

Dear Coach –

Every year I try to reach out early to the country's East Coast wrestling coaches. I hope by doing so, I'll give you time to set your calendars and plan accordingly. Ideally we try to create a platform for the East Coast wrestling community to witness and experience wrestling greatness. 2008 will echo these efforts.

Think of this letter as a call to duty...a call to give due diligence. A call to show solidarity and support for the sport with which we all say we are one. Collegiate wrestling has been decimated over the years by certain interpretations of Title IX. Case in point – Albany, NY. We do not have a single collegiate wrestling program within a 60-mile radius of Albany. We often hear people complain of the end results, but will we take preventive measures? Will we walk the walk? The Albany, NY area coaches have embraced this mindset and it has paid huge dividends for our wrestling community, but it's time to think larger than this. We need the same support and sense of obligation and urgency from the entire East Coast. We need your help and energy to make these opportunities a reality. The truth of the matter is we all talk the talk by saying, "I love wrestling or I'm involved in wrestling." but perhaps we all could walk the walk a little better. If wrestling people don't show up to see Iowa, Oklahoma State, Penn State, Edinboro, Central Michigan or Missouri in New York this fall, who will? Again, it's our burden and responsibility to spread the word of wrestling like gospel.

Furthermore, it is no secret that the eastern part of the country has become a prime recruiting ground for big-time collegiate wrestling programs. With that said, it becomes incumbent on us that we showcase and highlight our athletes to the collegiate programs through avenues such as the Journeymen/BRUTE Northeast Collegiate Duals, Sprawl & Brawl, John Smith's Oklahoma State Camp (Cobleskill, NY), and the Brands Brothers' Iowa Wrestling Camp at Binghamton University (Vestal, NY).

Finally, wrestling season seems far away, but the opportunities for wrestling in the East are being cultivated and developed as you read this letter. As coaches, it is our duty to galvanize our athletes and expose them to greatness. There is greatness outlined within this letter and I hope you'll spread the word. We need to be passionate, or else these opportunities will dry up and never present themselves again. Last year was a successful year, but again the support was local. Please embrace the philosophy articulated within this letter. Your actions as a coach and ambassador of the sport can directly affect the East Coast wrestling landscape! By supporting these endeavors, especially the two collegiate dual events and camps, we make a statement and speak volumes to the nation! Solid numbers are what most impress the leaders of our sport and it ultimately gives them a reason to make a trip to "Non Traditional Wrestling Towns." Help me make this an annual set of events and not a one-time wonder.

Thanks for listening.



Sincerely,
Frank Popolizio
Journeymen & Shenendehowa Wrestling
Frankiepesce@hotmail.com
518-374-3901

BIG NEWS & OPPORTUNITIES IN STORE FOR THE EAST COAST WRESTLING COMMUNITY

PLEASE BRING YOUR HIGH SCHOOL TEAM

Journeymen Wrestling's Club Summer Duals (June 7, 2008) – Eight club teams will wrestle at Shenendehowa High School, Clifton Park, New York. Four matches per team guaranteed.

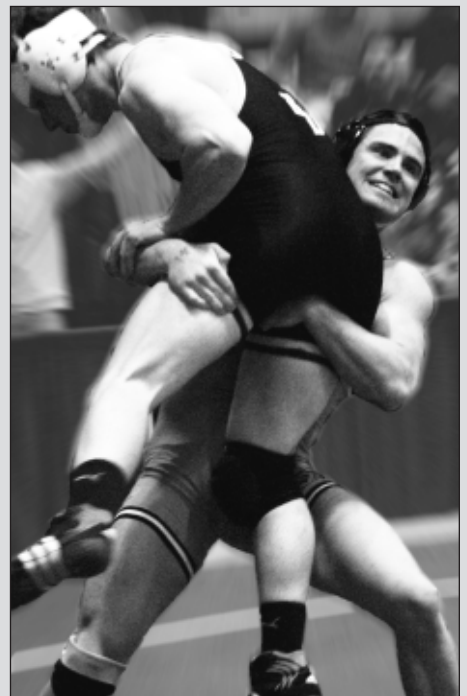
John Smith's Oklahoma State Wrestling Camp (June 28-July 6, 2008) – Six-time world and Olympic champion, John Smith, brings his staff and wrestlers to host school, University at Cobleskill (NY). Three camps within a 10-day period. Meet the cowboys this summer and then cheer them on in the fall at the Journeymen/BRUTE Northeast Collegiate Duals.

Brands Brothers' Iowa Wrestling Camp (July 13-17, 2008) – Hosted by Binghamton University (Vestal, NY). Tom, Terry and the Hawkeye staff and wrestlers join forces with Binghamton Wrestling to create one of the top camps on the east coast. Meet the Hawkeyes this summer and then cheer them on in the fall at the Journeymen/BRUTE Northeast Collegiate Duals.

Journeymen/BRUTE Sprawl and Brawl (November 23, 2008) – Hosted at Binghamton University (Vestal, NY). Four rounds of dual meet competition. 2008 features Big 10 powerhouse Penn State, Edinboro, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, Clarion, Rutgers, Columbia, Wagner, Binghamton, Upper Iowa (D-II) and AIC (D-II).

Northeast Duals High School Scrimmage (November 28, 2008) –

HIGH SCHOOL TEAMS NEEDED We're looking for 10 out-of-area teams (area being Albany, NY) to participate in our Pre-Northeast Collegiate Duals scrimmage. This year, we will have six mats at Hudson Valley Community College. We will have four teams per two-hour block. Preference is given to teams planning on attending the Northeast Collegiate Duals on November 29, 2008.



Journeymen/BRUTE Northeast Collegiate Duals (November 29, 2008) – Hosted at Hudson Valley Community College (Troy, NY). Don't miss it – Widely recognized as the "Toughest Wrestling East of the Mississippi." It is considered the premier early-season collegiate wrestling tournament in the nation. 17 teams square off in 30 pre-determined dual meets on six mats over five rounds. There isn't a bad seat in the house. 3,000-seat capacity.

2008 features: Iowa, Oklahoma State, Missouri, Central Michigan, Old Dominion, Lehigh, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina-Greensboro, Bucknell, Harvard, Brown, Bloomsburg, Binghamton, Drexel, American and Appalachian State.

NY State High School Early Season Duals (December 13, 2008) –

HIGH SCHOOL TEAMS NEEDED **ONE OF THE TOP DUAL MEET TOURNAMENTS IN NEW YORK STATE.** Housed at Shenendehowa High School (Clifton Park, NY). Teams already expressing interest: Waverly, Valley Central, Mahopac, Shenendehowa, Wayne, John Jay, Islip and Port Jarvis.

W.I.N.



Northeast Duals is becoming a home for the holidays

By Jason Bryant, W.I.N. Columnist

You know that feeling you get when you've eaten one too many plates of turkey, stuffing and mashed potatoes. That feeling that makes you gravitate towards the couch, put your feet up on the cushions – even though you're not supposed to – and grab any fluffy pillow around? That feeling is a right of passage during this holiday season.

Sure we give thanks and many of us travel to see family and fight the holiday traffic while wrestling season is nestled up close to Thanksgiving and later in December for Christmas. This means not everyone's going to have the "itis" after chowing down.

Thankfully (no pun intended) for those of us wrestling nuts, there's wrestling to be had on the holiday weekend. Big props to those wrestlers who might have had a piece or two of turkey while keeping their weight down. Why? They gave us quite a show over the weekend.

In four of the past five years, I've been at a tournament or an event the Saturday following Thanksgiving. In 2004, my last night working the sports desk at the *Daily Press* in Newport News, Va., was Thanksgiving. The next morning, I was in a van heading to Lock Haven, Pa., for Mat Town. I also did the same trek in 2001. This year, Mat Town went off without me. It's lost a bit of its luster after switching to an open format, but one thing that's definitely filled that wrestling gap in our stomachs has been the Journeymen/Brute Northeast Duals.

So with a big travel weekend awaiting, Thanksgiving was relegated to my third year dining in the Philly suburbs and the house of my friend's parents in Horsham, Pa. Highlights included a trip to the Horsham Inn and endless hours of Guitar

Hero. I'd only played this twice before – including once at the All-Star Classic last year with Jake Herbert, Jarrod King and Matt Storniolo – all of whom dominate the game, and in turn, really should get out more.

So after trading off the "guitar" with my friend Nate and his younger sister, I stuffed myself and prepped for the upcoming trip to Troy...and thankfully the Black Friday sale at Best Buy ended up with an early Christmas present to myself: a GPS for my travels.

Frank Popolizio, brother of Binghamton coach Pat Popolizio, has put together a solid – very solid – event in New York that has continually grown the last five years. Last year, Hofstra surged into prominence after knocking off No. 1 Minnesota. This year, it was Maryland and coach Pat Santoro slaying No. 5 Michigan.

It's not a tournament, it's more of a jamboree of sorts. Fourteen teams wrestled on six mats at the well-kept Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, N.Y. The competition was just solid.

Frank is always looking to make the event better. He's soliciting advice from coaches, fans, media, etc., to see what else he can do to improve it. Right now, he's got the right mix of teams with national and local appeal.

Event announcer Bryan Hazard, the head wrestling coach at Robinson Secondary in the Fairfax, Va., area, constantly made note to the many Journeymen Wrestling Club members taking the mats for their respective college teams.



Jason Bryant

The way Frank is doing it reminds me of how the Virginia Duals started. Get the kids from the local area recruited to wrestle in college, then bring them back to wrestle in front of the home fans.

While that's not Frank's primary goal, it's a by-product of a strong wrestling area, a strong wrestling club and a driven event director.

Last year, Frank brought in Minnesota.

This year, the big guns were Michigan, Oklahoma State and a return trip by Central Michigan. I think Chippewa coach Tom Borrelli might take exception if I'd left out his team as a "big gun," because, right now, they're just tough, real tough (moving up to No. 5 in the Nov. 26 W.I.N. rankings).

It could be called parity, it could be called balance, it could just be November, but off the top of my head, I can count a handful of returning All-Americans that were defeated. Hofstra even brought their pep band, which had plenty to cheer about after the Pride knocked off three All-Americans in their dual with Oklahoma State before ultimately losing 20-16 to the fourth-ranked Cowboys.

Jeff Blatnick, a New York native, was on the call with Scott Casber of Takedown Radio, adding more credence to the event.

The event had you scrolling from mat to mat seeing ranked wrestler take out ranked wrestler, unranked wrestler picking off ranked wrestler and falls that swung momentum in the totally opposite direction.

Simply put, the Journeymen/Brute Northeast Duals gave you a full stomach of wrestling on a day typically known for leftovers and turkey salad sandwiches.

For those of you who are reading this and are within a reasonable driving distance of the Albany region, you should have been there. And if you weren't there, make plans to be there next year.

The weekend ended with two duals in Philadelphia, where Virginia Tech topped Drexel but lost to Penn. But I ended the weekend right – with "the itis." I used the GPS to direct me to Geno's Steaks in Philly. Yeah, that's how you end Thanksgiving; a stomach full of food and wrestling.

(Jason Bryant is the lead writer/webmaster for InterMat and the 2007 W.I.N. Magazine Wrestling Journalist of the Year. The views expressed in his column are not necessarily the views of W.I.N. Magazine or Bryant's parent company, the National Wrestling Coaches Association.)

