

Journeyman Wrestling Produces National Champions and All-Americans



Hello Coach and Wrestling supporter. I hope this note finds you in good spirits. I'm sure your "off-season" has been busy like ours. Journeyman Wrestling is coming off its most productive and intense off season to date. The spring and summer seasons have been highlighted with strong performances at two national tournaments, an exchange trip to Naples Italy and an immensely successful camp operation. The formula of the "4Cs" (Club, Camps, Clinics and Competitions) is working extremely well in our region of the country. As a matter of fact, those "4 Cs" have produced a very positive and unexpected byproduct—media relations. Since wrestling activities have increased tenfold in our area, we've been able to catch the eye of all of the major media sources—Radio, Newspapers and News channels. In return, the story of wrestling is being told, which raises the awareness of wrestling, which in return promotes and elevates the sport! The bottom line is through participation from coaches and wrestling enthusiasts like you, we've been able to inspire and motivate the next generation. Contrary to yesteryears, it is now common for our athletes to transition into collegiate wrestling programs. Thank you once again for your continued support of Journeyman Wrestling. Please consider being a part of one of our endeavors in the future – the evidence is clearly illustrated in the articles below.



Frank Popolizio

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Austin Meys capped a superb performance by taking two of three matches in the final at 152 pounds, winning the National Cadets Freestyle Championship in Fargo, N.D.

Meys, a junior-to-be at Shenendehowa High who was representing **Journeyman Wrestling**, bested a field of 78 competitors to claim his national championship. **Side note—Hunter Meys (Shenendehowa), Austin Meys' older brother, was recently recognized by WIN Magazine for earning the prestigious Jr Schalles Award. The award goes to the Nation's most prolific high school pinner. Meys is on track to break the National Fall record by early next season.**

Journeyman Wrestling had competitors place in the Freestyle and Greco-Roman tournaments.

Zach Clemente, an incoming junior at LaSalle Institute, was fourth in Greco-Roman and sixth in Freestyle—earning All-American honors in both styles. Clemente wrestled in the junior division.

Michael Chaires, a Christian Brothers Academy graduate, placed sixth (Greco-Roman) and fifth (Freestyle), respectively.

Nate Graham from Ravena, who captured a state 171-pound Division II title in March, earned All-America honors with his second-place finish in Greco-Roman.

Chaires and Graham both earned scholarships to University of Virginia and Bloomsburg respectively.

Also competing with Journeyman Wrestling Club was Duaneburg stand-out Amy Whitbeck. Whitbeck earned a silver medal in Fargo, ND. This is her third national-level medal.

Journeyman Wrestling director and head coach Frank Popolizio said, "Obviously we're proud of our guys and their efforts; however, it's important to recognize that there are several coaches, variables, outside influences and intangibles that create a wrestler's success, Journeyman Wrestling is proud to be just a small part of the overall formula".

This is the second batch of National champions and All-Americans for Journeyman Wrestling this year. This past March, Zach Clemente (LaSalle) and Giuseppe Lanzi (Amsterdam) became National Champions in their respective grades at the NHSCA National Championships in Virginia Beach, VA. John Paris earned All-American honors by securing a fifth-place showing.



JWC sending wrestlers to Italy

by Bill Palmer—Gazette Sportswriter; First published Monday, June 18, 2007



NAPLES • ITALY

It's not typical summer school setting.

But a handful of teenagers from the Journeyman Wrestling Club will be furthering their athletic education when they spend a week in Naples, Italy, early next month.

"This will be a lot different from the local stuff we do," said Dan Riggi, who just completed his sophomore year at Scotia-Glenville High School. "There are not many times your coach will ask if you want to go to Italy."

Riggi and seven other JWC wrestlers will spend July 1-9 at a state-sponsored national training center. They'll work out with their Italian peers, and possibly another European team.

The trip sprung from a friendship between JWC founder and coach, Frank Popolizio and multiple Italian national champ Michele Liuzzi.

Popolizio was at the 2003 World Championships, trying to arrange for his younger brother, Pat, to get dual citizenship, which would allow him to compete for Italy.

"I grabbed the best guy on the Italian team to approach," said Popolizio, referring to Liuzzi, a 12-time world team member and two-time Olympian. "I started speaking broken Italian, he spoke broken English."

"We established a friendship because he was from the same region my father was from."

While his effort to help his brother didn't pan out, Popolizio maintained a relationship with Liuzzi, finally convincing him to participate in some JWC-sponsored clinics in the Capital Region.

"That's where the idea for this trip began," said Popolizio, who hopes to bring the Italian junior national team here next year as part of an exchange program.

Duanesburg's Brian Borst, Cobleskill-Richmondville's Rob Merchant, John Paris of Amsterdam, Zach Clement of LaSalle, Guilderland's Rob

Romeo, Whitehall's Zach Diekel and Ty White of Vermont will also make the trip overseas.

"It's going to be the experience of a lifetime," said Romeo, whose mother, Linda, will accompany the team. "I want to use this to expand my knowledge of the sport, see different styles."

"I've gone all over the state, but not overseas to wrestle," said Borst, who has made three trips to the state tournament.

Paris, who missed the entire 2006-2007 season with a knee injury, sees the trip as another chance to make up for lost time.

"I'm doing anything I can this spring and summer," said Paris, who placed sixth at the NHSCA sophomore nationals this spring. "I think I'll benefit a lot from this. This is another chance to learn something new."

Merchant and Riggi are looking to get an edge on future opponents.

"We're probably going to see some techniques we haven't see before," said Merchant, who will be a senior in the fall. "I'm really looking forward to it."

"Not many people are going to be there, so no one's going to know what we're learning there that we might be able to use this season," said Riggi.

Diekel's father, Paul, a former state high school champ and three-time All-American at Lehigh, knows how much the trip will benefit his son, who turned in a 29-13 record and fourth-place sectional showing in his first year of varsity competition.

"To be able to get international experience at that age is a huge benefit," said the elder Diekel, brother of Whitehall coach, Bob Diekel. "I was training at the Olympic training facility when I was in middle school, but I never got to go out of the country to wrestle."

"To get to travel and train with the Italian team is going to be great for Zach, for all of them. It's a great opportunity for them at this age."



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