, Iowa, and eight years at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids. John was a 2-time NJCAA Region 10 "Coach of the Year" and produced two NJCAA Region 10 Championship and four Region 10 Runner-up teams, had six NJCAA top 20, five top 15, and two top 10 national team finishes. As a JUCO coach, Johnson's record was 86-13-2 with 42 national qualifiers, 15 All-Americans, two finalists, and one NJCAA Champion, Derek Asbell from Maryland, who was the first national champion in any sport for Kirkwood. John was a two-time finalist for the NJCAA National Wrestling "Man-of-the-Year." This past February, Johnson was inducted into the NJCAA National Wrestling Hall of Fame during the NCJAA National Westling Championships.

While coaching at Kirkwood, John, like many coaches and wrestling supporters, started taking pictures of his own wrestlers to give them at the conclusion of the season. He started out taking pictures with an old Pentax K-1000, a standard 50 mm lens, and a cheep field flash. Then decided to make his first major photography purchase and bought a Canon EOS 1N film camera,



a Tamron zoom lens, and a low end flash. Once he started to get use to the film camera, the setting, timing, and lighting, to take decent wrestling photos, the digital revolution was starting to take hold. The cost of developing triple prints or more for media outlets, lithium batteries for the film camera, batteries for the flash, postage to mail out the pictures, John began to look at the advantages of digital photography. John was still somewhat hesitant to make the switch because he didn't want to spend a lot of money on a hobby, especially with a family. But with the encouragement from his family, he purchased a Canon 10D digital to use with his Tameron lens. John has since upgraded to a Canon 70-200 mm auto focus lens, a Canon 580EX speed light, with a quantum power pack. As with any equipment set-up, you are always looking at upgrades or new technology.

John really has a passion for wrestling photography, but his wife might even say an obsession. He is literally gone most weekends straight from late October until May or June. This isn't easy to do while trying to balance his duties as a superintendent and high school principal at West Central Schools in Maynard, Iowa. Plus, trying to balance time with his family where he resides in Winthrop, Iowa, with

his wife, Lois, and his children, Morgan and Travis. Both of the kids attend East Buchanan Schools in Winthrop. Lois works at Independence Schools as a medical assistant and library associate. With John's work at West Central they juggle three school calendars on the frig!

John continues to donate a vast majority of his photos, but has been compensated for some of his wrestling pictures. John receives a lot of requests for photos, and he tries as best as he can to meet every request. It does take time to find the pictures, identify them, and send them out via a slow dialup system.

Taking photos is a way to give back to this great sport that has given him so much and taught him about discipline, dedication, sacrifice, and other character building traits. "I have made many great friends through my wrestling exploits including the Bryant family and *Wrestling USA Magazine*. I am honored and humbled by this award that *Wrestling USA Magazine* and the Bryant family has bestowed on me."

Besides wrestling photography, John enjoys time with his family, woodworking, fishing, gardening, and various outdoor activities. He also enjoys collecting wrestling memorabilia and has various collections of wrestling pins, wrestling stamps, wrestling coins, trading cards, painting and other art work. John loves being able to go to meets with his family and his parents.

John Johnson received the National Wrestling Media Association - "Photographer of the Year" in 2002, and was presented *Amateur Wrestling New's* "Steven Brown Award" for recognition as the nation's top wrestling photographer in 1997, and had been named *Wrestling USA Magazine's* "Photographer-of-the-Year" in 1999 and now in 2008!

Wrestling USA Magazine would like to thank John Johnson for all his time and energy he took this year in supplying us with our photo requests. More importantly we don't just appreciate his contributions to *Wrestling USA Magazine* but to this great sport of wrestling that means so much to us.

