

# Gregg Quilty



**My older brother Jeff** introduced me to this great sport when I was in 3rd grade. Jeff was in 9th grade at the time, and had just joined his first wrestling team at Ardsley High School. Jeff would come back from practice each night and practice moves on me, while also teaching them to me. I would then practice these moves on my friends at school at recess, which build up my confidence, while earning plenty of respect from my school-mates. I could not wait to finally join our middle school team in 7th grade. My coach, Vinny Dacquino, was so much fun to be around. We had nearly 60 kids on the team and I knew more about wrestling than all of them, thanks to my brother and the Lehigh University team. At this time, Jeff was now away at school. He became the wrestling team manager of the powerful Lehigh team. He practiced with the team each day, and when he came home, he would always show me all the Lehigh technique. I would practice it all, as hard as I could every day, and it worked quite well. Before long, coach Dacquino was letting me demonstrate moves at our team practices. I was so excited about doing this that I had already decided that someday I would want to become a wrestling coach.

Almost every weekend for the next 4 years, my parents would drive me down to Lehigh to visit my brother. Coach Thad Turner was nice enough to let me sit on the team bench for the dual meets. This was a thrill beyond belief. I was in wrestling heaven. Witnessing capacity crowds

at Grace Hall, so loud you could not hear yourself speak. And the best part was that I was sitting next to legends like the Lieberman brothers, Bobby Weaver, Daryl Burley, Mike Brown, and Colin Kilrain. And they all treated me like a brother.

My childhood dream of becoming a major league baseball player had changed. I now wanted to become a wrestler. Grace Hall was like the Yankee stadium of wrestling, and I was in the front row every weekend. I became obsessed with the sport. I would read National Mat News and Amateur Wrestling News cover to cover, and even memorize the rankings for every weight class. As I entered high school, after an undefeated middle school career, I had dreams of being a future star for Penn State, Michigan, or the Iowa Hawkeyes. I went to summer camps where I was trained by Mark Lieberman, Bobby Weaver, and Daryl Burley. They helped me refine my technique, and improve my mental approach. Although in hindsight, I think I should have been a 3 time sectional champ, I did not actually win it until my undefeated senior year. But then my dream of being a NY state champ were shattered when I fractured my clavicle in team practice, the night before the state tournament. It was a difficult thing to deal with, but I think it motivated me even more to continue wrestling in college, which in turn, made me want to coach even more than ever. After spending a year in at UNC in Chapel Hill training under coaches Bill Lam and Carl Poff (who later taught my daughter at Lock haven University), I decided that I wanted to teach and coach in New York, so I transferred to Manhattan College. This is where I met Bob Annunziata, who helped me with the transfer process, and ended up coaching me at Manhattan. Many years later, Bob is the one who hired me at Horace Mann, where he is the director of athletics. Bob has been instrumental in helping me build the HM program in many ways.

Now, 33 years after wrestling my final match in college, I still love this sport more than ever. I have coached a varsity and middle school team simultaneously

for all of those years. The thing that keeps bringing me back is, not so much the victories, but the relationships I have built with so many others who love the sport like I do. The opposing coaches are all like brothers to me. I have so much respect and admiration for the officials. I appreciate the parents, who play such a huge role in the development of their children. But, of course, it's all about the wrestlers. Win or lose, these special athletes change from boys to men in a hurry, once they start wrestling. I have seen so many awkward students walk into my practices, who have little self confidence, and almost no athletic experience in any sport, but when they graduate high school, they always tell me that wrestling has changed their lives. They are now confident, physically strong, mentally tough, and ready to take on the world, regardless of what their career record was. This is what means the most to me in my coaching career. It's the things the wrestlers say to me when they are finished wrestling. They have all gained so many amazing qualities to take with them, as a result of being a dedicated wrestler. It always reminds me that coaching is not about winning championships, it's really just about building quality people, to continue working hard, and become successful in their world.

Wrestling is the most difficult of all sports. I sometimes think that my life would have been a lot easier if I had not coached wrestling for so long. But I am so grateful that I stuck with it. Wrestling has made me a much better person, and all the hard work has made me appreciate so many things, and so many people in my life. I would not be the person I am today without our wonderful sport of wrestling.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents. Richard and Marlene Quilty, may they rest in peace. They were two of the biggest wrestling fans New York State has ever seen. They were also two of the friendliest people you could meet at a Saturday tournament. They gave me the encouragement I needed to follow my dream. I never could have been able to achieve any of my accomplishments without them.