

VALLEY INDEPENDENT SENTINEL



Derby's Jadach To Be Inducted Into Wrestling Hall Of Fame

By Melvin Mason | Apr 5, 2010

Derby — Ask Walter “Buster” Jadach who deserves the credit for the Derby High School wrestling team’s success and he won’t talk about himself.

“It’s not about me. It’s about the kids involved in my program,” he said, honoring the hundreds of young men who have donned Derby singlets and sweated and grappled against some of the best Connecticut has to offer.

Jadach’s wrestling peers throughout the state, however, will say that he deserves a lot of the praise for keeping the small high school wrestling program a consistent winner.

Which is why Jadach will be remembered forever in the National Wrestling Hall of Fame.

Jadach, 59, Derby’s coach for 30 years, will be inducted into the Hall of Fame during the NWHOF Connecticut chapter’s induction ceremony at 5 p.m. Saturday at Foxwoods Resort and Casino in Mashantucket.

He is one of six men from Connecticut who will enter the Hall of Fame during the ceremony.

Jadach, with 499 victories, is the state’s all-time wins leader. His teams have also won four Connecticut Class S state championships and four Southern Connecticut Conference titles. The success comes from years of learning about wrestling maneuvers and techniques, watching film and attending wrestling clinics.

He served as an assistant coach under Jimmy Matthews for five years before taking over as the head coach in 1980.

For all his success, Jadach, a 1967 Derby High graduate, never wrestled in high school. Yet he stays with it because he's learned a lot, is still learning and loves teaching and seeing his wrestlers excel.

"It's been one nice happy family for 30 years and I'm hoping to keep it going for a few more," he says with a smile. "I'm still having fun. The kids are great and it's still a pleasure to coach."

Jadach said it can be challenging to get young men to take part in a sport where they're out there alone. "Wrestling is hard. You have to face your friends in school and say 'I lost' or 'I won today.' It's why a lot of kids would rather play in a team-oriented sport," Jadach said. "You're the lone person on the mat in wrestling. It takes a different person to do wrestling and we've got a lot of tough kids."

Ask any of Jadach's peers and they'll tell you Jadach deserves plenty of credit for the Red Raiders' success.

Ted Oczkowski, president of the Connecticut chapter of the NWHOF, said Derby's success on the mat is "just a reflection of how great Buster is."

"You can't do what Buster's done over 30 years without being a great person," Oczkowski said. "He's top shelf. He's been able to sustain a wrestling program in one of the smallest schools in the state for 30 years."

John Vino, a member of the state's Hall of Fame Committee and a 2003 NWHOF inductee, said Jadach's success comes from connecting with his wrestlers and being a great teacher.

"He knows how to connect with kids from freshmen all the way through the seniors," Vino said. "He does more psychological coaching with his team than coaching. He's almost like a father and a big brother for the kids."

Jadach admits he will be nervous when he speaks on Saturday. But he said he'll be touched to see so many of his friends, family and his former wrestlers – his extended family – on hand.

It will be particularly nice to see Paul Beilette, a member of his 1984 state championship team. Beilette has cerebral palsy and fought hard all year in matches. Jadach remembers seeing his team lift up Beilette, a junior varsity wrestler that year, while Beilette held the championship trophy.

That moment, he said, encapsulated the "Family" aspect of the Derby team.

"It's nice. It's a dream come true," Jadach said. "I'm nervous, but I'm excited about Saturday."

Tickets for the Hall of Fame ceremony are \$75 and can be purchased at the [NWHOF Connecticut chapter Web site](#).