



PENN STATE WRESTLING CLUB

THE UPDATE

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WRESTLING & FISHING ... WHAT DO THEY HAVE IN COMMON?

Jennie Tate and Jordan Anderson

You might not always think of wrestling and fishing going together, but for Joe Humphreys these two sports have been the focus of his whole life. This Curwensville native and Penn State alumnus showed his athleticism and skill in wrestling before becoming a world-famous fly fisherman. He wrestled his first junior high match for the State College Little Lions and caught his first trout in Spring Creek.

On an early Sunday afternoon, Jordan Anderson and I sat down with Joe Humphreys in his Oak Hall home. Anderson knew some of Humphreys' family from growing up and working on a small Centre County farm but had never met him or been in his historic home, a converted grist mill next to Spring Creek.



Anderson interviewing Humphreys in his Oak Hall home; JEN TATE PHOTO

Born in 1929, Humphreys was the youngest of four children born to James and Ruth (McDowell) Humphreys. Their move to State College was not planned, but rather a pivot during challenging times of The [Great] Depression. His father worked at a bank in Curwensville. The bank closed and his father had to leave the area to find another job. He also wanted his children to be educated.

State College is where they went in 1935, moving into a home on the corner of West Beaver Avenue and South Atherton Street, the location of today's Alpha Firehouse.

Not only did this move bring financial stability for the family, it was the cornerstone for Humphreys' incredible journey and legacy on the mat and in the stream.

His father found work and also rented out rooms in their home to students, to supplement their income. Things were still very hard financially.

After the move, Humphreys spent much of his time outdoors. "My father and I went down on Spring Creek when I was six and I caught my first trout. It was an eight-inch dandy. I always loved fishing!"

Humphreys rode his bike to the creek almost every day in the summer. When summer ended, he would bring his fly rod to school with him and bike as fast as possible to fish afterwards. "I was so bitten by the fishing bug that all I wanted to do was fish," Humphreys said.

Humphreys admitted that even with his father, there was competition. But the competitive spirit was fun. "I was so competitive as a little kid, I didn't want my father to catch more fish than I did, so I became a student of the game."



Humphreys in his State College singlet; FAMILY PHOTO

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Greetings Penn State Wrestling Fans! This past year was another exciting one for the Penn State Wrestling Club and Penn State Wrestling! I just completed my first year as editor of **"The Update"** – the newsletter belonging to the BEST wrestling booster club anywhere!

Over the past few years, we've made notable changes to the design, format and layout of The Update. We added new content and new writers, as well as full-color photos. Moving forward, we are adding a bit more color and a bit more style so we have a dedicated newsletter format and design. While much thought and research have gone into our changes, the next ones will be carried out by our new graphics designer, **Kay Lindsey**, and our new printing company, **Reese's Print Shop**.

Ed Gibbons, who also serves as the club's vice president, continues as our assistant editor and as one of our feature writers. His dedicated support and willingness to help is immeasurable. We truly hope that you enjoy this newsletter and will provide input, comments and suggestions.

Feature writer, **Jeff Byers**, wrote about his recent interview with head wrestling coach Cael Sanderson. **Herb Yost** gives

his opinion on the upcoming wrestling schedule and the wrestlers he expects to start this folkstyle season.

We have one new guest writer, **Jordan Anderson**, who helped me document our afternoon sit-down with the legendary Joe Humphreys in his Oak Hall home. I met Jordan a few years ago while taking photos at various high school and college wrestling events. Her beautiful soul and her willingness to help led me to ask her to write for The Update. I personally have a lifelong connection to the Humphreys family and believed Jordan would help capture important aspects of Humphrey's lifelong connection to wrestling.

I want to thank all of you for your support and kind words expressed throughout the year. I look forward to continuing our journey and exploring the exciting possibilities that lie ahead.

Jennie Tate, EDITOR



Comments and suggestions for PSWC publications may be forwarded to the staff through:

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Reflecting back on my first full year as PSWC president was enlightening. Watching the wrestling team progress through to a record-setting NCAA performance was everything I could have hoped. The committees followed along in lock-step to the season – without missing a beat – delivering great fan experiences at every opportunity. I couldn't be prouder of both of these "teams!"

As I've come to find out, the trips committee never really stops working even while some other volunteers take a much-needed break through the summer, enjoying some freestyle wrestling. The trips committee is solidifying our plans in Cleveland for 2026 and looking past that to ensure we have hotel rooms in Minneapolis for 2027.

Given the final PSU wrestling schedule only dropped recently, rest assured that Helen Knerr, Michelle Hoyne and their team recently finalized details for a overnight bus trip to West Point to watch our wrestlers in the annual Black Knight Invite on November 23. Traveling with the PSWC is a near-perfect way to immerse yourself with a group of people who will expand your wrestling knowledge and put you in the right state-of-mind for the event you are traveling to and from. Details are posted at <https://pennstatewrestling-club.org/>.

The annual awards luncheon caps off our season and is already solidified for April 12, 2026, at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center. More details are forthcoming and the committee is considering new ideas to keep the luncheon brief but inspiring. Details will be posted on the PSWC website.

Our dedicated webmaster, Ben Niebel, updated the PSWC website from a shared hosting server to a virtual private server, providing quicker access when logging in and allowing more members access at the same time. These efforts were completed seamlessly during the summer break. I trust that you'll notice the improved performance.

I am pleased to introduce new members to the 2025-2026 PSWC board of directors, and on the inside of the front cover, you will find a dedicated set of volunteers who spend countless hours serving the wrestling booster club.

Todd Erdley is a State College native and admits he is old enough to be born in Bellefonte's (Willowbank) hospital. Todd began attending wrestling meets with his father in the early 1970s where he watched his favorite wrestler, Jerry Villecco. He was a four-year Blue Band member and saw

Penn State win its first national football championship in the 1982 Sugar Bowl. Erdley graduated from Penn State with a degree in Electrical Engineering and went on to work for several local engineering firms before founding Videon, a local tech company now at the forefront of video encoding and streaming products. He still serves as Videon's chairman but now works full-time helping emerging entrepreneurs in Central and Northern Pennsylvania. Erdley and his wife, Julia, have one son and two grandsons, and are working to ensure their grandsons want nothing else than to attend Penn State and return to the east coast from their Boulder, Colorado, home.

Ben Niebel is a Centre County native and a third-generation PSWC member following in the footsteps of his parents, Joe and Sandy Niebel, who were longtime leaders of the PSWC's trips committee and his grandfather, Ben, who was a founding member of the PSWC. He has enjoyed attending dual meets at Rec Hall for as long as he can remember and traveling to the first Big Ten Tournament featuring Penn State back in 1993. Niebel is a 2006 graduate of Penn State's College of Information Sciences and Technology (IST, B.S.) and is a CPA and CISA (Certified Information Systems Auditor).

Niebel has served as PSWC's webmaster since 2007. He lives in Pittsburgh with his wife, Danielle, and children, Elizabeth and Christopher, where he works as an audit managing director at KPMG. Danielle is also a proud Penn State alum, but the two didn't meet until after graduation while working together at KPMG. The first dual meet she attended was what Niebel describes as "the best dual meet ever" when Penn State took down Ohio State in 2018.

Mike Kremer is a Lancaster County native and wrestled for two years in junior high school, but health issues prevented him from continuing. Since he could not participate in sports, he turned to photography and took photos at sporting events for his high school yearbook. Kremer visited Penn State twice – and would have liked to enroll there – but ultimately chose a pharmacy major and attended Philadelphia College

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of Pharmacy and Science. He graduated in 1980 after winning an ROTC scholarship in his second year of college. He then spent four years on active duty as a pharmacist in Germany and at Fort Meade, Maryland. After several years in hospital pharmacy, Kremer gravitated to retail pharmacy because of direct patient contact and in 2012 he purchased Beward Pharmacy in Mifflintown. He recently sold it and will work for about 6-9 months to provide for a smooth transition.

Kremer is looking forward to retirement and plans to spend time volunteering and traveling with his wife, Lin. They have one daughter, Jocelyn, and two grandchildren, Dilan and Briannca, and celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in August.

Please join me in welcoming our new officers, committee chairs and directors at large. These folks have been involved in the club in some cases for several years and have agreed to step into a leadership position. Your acknowledgment of their commitment (and to those mentioned above) would be very supportive and appreciated.

I will never stop pointing out the incredible work our core group of volunteers do to create great opportunities for the PSWC members and fans. However, I also need to recycle the message that they can always use some more help. Take a look at our "Volunteer Recruitment" link under the "Join" menu at our website and step into the experience. No one is abandoned in a new role with the PSWC. The mentoring you will receive is first-rate and ensures you are (and we are) successful!

The Penn State Wrestling Club meets regularly during the college wrestling season at The Village at Penn State clubhouse. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, Dec. 10, at 6:15 pm. Meetings are open to anyone interested in attending.

I'm already warmed up for my second year in this role and anxious to see the wrestling team perform and watch our committees roll out an incredible suite of offerings to support your engagement and enjoyment. Look me up and introduce yourself whenever you have time. My contact information is under the "Leadership" menu on our website if you prefer that approach!

Until next time, Scott Roycroft

Hello, fellow Penn State Wrestling fans AND Penn State Wrestling Club members. It's time for an inside look into PSWC's membership committee!

We are a small group, but active throughout the entire fiscal year, May 1, 2025, to April 30, 2026. Even when college wrestling ends each season with the NCAA Wrestling Championships, work in the club's membership – for each member – continues. In fact, March, April and May represent the busiest times each year when nearly 60% of memberships are renewed or new members join the club.

Volunteers of PSWC's membership committee include co-chairs Brian McMahon and me [Allen Smith] and

committee member Denny Moyer. Closely aligned to this committee is the website committee with webmaster Ben Niebel and chair Joe Niebel, along with Sandy Niebel's assistance.

In addition to the enormous amount of historical information, rosters, Penn State's wrestling schedule and more, the membership database resides on the same secure server managed by the Niebels. These two committees work closely together.

PSWC memberships have skyrocketed since 2009 when Cael Sanderson arrived as head coach of Penn State wrestling. In the 16 years since, memberships have risen over 330%! And for that, we thank you!

Member benefits are many. Past publications and historical information are free to members. Members have access to The Update newsletter. Unfortunately for 2025-2026, Penn State's media guide will not be produced, so other alternatives are being pursued as I write this article.

Other member benefits include pre-match socials, at-cost bus trips, the annual PSWC Awards Luncheon, access to reduced-price hotel room blocks at wrestling tournaments, member-only information on the PSWC Website and much more.

PSWC membership is truly a bargain at \$35 per membership. And to show your support of Penn State Wrestling, you can donate additional money when you join/renew your

The PSWC website committee, including webmaster Ben Niebel, Joe and Sandy Niebel, Allen Smith, Rory Ansel and Kyle Kroboth, are excited for the 2025-2026 Penn State wrestling season. A few website enhancements were made over the summer or will be made in the near future.

The first enhancement made by Ben Niebel over the summer was the transition of the website from a shared hosting server to a virtual private server. This change provides quicker log-in access and permits more members to use the site at the same time. This most helpful change increased the speed at which the site operates, particularly when the demand for information is high. Peak usage usually occurs during the B1G and NCAA tournaments when fans seek updated individual results and team scoring.

The committee will also be working closely with the PSWC historian to have photo albums and articles from the storied past come alive on the club website. This is a work in progress and we hope to have material available as this season progresses.

Kyle Kroboth will be managing the "@PennStWrestling" Instagram account. You can expect previews of PSWC website content, along with the latest "GoPSUSports" photos and Penn State wrestling news.

Allen Smith will again write original articles for the PSWC newsfeed on various aspects of Penn State wrestling.

Rory Ansel will continue to maintain individual and team rankings as the season progresses. Ansel will help with the coordination of uploading photos from club photographer Jennie Tate to make easily accessible photo albums from various dual meets and tournaments.

If you have any questions regarding the PSWC website or have any ideas you believe would be helpful, please contact Ben Niebel on the website at <https://pennstatewrestling-club.org/> or by email to jsniebel@gmail.com.

membership. One hundred percent of your donation will benefit the wrestling program.

I will end with two thoughts. First, by submitting your renewal each year electronically by scanning the QR code on this page or going to the club's website, the amount of effort by our small committee is minimized enormously. I am asking those that don't currently use our website (<https://pennstatewrestlingclub.org/>) for renewals to please consider this.

Lastly, and most importantly, one final and heartfelt **THANK YOU** for your membership of the largest and most active college wrestling booster club in the country. As past president and long-time volunteer, I have seen the

benefits of this organization play out in every imaginable way. **YOU** are truly an important part of Penn State wrestling!



Which Penn State wrestler is the All-Time PSU leader for the highest percentage of bonus point wins?



Humphreys talks about his wrestling journey and its impact on his life; JEN TATE PHOTO

"Humphreys is nothing if not competitive. He maintains a relentless desire to succeed and doesn't stop until he accomplishes what he sets out to do," said Ralph Scherder of Dark Skies Fly Fishing.

Wrestling was also his sport and an important part of his

journey. But the journey to wearing the Penn State singlet wasn't without trial and tough matches.

Humphreys began wrestling in 1942. "I had one junior high match, and I lost. In 1943, I had one junior high match, and I won," said Humphreys. "As a freshman in 1944 on varsity, I had a good record. I wrestled ten matches and lost every damn one of them." His sophomore year wasn't much easier because a senior kept beating him out, keeping him from making the lineup, but in 1946, things changed.

Now a junior, Humphreys, showed his poise and skill on the mat with an 8-2 record. And finally, as a senior in 1947, his persistency paid off with a 14-0 dual meet record. He went all the way to regionals where he placed second. There, he experienced his first loss on the season to Mike Comets who went on to become the state champion.

After his 1947 high school graduation, Humphreys went to Colorado and worked for the forestry service. He loved the outdoors! When that job ended, he worked on the "Million Dollar Highway" just long enough to save money to get back home.

After getting back to State College, Humphreys joined the Navy. He wanted to be near water. After completing basic training, he was assigned as a fireman (FN) to the aircraft carrier USS Cabot at Naval Air Station Pensacola. While there, he learned they had a wrestling team.

For three years, Humphreys wrestled for the Navy against teams like Northwestern, Millersville, the New Orleans Athletic Club and the Atlanta Wrestling Club. Then after winning the Navy's regional tournament, he went to Annapolis for the "All-Navy Wrestling Championships."

He took fourth place in the championships and they tried to recruit him for their wrestling team. "I was detained in Annapolis for three weeks because of an infected ear. And I was ready for something new," he said.

He finished his service at Green Cove Springs. His love of competition drove him to excel in other sports so he boxed middle-weight on Green Cove's boxing team. He also became friends with a nearby resort-owner and ferried fisherman to the water's best spots on weekends.

Humphreys returned home to State College after his discharge from the Navy. Along came Charlie Speidel. He was Penn State's wrestling coach at the time and wanted Humphreys to wrestle. Humphreys said, "I didn't even think I could get into Penn State, but to Speidel's delight, I did. I took an exam and passed."

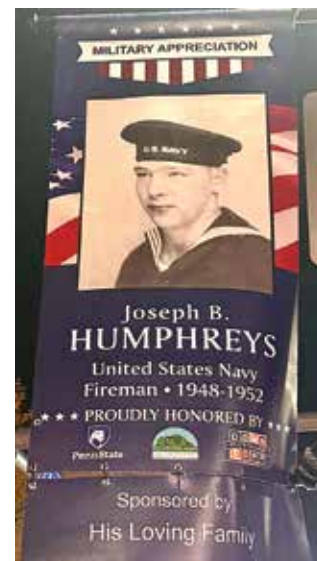
Humphreys entered Penn State in 1953 and chose to study exercise and sports science, now known as kinesiology. "Call it what you like, it's still just Phys. Ed."

He wrestled for three years (1953-1956), also wrestling on Penn State's 1954 team that took third in the nation. Humphreys

turned out to be a great asset to the team. "Wherever they needed me, they put me. They knew that if I couldn't

win, I wouldn't get pinned! I would save them some points. I never got pinned by a national champion," he shared.

Often the underdog giving up a lot of weight but he was a wrestler that coaches and teammates could depend on.



Humphreys' service banner; FAMILY PHOTO



Humphreys wrestling for Penn State; FAMILY PHOTO

"I was a 147-pounder, but I wrestled 157 and then they'd push me up to 167. If I would hit a single leg, it was like hitting [a] post."

After successfully wrestling and boxing in the US Navy, Humphreys became one of only two varsity athletes in Penn State's history to letter in two sports in the same season. In 1954, he and Larry Fornicola took up boxing under head coach Eddie Sulkowski which led to earning letters in both wrestling and boxing.

Humphreys' long friendship with Fornicola also introduced him to his future wife, Gloria Irvin. They married and raised two beautiful daughters, Dolores and Johanna (Hanna), in the very home we had this chat.

Looking back on his wrestling career, Humphreys values his time as a Nittany Lion. It's special to him. He talked about his last match in Rec Hall. "I'll never forget it. I was a senior and we wrestled Syracuse. I don't know how I remember this, but the kid's name was Gordon Carberry. I beat him like three to one. When it was over, the referee raised my hand and turned me around to the crowd. I got a standing ovation because I was a senior. It was my last match. I will never forget that!"

Rec Hall's unique environment is one he still cherishes decades later. "You know how the people are at Rec Hall. They stand up and give an ovation to the seniors. And I thought Wow; this is pretty cool!"

After earning his degree, he began teaching and coaching at Penns Valley High School. They had not won an athletic contest of any kind. "In 1957, I gave them their first win. We beat Moshannon Valley and had a 4-5 record the first year.



Humphreys and Harvey; FAMILY PHOTO

In the second year I gave them a winning season with a 5-3-1 record. Not only did I give them their first win, I gave them their first winning season."

Two years later, he went to Kittanning with Gloria*, who also had a teaching job there. With a few undefeated seasons, 40+ dual meet wins and two individual state medalists, Humphreys' positive impact on Armstrong County was clear. But one thing

was lacking: "I loved to fish so much and there wasn't any fishing there I wanted to do."

He interviewed for a coaching job at Arizona State but declined because there was no fishing there either. "No, I've gotta have fishing. Fishing was my big love," he said. Humphreys moved back to Centre County teaching and coaching at Bald Eagle High School. In seven years, he had several undefeated seasons, and notably remembers the only losses came from a school (Clearfield) near his hometown, three different years.

During this same time, Humphreys purchased the abandoned and deteriorating Irvin/Oak Hall grist mill next to his brother's home and adjacent to Spring Creek. He then hired a crane to lift the collapsed roof, removed the upper stories and collaborated with a contractor to finish the home he still occupies. Over the four-year renovation, he also pumped some of his beloved Spring Creek's water under his house.

Former Penn State wrestling coach Bill Koll was so impressed by Humphreys' achievements he hired him as an instructor and assistant wrestling coach in 1970. Humphreys looked up to Koll "a lot." Koll had an impressive collegiate record including three consecutive NCAA championships.

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And now, Humphrey's answers to

"Wrestling and Fishing ... What Do They Have in Common?"

“They're both physical sports. Technique is so important.

When you're wrestling you have to set up your takedowns. You've got to move your opponent. On the bottom, you've got to be explosive. There are techniques and smarts involved.

In fly fishing you have the same things. You have to adjust when you're fishing dry flies. You must have great fly control so that the fly will float perfectly, drag-free. When you're nymphing, you have to make that tough cast at a distance so you can have line control and get the nymph to the bottom.

You really have to respect techniques in both aspects of both games.”

In addition to coaching, Humphreys was a teacher, an Assistant Professor of Physical Education from 1970-1989. He taught bowling, figure skating, personal defense, casting and angling. In 1972, after two years with Koll, he stepped back from coaching. "Enough wrestling, fishing is my game," he thought. His wrestling career may have ended, but Humphreys took an important piece of advice from Koll that he carried through his teaching and fishing careers.

"The basic fundamentals refined to perfection are your most advanced techniques," Humphreys said. With that and all of the passion, intensity and lessons learned from wrestling, he stepped into the next part of his life.

Humphreys was given the opportunity to succeed George Harvey as Penn State's fly fishing instructor. After only a slight hesitation, fly fishing beckoned. Humphreys couldn't refuse! By now, he had been teaching angling, casting and fly fishing classes at Bald Eagle High School. Now he was going to teach his skills at Penn State!

The late George Harvey is credited with starting the fishing program in 1934. According to Humphreys, "It was mostly for professors and anyone at Penn State who wanted to learn about fly fishing." Then, in 1947, it became a credited course, one of the first in the US. Its popularity increased each year.

Humphreys had met Harvey as a youngster while fishing with his father. The three fished together and in the years that followed, Humphreys would call Harvey when he wanted to go fishing. Harvey picked him up, took him fishing and taught Humphreys everything he knew.

"Harvey was watching all of this," Humphreys said. He considers Harvey his mentor since he had been one of Harvey's students during his time at Penn State. With his vast knowledge on fishing, Humphreys was Harvey's aide to help students struggling with basic tying techniques. The two began fishing together more and more until Harvey told Humphreys he should take over the Penn State course. "He knew who I was and he was ready to have me take over for him," Humphreys said.



Humphreys demonstrating casting at fly fishing class; family photo

In 2012, Humphreys received the prestigious honor of being inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame as the Outstanding American from Pennsylvania. Wrestling definitely wasn't gone from his life!

Wrestling taught Humphreys valuable lessons that transferred to fishing and life. "I learned how to lose. I learned how to win. I learned how to be gracious. It kind of shaped my life as the drive to be good at anything I do."

He went on to teach others about his extraordinary experiences as a fly fisherman and to be one of world's greatest fly fishing experts. He's been to five world championships with U.S. teams competing in Finland, twice in Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Wales.

He indulged requests to fish next to dignitaries and other prominent people. Former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and Oscar-nominated, Irish actor Liam Neeson are just a few of them.

But the enduring source of Humphreys' pride came from the thousands of Penn State students who learned fishing and sharpened their skills under his tutelage!

Almost 66 years after receiving his first Rec Hall standing ovation, déjà vu couldn't have been more real as Humphreys

Humphreys enthusiastically taught Penn State's fly fishing program for 19 years, teaching thousands the sport of fly fishing and how to improve their skills. In 1984 he began hosting the first nationally-televised fly fishing program on ESPN. By this time, he had already made a name for himself with his "Trout Tactics" book, one of the best-selling fly fishing books of all time.



Humphreys demonstrating his famous bow and arrow cast; family photo



Humphreys at Penn State vs Rutgers dual;
PSU PHOTO

personally touched thousands of lives with his irrepressible enthusiasm for the sport of fly fishing."

"Wasn't it neat? All of the people stood up and gave me an ovation when I was taken out to the mat. That was so wonderful," shared Humphreys. "I'll never forget that! It really brought a lot of memories back!"

received another one the night of Jan. 16, 2022.

During intermission of Penn State's wrestling match with Rutgers, an announcement was made that Penn State's fishing program would be re-named at the request of an anonymous donor. The program's name was permanently changed to the "Joe Humphreys Fly Fishing Program" to honor Humphreys and how he

"I think I've been a very good student of the game," shared Humphreys. "And I'm still learning. You never stop learning." He loves the game, the process and the drive. He always wants to be successful and claims he "learned from the fish themselves."

At almost 97 years young, Humphreys still fishes the streams of Central Pennsylvania. According to him, "State College is the mecca for fly fishing." The cold spring water comes right out of the mountain. It's perfect for trout and it's what he uses to make his morning coffee.

He loves to support the Nittany Lions. He follows Penn State Wrestling now just as much as he did in the 1970s. "I think Penn State is getting a lot of good press with winning nationals so many years. It's not only helping Penn State, it's helping wrestling," shared Humphreys.

**In May 2014, Humphreys lost his wife and first love, Gloria, after a year-long battle with cancer.*



Joe Humphreys has long embraced a personal philosophy enabling him to get the most enjoyment and fulfillment from life. "One thing that I've always done, every day of my life, is to have something exciting to look forward to," Humphreys said. That means appreciating and being grateful for a beautiful day on a mountain stream, fly fishing, supporting Penn State and spending time with his family and those he loves.

Humphreys found new love and a special fishing partner in his girlfriend of almost seven years, Tammy Conway. A native of Southwest Pennsylvania, she shares his passion for fly fishing, nature and sports. (FAMILY PHOTO)



Humphreys and his family attending a Penn State football game; L-R: son-in-law Andrew Barnes, daughter Hanna, Joe and Tammy and daughter Dolores Barnes. (FAMILY PHOTO)



In mid-October, Joe and Tammy took Cael Sanderson and Jake Varner fly fishing on Spruce Creek. Sanderson caught a rainbow trout!

(TAMMY CONWAY PHOTOS)



Accolades for Our Achievers—

Ed Gibbons Inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame

We're proud to share that our wrestling club vice president, Ed Gibbons, was inducted into the New Jersey Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame (NWHOF) on Saturday, Sept. 28, at Princeton's Westin Hotel! This lifetime service honor recognizes his outstanding contributions and lasting impact on the sport of wrestling.

Gibbons' official story began in Brooklyn and ended in Union, New Jersey. What transpired in between is the reason he was inducted into New Jersey's Chapter of the NWHOF!

Following a successful wrestling career at Garden City, New York's High School, Gibbons wrestled for Massachusetts' Springfield College from 1972-1976 before going on to earn a master's degree in sports administration from the University of Michigan. At Michigan, he met his future wife, Mary Ellen, who was earning her master's in bio statistics.

During his first few post-grad years, Gibbons was a New York City public schools teacher and a wrestling coach and director of recreational sports at New York's Hunter College. That all changed when

Mary Ellen saw an ad in the Sunday paper for a teacher/assistant wrestling coach position at Caldwell High School and called her future husband right away. "Jobs were tough to come by in those days, the country was in a recession and the job at Caldwell was like a dream come true," he recalled.

Gibbons went on to teach, coach and serve as athletic director at two high schools before retiring after 10 years as Union High School's principal. His involvement in wrestling spans over 40 years and includes times he served as a coach, administrator and member of New Jersey's state wrestling committee. He continues to serve on



Presentation of the HOF plaque and jacket (L-R: Howie O'Neill, Ed and Bob Shernce); PHOTO PROVIDED

the New Jersey Wrestling Hall of Fame Executive Board.

Gibbons and his wife live in Boalsburg and have three children, Edward Jr., Eileen and Kathryn, and six grandchildren,

Michael, Harper, Addie, Annabelle, Edward and William. A few interesting tidbits about Ed's family: Eileen was a team manager for Penn State wrestling; Ed wrestled for West Point and is currently a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army; and granddaughter Harper is a wrestler and twice qualified for the national tournament.

Zain Retherford Inducted into Benton High School's Athletics Hall of Fame

The Benton High School Athletics Hall of Fame – established in 2024 – recently honored five graduate athletes at their second induction ceremony. The ceremony was held at the high school on Friday, Oct. 10, and Zain Retherford from the class of 2013 was one of those honored.

Retherford is a two-time PIAA state wrestling champion and the 2013 national winner of the Dave Schultz High School Excellence Award presented by the National Wrestling Hall of Fame. This award

honors the legacy of Olympic and World champion wrestler Dave Schultz and recognizes an outstanding high school senior who exemplifies excellence in wrestling, academics and community.

Retherford is also a four-time NCAA All-American, a three-time (consecutive) NCAA wrestling champion and a two-time (consecutive) Hodge Trophy winner – given to the nation's top college wres-

tlar. In 2023, he won the World wrestling championship at 70kg and was on the 2024 US Olympic wrestling team at the Paris Olympics.

Retherford and his wife, Julianna, live in State College with their two sons, Stetson and Wyatt.



Penn State's Zain Retherford;
JEN TATE PHOTO

Penn State Wrestling Club congratulates these inductees on their well-deserved honors!

Ed Ruth Inducted into the PWCA Hall of Fame

The Pennsylvania Wrestling Coaches Association held its annual induction ceremony and banquet on Sunday, Oct. 26, at the Mountain View Country Club in Boalsburg. PWCA's class of 2025 – its 56th recognition – included 11 inductees, one of which was former Penn State wrestler, Ed Ruth.

Ruth was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to Thanayi and Eddie Ruth. He wrestled at Susquehanna Township High School prior to transferring to Blair Academy in New Jersey for his senior year, graduating in 2009. Ruth was a 2009 High School All-American and was the top-ranked wrestling recruit in his weight class nationally.

In folkstyle wrestling, Ruth competed for Penn State from 2010-2014, where he

was a four-time NCAA All-American, four-time Big Ten Champion and a three-time NCAA Champion at 184 pounds. In 2011 – his freshman year – Ruth garnered a third-place finish at 174 pounds after losing in the semifinals to Stanford's Amuchestegi. He completed his collegiate career with an impressive 136-3 overall record during his career as a Nittany Lion.

During his college career, Ruth never lost to a Big Ten opponent and owned a 42-0 record against conference foes. He was named Penn State's 2013 Male Athlete of the Year and was a Big Ten Male Athlete of the Year finalist.



Penn State's Ed Ruth; PSU PHOTO

Following his time at Penn State, Ruth was a representative for team USA at the 2014 World Wrestling Championships and was a silver medalist at the 2015 USA World Team Trials before becoming a professional MMA fighter. In July 2021, Ruth joined the University of Illinois wrestling program as an assistant coach, joining head coach Mike Poeta in his first year at the program's helm. Ruth went to Champaign after several years as a professional Mixed Martial Arts fighter.

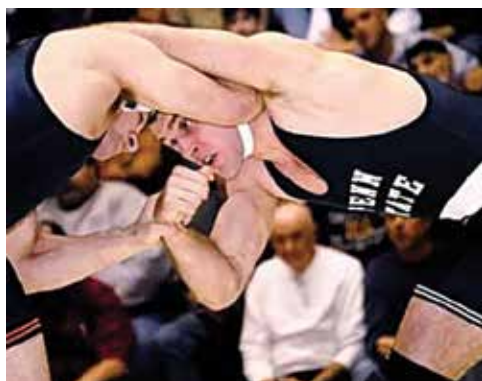
James Yonushonis Inducted into the Centre County Sports Hall of Fame

The Centre County Sports Hall of Fame was established in 2016 with the mission of perpetuating the memory of individuals bringing lasting fame to Centre County through their achievements in athletics. The CCSHOF provides 12 annual scholarships to one female and one male student athlete at each of the six county high schools.

Dr. James Yonushonis was one of the twelve new inductees honored on Sunday, Oct. 19, at the Penn Stater Hotel. He was a standout in two sports at Philipsburg-Osceola and his wrestling career remains an inspiration to others.

In addition to his outstanding football and wrestling careers at Philipsburg-Osceola, he continued his wrestling career at Penn

State where he was a three-year starter, earned NCAA All-American honors, was a B1G runner-up and twice earned the B1G sportsmanship award. His senior year, he was ranked No. 2 nationally and was a wrestling team captain.



PSU wrestler James Yonushonis and Illinois' Frank Guida; DAILY COLLEGIAN PHOTO

He graduated from Penn State in 2007 and then pursued a berth to the Olympics for wrestling from 2007-2012. During this

time, he was introduced to chiropractic and experienced significant healing of his injuries from chiropractic treatment, inspiring him to become a chiropractor himself.

Dr. Yonushonis attended Life University in Marietta, Georgia, graduating in March 2020. He returned to State College and opened Healthy Valley Chiropractic in 2021.

He coached wrestling at various levels including at the University of Maryland and Life University and is currently one of the State College junior high wrestling coaches.

Yonushonis met his wife, Meredith, at Penn State, where she was a gymnast and competed for Penn State. They live in State College with their seven children.

NI TTANY LION ACHIEVERS!

Penn State's **Carter Starocci** was recently honored by the City of Erie for his collegiate wrestling achievements. Starocci was presented with a Key to the City by Erie's Mayor Joe Schember and the 1000 block of West 30th Street was formally dedicated as "*Carter Starocci 5X Way.*"

Starocci earned a record five NCAA Division 1 championships during his Penn State career, cementing his legacy as one of

the most accomplished athletes in the history of wrestling. Starocci and his family are shown in these donated photos.



PENN STATERS IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

► The Lehigh Valley Wrestling RTC announced in September the addition of NCAA Champion, five-time All-American **Greg Kerkvliet** to their resident athlete roster. Kerkvliet joined LVWRTC in September after an incredible career at Penn State. After graduation, Kerkvliet stayed at Penn State and wrestled with the Nittany Lion Wrestling.

► Two-time NCAA Champion and former Nittany Lion wrestler, **Vincenzo Joseph**, recently joined Lehigh University's coaching staff. Pat Santoro, the Mountain Hawks' head coach, announced the addition on Sept. 11. Joseph served as Head Coach of the Tar Heel Wrestling Club RTC and Recruitment Coordinator for the University of North Carolina from Aug. 2024 – Sept. 2025. He joined the Tar Heels after he announced his retirement from competitive wrestling after the 2024 U.S. Olympic Team Trials. Joseph began his coaching career at Stanford in June 2021 and coached through the 2021-2022 season. He then returned to competitive wrestling and training to prepare for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

THE RECKoning - Penn State's Wrestling Affiliate Club!

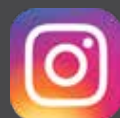
The Reckoning welcomes back all wrestling fans! We attended the "Involvement Fair" and got a bunch of people interested in our club. Our first meeting of the year was held October 23 and we plan to have another one just before Penn State's first home wrestling dual of the season.

We were invited to **ESPN's College Gameday** on September 27 on Old Main's Lawn.

Current Reckoning officers are **Kendyl Ramsey** (President), **Allison Billard** (Vice President), **Aiden Connell** (Treasurer),

Matthew Knepp (Secretary), **Wesley Doll** (Membership Chair), **Zack Wilken** and **Lauren Hoffman** (Social Media).

Shonnie Robb serves as Penn State's official faculty/staff advisor and **Lou Ann Kloss** serves as advisor to the Penn State Wrestling Club.



You can follow The Reckoning on Instagram at https://www.instagram.com/the_reckoningpsu/
the_reckoningpsu/



Meet the Team – 2025-2026



Josh Barr, So

WEIGHT: 197

HOMETOWN: Davison, Mich.

HIGH SCHOOL: Davison



Sam Beckett, Sr+

WEIGHT: 165

HOMETOWN: Harleysville, Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: Souderton



Marcus Blaze, Fr

WEIGHT: 133

HOMETOWN: Perrysburg, Ohio

HIGH SCHOOL: Perrysburg



Dawson Bundy, RS Fr

WEIGHT: 285

HOMETOWN: St. George, Utah

HIGH SCHOOL: Desert Hills



Lucas Cochran, Sr

WEIGHT: 285

HOMETOWN: Perry, Utah

HIGH SCHOOL: Box Elder



Asher Cunningham, Fr

WEIGHT: 174/184

HOMETOWN: State College, Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: State College



Hayden Cunningham, RS Fr

WEIGHT: 141

HOMETOWN: State College, Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: State College



Braeden Davis, Jr

WEIGHT: 141

HOMETOWN: Belleville, Mich.

HIGH SCHOOL: Dundee



Sean Degl, Fr

WEIGHT: 165/174

HOMETOWN: Mahopac, N.Y.

HIGH SCHOOL: Iona Prep



Nate Desmond, Fr

WEIGHT: 125

HOMETOWN: Bethlehem, Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: Bethlehem Catholic



PJ Duke, Fr

WEIGHT: 157

HOMETOWN: Slate Hill, N.Y.

HIGH SCHOOL: Minisink Valley



Mason Ellis, Fr

WEIGHT: 184/197

HOMETOWN: Gurley, Ala.

HIGH SCHOOL: Madison County



Kyison Garcia, So

WEIGHT: 133

HOMETOWN: South Jordan, Utah

HIGH SCHOOL: Mountain Ridge



Levi Haines, Sr

WEIGHT: 174

HOMETOWN: Arendtsville, Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: Biglerville



William Henckel, Fr

WEIGHT: 174

HOMETOWN: Southbury, Conn.

HIGH SCHOOL: Blair Academy



Tyler Kasak, Jr

WEIGHT: 157

HOMETOWN: Doylestown, Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: Bethlehem Catholic



Luke Lilledahl, So

WEIGHT: 125

HOMETOWN: St. Charles, Mo.

HIGH SCHOOL: Wyoming Seminary (Pa.)



Mitchell Mesenbrink, Jr

WEIGHT: 165

HOMETOWN: Hartland, Wis.

HIGH SCHOOL: Arrowhead



Cole Mirasola, RS Fr

WEIGHT: 285

HOMETOWN: Jackson, Wis.

HIGH SCHOOL: West Bend



Connor Mirasola, RS Fr

WEIGHT: 197

HOMETOWN: Jackson, Wis.

HIGH SCHOOL: West Bend



Aaron Nagao, Jr

WEIGHT: 141

HOMETOWN: La Habra, Calif.

HIGH SCHOOL: Esperanza



Cael Nasdeo, RS Fr

WEIGHT: 141

HOMETOWN: Williamsport, Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: Williamsport



Masanosuke Ono, Jr

WEIGHT: 133

HOMETOWN: Matsue City, Japan

HIGH SCHOOL: Tosu Technical



Dalton Perry, Fr

WEIGHT: 149

HOMETOWN: Renovo, Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: Central Mountain



Connor Pierce, Jr

WEIGHT: 149

HOMETOWN: Erie, Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: Harbor Creek



Joe Sealey, RS Fr

WEIGHT: 157

HOMETOWN: Bear Creek Twp., Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: Wyoming Seminary



Shayne Van Ness, Jr

WEIGHT: 149

HOMETOWN: Somerville, N.J.

HIGH SCHOOL: Blair Academy



Ty Watson, RS Fr

WEIGHT: 165

HOMETOWN: Centre Hall, Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: Penns Valley



Brock Weiss, RS Fr

WEIGHT: 149

HOMETOWN: Jersey Shore, Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: Jersey Shore



Rocco Welsh, So

WEIGHT: 184

HOMETOWN: Waynesburg, Pa.

HIGH SCHOOL: Waynesburg Central

The Penn State wrestling program has had historic success over the last couple of seasons and the upcoming season brings the opportunity for more record-breaking numbers to be reached. The Nittany Lions return seven starters from last year's team with only Beau Bartlett, Carter Starocci and Greg Kerkvliet out of eligibility. And Penn State has an infusion of new talent and guys like Aaron Nagao returning from injury. Arguably, this will be Penn State's deepest team yet with All-American potential at every weight and national title contenders at most.

Once again, expectations are high as Penn State tries to make some history in seeking a 5th consecutive national championship. The Nittany Lions have never won more than four in a row.

The long-time voice of the Nittany Lions, Jeff Byers, recently talked with head coach Cael Sanderson who is heading into his 17th season at the helm of the program.



Coach Cael listening to his wrestlers TONY ROTUNDO PHOTO

BYERS: Can you talk a little bit about the team you have coming back, and the so-called off-season with the program?

SANDERSON: I think we just have a really outstanding group of young men that love the sport. They are just really super-high-character human beings and obviously, very talented wrestlers. We're just really excited to get going. I mean, we really never stop. The college season is fun, folkstyle is fun, the team aspect is a lot of fun!

We just have a great group of guys that are incredible wrestlers but are also a very close team. They are just a group that loves to compete and love the sport. I think they are just fun to be around!

BYERS: Cael, how challenging is coaching in the environment we're in right now? Between the NIL and the transfer portal, and all of the added things are around college sports that maybe weren't there in the past. Do you feel like it makes it more challenging to zero in on the actual coaching component of being a coach?

SANDERSON: I think so – 100 percent! It just takes more focus and also understanding that it's not the kid's fault we're in this position. I mean, we're the people that created

this mess, where the focus can be on "how much money can I get?" and you're in a non-revenue sport. So that can be frustrating. It's not the kid's fault or the parent's fault. It's just this is the world we're living in. You just have to do the best that you can.

I think the biggest thing is just focusing on our own values and not allowing our values to change. You can sit and get frustrated about it because you're getting busier with more and more of your time being taken up by these changes. At the same time, I don't think that's why any of us really got into coaching. We get into coaching because we like building teams and being around motivated and good people.

I think we just have to focus on the things we enjoy doing and, on our values, not allowing these things to change. I think that will work for us. We don't have to shift to be like other programs. We just need to keep doing what we're doing and make sure our kids are taken care of. But we have to make sure they are happy, healthy and reach their goals. I think if we focus on that, things will work out well.



Coach Cael explaining the brick; SAM JANICKI PHOTO

BYERS: Does the current environment and rule changes affect what you're looking for in the recruiting process, or does it just re-emphasize what you've always been looking for?



Coach Cael enjoying the NCAAAs; SAM JANICKI PHOTO

SANDERSON: I think it's a little easier to identify values now. We definitely want that team mentality and we just believe that's the best path for any individual in their life. They'll be more successful and more valuable in the workplace once they're done wrestling. We believe in what we say and the way in which we approach the program. We are grateful that we have the chance to work with great kids who want to be part of this program for the right reasons.

We still have to put in the time and effort, making sure they are benefiting and doing as well as they can with their name, image and likeness. From that standpoint, it's a great

thing. It's just tough dealing with how competitive everything is – for integrity of name, image and likeness to be maintained for which it was intended. I do think – with us – we're getting guys who are coming here because they want to be the best wrestlers in the world. They aren't driven by the NIL "stuff." We want to help them in every way we can and we will continue to work tirelessly to help them reach their goals in wrestling and in life.

BYERS: *Can you talk about what all goes into putting the schedule together with the non-conference part that you can control?*

SANDERSON: It's just a short window and with rivalries like Lehigh, there's just not a lot of dates you have to play around with. One of the tricky parts is people, of course, want return trips and so you get locked into those. And that's good. We're traveling to Wyoming this year, and I'm excited because we "get" to go to this beautiful area. When we were kids, we used to wrestle at the University of Wyoming at regional freestyle tournaments.

And, we have Oklahoma coming in. They have put together a really good team and we probably haven't had a dual meet with them in a long time. I think that will be a fun match. We don't obsess over scheduling. Our kids are training and competing year-round so we try to get some different areas covered and then just go out and wrestle.

BYERS: *Can we just go through the weight classes and the kids you have, starting with 125 where you have Luke [Lilledahl]? He was so good last year and, of course, continues to impress in freestyle.*

SANDERSON: Luke had a great season last year and had an outstanding freestyle season where he won the U.S. Open and made Final X. He just keeps getting better. He's just a competitor, but also a massive student of the game and he's talented! He's just a good dude. It doesn't take a lot to make that kid smile. He loves wrestling and he's special!

BYERS: *And then, can you talk about a lot of contenders there at 133 and 141?*

SANDERSON: There are not a lot of secrets. We have Masa [Ono] and we're still working on his eligibility to see what we have. This is taking a very, very long time. Marcus Blaze is at 133 right now. Nate Desmond is a great wrestler and he's certified at 125 but could go 133. We have Kyison Garcia who is tough.

At 141, we have Aaron Nagao looking to go at that weight. Braeden Davis is going up and has a redshirt option. We also have some guys flying under the radar a bit – guys like Hayden Cunningham – who have been working really, really

hard behind the scenes. We have some other hammers – guys like Cael Nasdeo – who are getting better.

At 149, we have Shayne Van Ness back and Connor Pierce is an experienced guy who continues to improve. We have a lot of good guys but these guys aren't here unless they want to be. Last year was a tough year because we had to reduce our roster limit down to 30.

Again, kids aren't here unless they really want to be here – and that's a blessing for our program!

BYERS: *At 157, can you talk about Tyler Kasak and how he continues to get better?*



Coach Cael and Tyler Kasak;
JOE HERMITT PHOTO

SANDERSON: Kasak's just a dog! He's a competitor! He loves to compete! He's just clutch in big moments and that doesn't happen unless you love competing. He's taken third at the NAAs twice and that's not easy. I think it shows a lot about his

character. I think that's a really big deal. It says a lot about his competitiveness and his inner strength.

P. J. Duke is in there, too. They both obviously have red-shirts, too. Guys can grow, too, so we're trying to figure out how to help them manage that throughout their careers. We have Joe Sealy, who maybe isn't ideally a 157-pounder. He's a little bigger but he's a really, really tough wrestler. He's a guy we appreciate and we have a ton of confidence in him.

And as we move up – obviously – we have returning NCAA champion Mitchell [Mesenbrink] who is just Mitchell! I mean, he keeps competing. He wrestled all off-season and he's just a competitive guy. It's probably as fun to watch him wrestle as anyone who's ever stepped on a mat before! We are very excited to have him and we still have him for two more years!

Then we have Levi [Haines]. Levi's a senior. He's had a great off-season. He has to be really confident right now after making the World finals at the senior level in his first go. He's just an incredible leader for us. He's really a perfect example of a coachable, hard-working, low-key, low-maintenance,



Coach Cael and Mitchell Mesenbrink;
SAM JANICKI PHOTO



Coach Cael and Levi Haines;
TONY ROTUNDO PHOTO

tough, competitive kid. He has that team mentality. He's a guy we'd love to have on our team forever. But he's probably going to be ready to move on after he graduates. I just can't say enough good things about Levi.

We have some freshmen competing as well. Guys like Will Henckel, who had a nice summer taking second in the U20 World championships. Guys like Asher Cunningham – although he's probably bigger

than 174 – but there are guys that can go up and down. With [today's] technology and wisdom these guys have, they can figure out where they want to go.

At 184, Rocco Welsh – who transferred in from Ohio State – really fits in well here. He loves wrestling, loves competing. It's really been an incredibly smooth transition into our program. He was already friends with a lot of our guys and he grew up in Pennsylvania. He's obviously a great wrestler, so we really couldn't be happier with him and having him in our program.

And then, as we get into the upper weights, we have the Mirasola brothers [Connor and Cole]. They are both incredible individuals. They are just guys that are super important for the culture and the program. They are both great com-

petitors as well and they both medaled at the U20 World Championships this year. Connor is certified at 184 but he's probably a more natural 197-pounder. Cole is just continuing to build up and he'll be tough at heavyweight.

Josh Barr continues to improve and he's looking really confident. He took second at Final X and had some competitive matches against the guy who won the World Championships, Trent Hiday. He's really feeling good. He's just getting better and better because he's really bought into how we like guys competing.

Lucas Cochran has bulked up and he'll be a serious contender at heavyweight, too. He and Cole will carry that weight class for us and they are both just really tough.

And, we have a bunch of guys in there who will be battling, too. We have a really good team that likes each other, likes to compete and loves the sport. We just feel very fortunate that we get to work with these guys and try to help them tinue to improve to reach their goals.



Coach Cael and Rocco Welsh;
TONY ROTUNDO PHOTO



Who is the all-time leader in career wins by a Penn State wrestler?

NI TTANY LION ACHIEVERS!

> **NI TTANY LION** Associate Head Wrestling Coach **Casey Cunningham** was named the 2024 USA Wrestling Freestyle Coach of the Year (April 27)

> **NI TTANY LION** **Carter Starocci** was named the 2024-2025 Penn State Male Athlete of the Year (June 23)

> **NI TTANY LION** **Hayden Cunningham** was one of four Penn State student-athletes selected to travel as part of Harvard's Sport and Education Program: from Ancient Olympia to the Present at the International Olympic Academy (July 3)

> **NI TTANY LION** **Mitchell Mesenbrink** was named a College Sports Communicators (CSC) First Team At-Large Academic All-American (July 9)

> **NI TTANY LION** **Carter Starocci** was named the 2025 B1G Jesse Owens Male Athlete of the Year (July 10)

> **NI TTANY LIONS** **Brian Borden, Levi Haines, Matt Lee, Mitchell Mesenbrink** and **Aaron Nagao** were named 2024-2025 B1G Distinguished Scholars (July 14)



I am really excited about our upcoming 2025-26 wrestling season!

By the time this newsletter comes out, we may only be a day away from seeing the Oklahoma Sooners in the Bryce Jordan Center, our first dual of this season.

Let me just list some of the things that I believe will make this a Penn State wrestling season to remember. Keep in mind I have been a die-hard Penn State wrestling fan since 1953. Here goes!

1 Our Nittany Lions will be wrestling four times in the BJC. I never saw that coming! Three dual meets with #23-ranked Oklahoma, 3rd-ranked Iowa and 5th-ranked Ohio State. Those rankings are of course pre-season rankings and may change before these duals occur.

The added plus this season is that the Big Ten Wrestling championships will be held in our very own Bryce Jordan Center.

As much as I like the atmosphere at the always-packed Rec Hall, I have grown to enjoy wrestling on the stage in BJC. You know, the lights, the often too-loud music and the big, big crowd of 15,998 Penn State fans. Well, probably 15,000 of them will be cheering for the guys in the blue and white singlets.

Roughly 10,000 more rabid wrestling fans can enjoy the wrestling skills of our guys in the BJC than they could in good old Rec Hall. Besides that, the bathrooms are nicer, the seats are more comfortable, etc. Last year, the B1G championship was held at Northwestern. Their venue was nice, but small. I think holding somewhere around 7,000 fans.

2 I was happy to have our schedule online earlier this season than usual. *The Penn State roster was just released!* In all my emails to folks on my wrestling email list, I keep saying the same things. ***I think this can easily be the best team Penn State has ever put on the mat.*** There may be a bit of mystery about who will be our starters at 141 and 157, but I do not think it matters much which of our guys start, and which of them redshirt. At 141, the two guys competing are probably going to be Davis and Ono. At 157, the two guys would be Kasak and Duke. Maybe our very good coaching staff has already solved the dilemma, who knows?

Since our starting line-up generally is not finalized until early January, let me just make a comment or two about what I think this year's team may achieve.

I am thinking a new record team score, another 10 All-Americans and as many as five NCAA Champions. Lofty expectations, I know, but that is what we have come to expect from the best coaches, best wrestling staff and of course, the best wrestlers in the country.

3 I would be remiss if I did not mention how easy it was for me to get my wrestling tickets. This is probably only true for the 6,500 fans who are lucky enough to have season tickets to wrestling in Rec Hall. Penn State sent an email with the same Rec Hall seats we've had for about 30 years. Included were the seats we had last season in the BJC. Other than having to pay more for the seats, I only had to make a few clicks.

True the tickets will be electronic, but that seems to work for me.

***BRING ON THOSE SOONERS!!!
I AM READY TO SHOUT THREE, THREE!!!
ROAR LIONS ROAR!!!***

Casey Cunningham summed it up in his Oct. 26 Instagram post: "With that, our 2024-25 season has come to a close!" Penn State and the NLWC represented the United States in 15 of the 30 weight classes for the U20, U23 and Senior World Championships winning 11 medals – six gold, two silver, and three bronze medals. Let the folkstyle season begin!

Many Penn State wrestling fans understand that wrestling IS a year-round sport. Others think that wrestling season ends with the NCAA tournament and the reality of that finally hits at the awards luncheon. We re-live the enchantment of the season as the team video plays around us. We wait in line for photos with our favorite wrestlers. Everyone eats lunch and listens to the planned program.

We watch as the wrestlers names are called – one-by-one – to collect their plaques and statues. We watch them walk across the stage, receive their awards and pose for photos. Some will speak from the podium and describe their time at Penn State. All-Americans will pose for a group photo as will the Seniors. And, lastly, all the wrestlers present will gather for the team photo! The season really IS over!!

No more pre-match socials. No more dimmed lights and upbeat music while waiting for our Lions to hit the mat in Rec Hall. No more haze, light beams and rotating headlights in the BJC. **Wrestling season is OVER!! OR IS IT???**

IF... we listen to our coaches and watch our wrestlers, we'll quickly learn that the only thing that ended that day in April was the college (aka folkstyle) wrestling season for 2024-2025. While many wait for college wrestling to start again, Penn State coaches and Penn State wrestlers were just starting their freestyle season.

Penn State's freestyle season started about a month after the 2025 NCAA tournament with three PSU wrestlers competing in the U23 Pan American Championships in Queretaro, Mexico, followed by nine wrestlers competing in the CLAW U.S. Open Championships in Las Vegas. The three wrestlers who competed in the U23 PanAms all claimed gold medals and four of the nine wrestlers who competed in the CLAW U.S. Opens earned titles.

On May 16-27, five members of the Nittany Lion wrestling team/ Penn State Olympic Regional Training Center competed in the U.S. Team Trials in Louisville, Kentucky. Four wrestlers advanced to the finals and three

of them won their respective weight classes which allowed them to advance to June's Final X. Levi Haines, Kyle Dake and Josh Barr each earned spots in Final X.

Eight members of the Lions wrestling team/ Penn State Olympic RTC competed at the 2025 U23 National Championships and U20 World Team Trials in Geneva, Ohio, May 31-June 1. Twin brothers Connor and Cole Mirasola each earned spots on the U20 World Team. Joe Sealy placed third in the challenge bracket and fourth overall. Five wrestlers took part in the U23s, including new PSU team member Rocco Welsh who won the U23 national title with a 7-0 mark. Connor Pierce, Sam Beckett, Dawson Bundy and Ty Watson also competed.

On June 14, seven members of the Lions wrestling team/ Penn State Olympic RTC competed at 2025 Final X in Newark. Josh Barr, Kyle Dake, Levi Haines, Luke Lilledahl, Mitchell Mesenbrink, Kyle Snyder and Carter Starocci all clinched spots on the U.S. National team. In addition, Haines and Snyder earned spots on the 2025 U.S. World Team by winning a best-of-three series at their respective weight classes.

Final X determined the 2025 U.S. World Team in both men's and women's freestyle disciplines. The top two U.S. athletes in each weight class wrestled a best-of-three series to determine the U.S. representatives at the 2025 Senior World Championships in Zagreb, Croatia.

In a July email from Cunningham, he said all were back from the April-June competitions and were ready to compete again in mid-July. First up were the U20 Pan Am Championships in Lima, Peru, on July 12.

Brothers Connor and Cole Mirasola and Will Henckel all claimed freestyle crowns. Team USA won the team title as five additional wrestlers claimed gold for the U.S.

The next event in which Penn State had competitors was in a ranking series event held in Budapest, Hungary, July 17. The



Lilledahl in Budapest Ranking Series; UWW PHOTO

"Budapest Ranking Series" serves as the primary team selection event for most countries heading into the World Championships. Rather than conducting domestic trials, nations use this international competition to identify their top wrestlers for each weight class.

Luke Lilledahl and Levi Haines both competed at this event, each coming away with gold medals. Cunningham said that "This trip was a great opportunity to get in some matches. It gave our wrestlers a chance to wrestle great competitors from all over the world before they headed to the world championships in August."

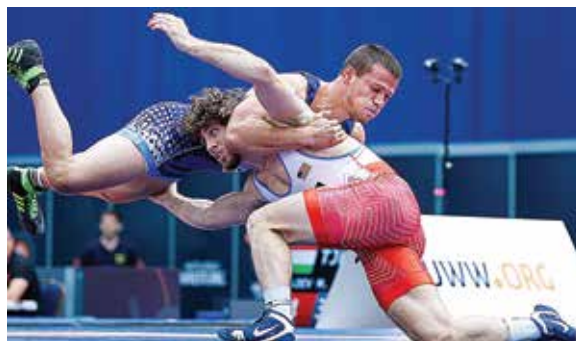
Next up for five Penn State wrestlers were the U20 World Championships held Aug. 17-20 in Samokov, Bulgaria. All seven wrestlers brought medals home: gold for incoming freshman Marcus Blaze and P.J. Duke; silver for incoming freshman Will Henckel; and bronze for both Connor and Cole Mirasola.

The U20 USA team won the team title and broke the record for the most champions ever!

It was a great performance by the USA team and, in particular, the young wrestlers who will be a big part of Penn State wrestling over the next 4-5 years. This tournament is probably the second toughest world championship, second only to the Senior Worlds.

Two more Nittany Lions added even more hardware on Friday, Aug. 22, taking the total number of medals won this week to seven.

Mitchell Mesenbrink and Rocco Welsh, an offseason transfer from Ohio State, each took to the mat for Team USA at the U23 Junior Pan Am Championships in Asunción, Paraguay. Mesenbrink's 3-0 run, all tech falls, and Welsh's 3-0 run, with



Haines in Budapest Ranking Series; UWW PHOTO



Penn State's U20 World Championships' team (L-R: Connor Mirasola, Marcus Blaze, Cole Mirasola, P.J. Duke and Will Henckel; PSU PHOTO



Duke, Snyder and Haines at Sr. Worlds; UWW PHOTO



Haines lifting Bahrain's Saipudinov; UWW PHOTO

two tech falls, earned gold medals for both wrestlers.

In September, about three weeks after the U20s, were the Senior World Championships in Zagreb, Croatia. Three PSU/NLWC wrestlers competed. NLWC's Kyle Snyder has competed in many world championships so this was an opportunity for him to get back on top of the podium. He won another gold medal to be added to his collection by beating two guys who'd beaten him within the last year.

Levi Haines and P.J. Duke competed for the first time in the championships. Haines, who still has another year of college wrestling, won silver defeating a world champ along the way.

Duke, a true freshman for Penn State, lost to the returning world champion in a great match. When his opponent lost in the semis, Duke was eliminated based on international wrestling rules. Duke wrestled a great tournament and continued to impress.

With two of the three world championships complete, PSU wrestlers were back in school and participating in official practices for the upcoming college season. There was just one more championship to go to finish out the 2024-25 wrestling season.

Seven Penn Staters took part in the U23 World Championships freestyle events that started Oct. 24 in Novi Sad, Serbia. Luke Lilledahl, Marcus Blaze, P.J. Duke, Mitchell Mesenbrink, Levi Haines, Rocco Welsh and Josh Barr all competed at the final world championship of the season.

CONTINUED ON PG 20

Mesenbrink won gold at 74kg and began the tournament with three straight technical superiority wins. He took on Japan's Aoyagi in the semis, posting a 7-4 win to advance to the title bout where he took on Turkey's Ozmus and roared to a 12-2 first period tech to win the gold medal.

Lilledahl took gold at 57kg by winning his first two bouts, moving him into the semis. He then posted a 7-1 win over UWW's Ondar before taking on Japan's Kikuchi in the finals, winning 4-0.

With this most recent win, Lilledahl has been in five straight age-group finals and is the only American male to have won consecutive age-group titles in U17, U20 and U23 world championships!

Haines won gold at 79kg by winning his first two bouts, moving him into the semis where he downed UWW's Daudov 11-4 to advance to finals. Haines met Turkey's Yaprek in the title bout and rolled to an 11-1 technical superiority win.

Haines told USA Wrestling, "I made improvements from Seniors and I'll get better for the next competition and get better for the next one after that. Competition is the best practice."

Duke took bronze at 70kg, reeling off three straight wins to start his tournament, advancing him to the semifinals. He then lost 14-4 to Azerbaijan's Heybatov to

"I feel like I'm becoming a more emotionally sound and fearless competitor out there," Mesenbrink told USA Wrestling. "Kind of a controlled force, and a by-product of that is just enjoying it more."



Mesenbrink turning Japan's Aoyagi; UWW PHOTO



Haines maintains control of Turkey's Yaprak; UWW PHOTO



Lilledahl wrestling UWW's Ondar; UWW PHOTO

"I just want to keep getting better and that's all I focus on," Lilledahl told USA Wrestling. "I have the results already and the results will keep coming."



Duke taking down Armenia's Margaryan; UWW PHOTO



Cunningham has said that the "secret weapon behind it all at USA Wrestling is Coach Joe Russell. He serves the athletes and coaches, he's selfless, loves wrestling and just gets it. He is the man!

Congrats Coach!"

Cunningham watches as Russell looks on from behind; UWW PHOTO



Cody Sanderson, Duke and USA wrestling coach Russell; UWW PHOTO

slip into a bronze medal bout. There he faced off against Armenia's Margaryan, pinning the Armenian at 2:53 in the first period.

Welsh went 2-1 at 86kg. He began the tournament with two straight tech superiority wins before losing a tough 7-4 bout to Iran's Rahmani Firouzjael in the quarters. The Iranian then lost a tough 2-1 match in the semis and Welsh's tournament came to an end with a 2-1 record.

Barr went 1-1 at 92kg before bowing out with an injury. He opened the tournament with an 11-1 technical superiority over Turkey's Tokgoz. In his next match, he was leading Iran's Azimi 3-1 when he sustained an injury while being taken down by Azimi. Barr lost that bout and although he was pulled into the repechage, he withdrew from the tournament due to the injury.

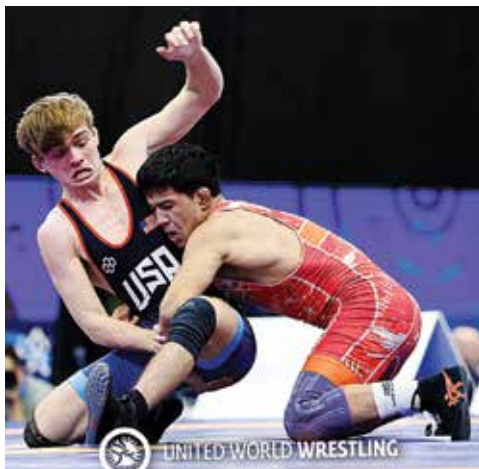
Blaze competed at 65kg and lost a hard fought 4-2 bout to Kyrgyzstan's Uulu in his first bout. Blaze then needed Uulu to advance to the finals in order to get pulled into the repechage. Uulu won his next two bouts but lost a close one in the semis, ending Blaze's tournament run.

Four of the seven Nittany Lions brought home U23 World Championships and gold medals, and another won bronze. Of Team USA's ten wrestlers, seven were current Nittany Lions. With Jax Forrest's win in the Finals, Team USA locked up the U23 Worlds Men's Freestyle title!

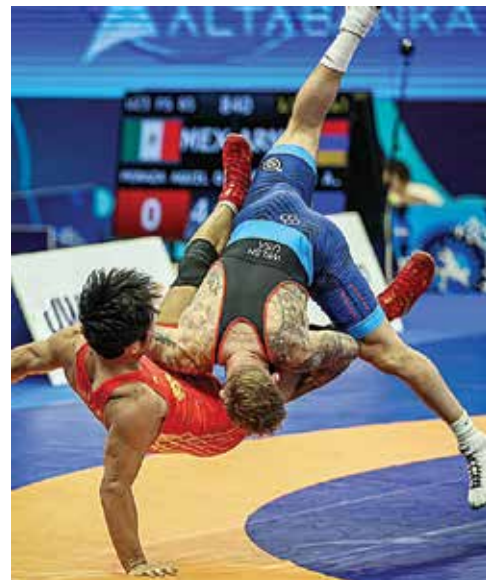
Cunningham shared "It was very cool having seven Penn State guys representing the United States at the World Championships. It was a fun trip for sure!"



Barr maintaining control over Turkey's Tokgoz;
UWW PHOTO



Blaze trying to fight off Kyrgyzstan's Uulu;
UWW PHOTO



Welsh controlling China's Minshui
Liang; DURWOOD TENNY PHOTO

Haines told USA Wrestling, *"I made improvements from Seniors and I'll get better for the next competition and get better for the next one after that. Competition is the best practice."*

It was an action-packed summer with lots of competition and opportunities for learning, improving and growing. Cunningham said that Penn State has "a group of very committed guys that just continue to work and evolve because they love it. We are very excited about the group that will represent Penn State this year and their commitment to being great."

Freestyle competitions are finished and the wrestling schedule has been released. The 2024-2025 season has now ended and the focus turns to the 2025-2026 college wrestling season again! Penn State welcomes the Oklahoma Sooners to their opening dual on Friday, Nov. 14, in the Bryce Jordan Center.

NOW... let's go have some fun! GO LIONS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

LION MAT FACT #1 ANSWER: David Taylor at 91.2%.

The top seven on the list, and all wrestlers from the top ten, came from Cael Sanderson's era, with current assistant coach Nick Lee ranked at number ten.

LION MAT FACT #2 ANSWER: Dr. Jim Martin with 155.

This record is unlikely to ever be broken as very few Penn State starting wrestlers – or for that matter, any wrestlers from other schools – will wrestle anywhere close to that number of matches in their careers.

2025-2026 PSU/PSWC Schedules

Compiled by Jennie Tate

Penn State Wrestling recently announced its schedule for the 2025-2026 wrestling season. Penn State will have seven home dual meets and will serve as host for the 2026 Big Ten Championships in March. The Nittany Lions will compete four times in the BJC – three times in dual meets, opening the season there when the Oklahoma Sooners come to town on Nov. 14 for a 7:00 p.m. dual meet.

The next weekend, Penn State travels to Army West Point to compete in the Black Knight Invite on Sunday, Nov. 23. Penn State then visits Drexel in Philadelphia on Friday, Dec. 5, for a 7:30 p.m. dual meet.

The Nittany Lions return to Happy Valley two days later for their annual match-up against longtime Eastern rival Lehigh. The Nittany Lions and Mountain Hawks will meet on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 1:00 p.m. in Rec Hall.

Penn State then heads west to Laramie to face the Wyoming Cowboys on Saturday, Dec. 13 at 8:00 p.m. They close out the first semester on Saturday, Dec. 20, at the Journeyman Collegiate Duals in Nashville, Tenn. Penn State will face North Dakota State and Stanford at 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Penn State dives into the B1G season wrestling in January with five duals in 15 days to start the conference slate. They begin the B1G season at home in Rec Hall, hosting Rutgers on Saturday, Jan. 10. The lions get on the road for away duals at Iowa (Iowa City) on Friday, Jan. 16, and Northwestern (Evanston) on Sunday, Jan. 18.

The following weekend, Penn State hosts Indiana on Friday, Jan. 23, in Rec Hall, before heading to Maryland on Sunday, Jan. 25, for a dual with the Terrapins in College Park. Penn State then welcomes Nebraska to the BJC on Friday, Jan. 30, to close out the January portion of the schedule.

February begins with Penn State traveling to Michigan for a dual on Friday, Feb. 6. The Nittany Lions close out the B1G dual slate the following weekend by hosting Ohio State on Friday, Feb. 13, in the third BJC dual of the year.

The Nittany Lions end the regular season by hosting Princeton in Rec Hall on Friday, Feb. 20, at 7:00 p.m.

Penn State will serve as the host institute for the 2026 B1G Wrestling Championships. The two-day event will take place in the BJC on Saturday and Sunday, March 7-8. The 2026 NCAA Wrestling Championships will take place on Thursday through Saturday, March 19-21, in Cleveland's Rocket Arena.

Two PSWC bus trips are planned for this wrestling season: (1) an overnight trip to the Black Knight Invite at Army West Point on Sunday, Nov. 23., and (2) another overnight to the mid-March NCAA tournament in Cleveland. More details, including costs, can be found at the PSWC website: <https://pennstatewrestlingclub.org/>.

PSWC's Newsletter & Photo Committees

Jennie Tate

PSWC's Newsletter & Photo Committees Penn State Wrestling Club's newsletter and photography committees work very close together throughout the year and are chaired by the same person. With that being said, we are excited for the 2025-2026 college wrestling season and to watch our Nittany Lion wrestlers do what they do best! And to tell the rest of the world about them!!

Over three years ago, past club president Harvey Manbeck took over the newsletter and developed a well-functioning process. Significant changes and improvements were made – and

hopefully noticed by all you readers. We're still making a few enhancements to have a consistent product moving forward. This process will also help us be more digitally compatible.

While I personally have experience with editing and writing, 90% of it was in STEM-type environments and scrutinized closely by upper-level management and sponsors. I seem to attack my newsletter responsibilities in a similar manner. I depend on the committee members, writers and photographers to get the job done.

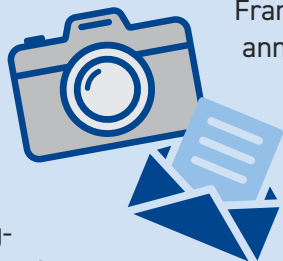
Most of the newsletter committee members remain the same. A few members have swapped titles and responsibilities but our commitment remains the same. In doing this, we've added a few people to our group, and we're still looking for a few more willing volunteers.

We're always looking for people who want to contribute. It can be an opinion, news, suggestion or special interest, so send it to use at the PSWC website at <https://pennstatewrestlingclub.org/>. You can find more info about the newsletter committee in the Editor's Notebook (page 2).

Date(s)	Time	Event		Notes
Nov. 14, 2025	6:00 p.m.	Oklahoma Dual	H	BJC, PSU Campus
Nov. 22, 2025	12:00 noon	PSWC bus departs for West Point	A	Details at PSWC website
Nov. 23, 2025	9:00 a.m.	Black Knight Invite	A	Christl Arena, West Point, N.Y.
Dec. 5, 2025	7:30 p.m.	Drexel Dual	A	Daskalakis Athletic Ctr, Philadelphia
Dec. 7, 2025	1:00 p.m.	Lehigh Dual	H	Rec Hall, PSU Campus
Dec. 13, 2025	8:00 p.m.	Wyoming Dual	A	Arena-Auditorium, Laramie, Wyo.
Dec. 20, 2025	5:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	(Journeyman Duals) North Dakota State followed by Stanford	N	Ensworth First Campus, Nashville, Tenn.
Jan. 10, 2026	4:00 p.m.	Rutgers Dual	H	Rec Hall, PSU Campus
Jan. 16, 2026	7:00 p.m.	Iowa Dual	A	Carver-Hawkeye Arena, Iowa City
Jan. 18, 2026	8:00 p.m.	Northwestern Dual	A	Welsh-Ryan Arena, Evanston
Jan. 23, 2026	7:00 p.m.	Indiana Dual	H	Rec Hall, PSU Campus
Jan. 25, 2026	12:00 noon	Maryland Dual	A	University of Maryland, College Park
Jan. 30, 2026	8:00 p.m.	Nebraska Dual	H	BJC, PSU Campus
Feb. 6, 2026	6:00 p.m.	Michigan Dual	A	Crisler Center, Ann Arbor
Feb. 14, 2026	7:00 p.m.	Ohio State Dual	H	BJC, PSU Campus
Feb. 20, 2026	7:00 p.m.	Princeton Dual (Senior Day)	H	Rec Hall, PSU Campus
March 7-8, 2026	All Day	B1G Tournament	N	BJC, PSU Campus
March 19-22, 2026	TBA	PSWC bus departs for Cleveland	A	Details at PSWC website
March 20-21, 2026	All Day	NCAA Tournament	N	Rocket Arena, Cleveland
April 6, 2026	TBA	PSWC Awards Luncheon	H	Penn Stater Hotel
<i>*B1G tv coverage was just announced; check with your tv provider or the internet for details.</i>				

In addition to working on the newsletter, I've served as primary club photographer for a number of years. I mostly take action and family photos for the wrestlers' scrapbooks and PSWC's newsletter and website, but I also provide photos to various media outlets upon request.

It's not always easy or affordable for me to get to some wrestling events. I've developed some great working and personal relationships with other photographers who now assist me getting photos, allowing me to use them with proper credit.



One person I've worked closely with is Lloyd (Bob) McCully, who's now part of the photography and newsletter committees. McCully is a Clearfield County native and grew up as a Penn State wrestling fan. His first experience listening to Penn State wrestling was on WPXI on his Channel Master radio. Fran Fisher did the play-by-play, announcing for wrestlers like Clyde Frantz and Andy Matter.

McCully took up photography in the early '70s as Moshannon Valley's yearbook photographer.

He was hooked! After 40 years in the auto industry, he restarted his photography. He's worked with Tom Elling, Norm Palovcsik and me since 2019 and is now a photographer for Tom's Wrestling Page and the Pennsylvania Wrestling Round Up magazine. He's also been helping me with the PSWC Facebook pages and does a great job!

Please reach out to Bob if you see him – and welcome him to The Update and Photo committees.

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- > Receive Penn State Wrestling News (THE UPDATE)
- > Get-Together With Other Wrestling Fans
 - At home-meet socials, end-of-year awards luncheon, etc.
 - On chartered out-of-town bus trips
 - At tournament socials
- > Access Block Hotel Reservations at PSWC Events

Enrollment in the Penn State Wrestling Club May 1, 2025 – April 30, 2026

Name: _____ # of Family Members _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone #: _____

All members can read and print PSWC newsletters from the PSWC Website

☐ Check here for mailed, printed copy of newsletter – Note that printing/ mailing may delay delivery up to two weeks.

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☐ Regular Family Membership	\$35.00	_____
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☐ Honorary Associate Head Wrestling Coach*	\$500.00 – \$999.00	_____
☐ Honorary Head Wrestling Coach*	\$1,000.00 & Higher	_____

Please make checks payable to **Penn State Wrestling Club**, and mail to

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**All contributions above membership fee are tax deductible*