

Collins named Coach of the Year

by **Joey Karlik**
Staff Writer

Ketchikan's Rick Collins received Head Coach of the Year for wrestling at the 2016 State Wrestling Tournament. Collins has coached 16 State Champions including Nate Fousel, John Hamilton and Nick Martin, each having multiple titles. More recent state champions include Marcus Martin in 2015 and Matthew Rodriguez 2016.

Collins started coaching in 1997 and stopped in 2005 to spend more time with his family and to raise their young children. Collins then came back to wrestling in 2014 when his kids were in 8th and 5th grade and when previous coach Bill McLaughlin left Ketchikan. Since his return, Collins has coached Kayhi to earn a stunning nine consecutive region championships.

Collins certainly wasn't the first person to coach the wrestling program. It started with Dennis Oliver back in 1966. In 1969 Frank Adame coached for about four to five years and won four region titles. Don Dillenburg was the next coach, coincidentally Dillenburg coached Collins himself. Afterwards, it was Kurt Keul who later went down to Schoenbar and got a tournament named after him. When Kurt left, Steve Mello took over in the late 80's. Miles Hancock came after Mello who was the last major coach before Rick Collins took over. He and right hand man Greg Karlik both left in 2005 to take care of their families and kids, which is when Bill McLaughlin stepped up. When Bill left, Collins and Karlik came back in 2014 and have coached ever since.

Before Collins took over, there were only three state champions: Mike Maxwell, Chuck Mallett, and Charlie Jeffery. Charlie was on the team with Collins when Dillenburg was coaching. Other than those three, Collins can take credit for coaching the state champions on the state champions board, which can be found on the left side of the



Rick Collins shakes hands with Norm Davis, the head of Alaska Wrestling Coach's Association.

Courtesy of Joey Karlik

gym next to the region champion banners. Collins says there's one exception, Nick Martin, and he gives that credit to Bill McLaughlin.

"One exception was Nick Martin. I coached him as a freshman, and then Bill came in and Nick went on to become a 3-time state champ," said Collins. "You have to give that one to Bill, but I take a tiny bit of credit just like all the assistant head coaches deserve for all the state champions."

Collins has very high praise of his coaching staff and is a key to his success.

"Anything you do like coaching or business, you have to surround yourself with excellent people," said Collins. "I have great assistants like: Greg Karlik, Joey Fama, and Eric Collins. We are also very lucky to have our former wrestlers come help out like: David Mann, Jess Boyd, Ross Sanford, and Matt

Hamilton so they can really develop things."

If you take a look at some of the recently outstanding wrestlers, many of them have been in wrestling ever since they were kids. For example, Max Collins, three-time region champion and Matthew Rodriguez, a 2016 state champion. However, there are some kids who haven't wrestled before. That did not stop them from beating out the competition. Vince Tenebro and Sean Tavares are two wrestlers that had no prior experience with wrestling, and turned out to be extremely good athletes. Collins revealed how he could recruit new people and turn them into state-placers.

"Vince Tenebro and Sean Tavares are naturally good athletes, and then there are the kids who aren't that good yet. There's definitely a natural talent factor. Part of being a good coach is identifying what cer-

tain wrestlers skill set is and trying to find out special skills that they will exceed in," said Collins.

"I personally try to recruit good athletes. A lot of wrestlers peak late. They aren't good naturally, but improve as they go throughout the program."

Collins has a specific qualities he looks for in new kids in order to bring out their inner wrestler.

"When I'm looking throughout the school, I'm looking for a lean strong kid with balance. You know, a kid who can multitask like people who can walk and chew gum," said Collins. "I'm also concerned about their cardiovascular system. When you get a kid who is small and strong like Vince or Sean, also likely to stay small and strong. They will become older and more mature compared to the other kids in their weight classes, and that's why they peaked early and will stay great."

Some other wrestlers weren't as successful their freshman and sophomore year but Collins believes they will become stars later in their Kayhi wrestling career.

"There will be other kids that will blossom their junior and senior year including: Max, Joey, Nate, Brayden, Cameron, and even Joey Rhoads, who came with us last year after he hadn't wrestled in a long time," said Collins. "It's all about putting in the time. In practice and outside of practice. If anything, it's that drilling is the most important thing we do. Drilling helps create muscle memory, which allows you to hit those moves quickly and effectively."

Coach Collins loves what he does and that's why he's so good. He loves wrestling, he breathes it, he thinks about it all the time. He is truly passionate about this sport. He is very different from all the other coaches.

Rick makes the wrestlers and their parents buy into the idea that they aren't just teammates trying to win. They are more than that. He strengthens the bonds between them. They are brothers. They are family. The reason he coaches so well? He does his own twist into normal wrestling that other coaches don't do.

"Everything you do in life you should put your personality stamp on it. You can't be somebody else. You can't just look at a pro or a college level coach and copy everything they do. Because it may not work with your personality. You need to be authentic," said Collins.

"If all you do is preach somebody else's stuff and I don't do anything unique I think the kids will see through that and it wouldn't be effective. If you do all that then you should end up better than they think they can be. I have pride in ourselves and I think very similar to the other programs. We deserve all those banners up there and the kids' names on that board."



Kings and Lady Kings home game schedule

January 27-28: Kayhi Kings v. Juneau Douglas Crimson Bears

January 27-28: Kayhi Lady Kings v. Lathrop Malemutes

February 3-4: Kayhi Lady Kings v. Thunder Mountain Falcons

February 24-25: Kayhi Kings v. Thunder Mountain Falcons

February 17-18: Kayhi Lady Kings v. Juneau Douglas Crimson Bears

