

TONY MELLINO

The Face of West Islip Wrestling

Tony Mellino's association with the sport of wrestling spans six decades, from his freshman year at West Islip High School in 1958, when he was introduced to the sport by Coach Fred Durt, to what is now his 40th year as a coach at his alma mater. Following his high school years where he was a four-year varsity starter, an All-League wrestler twice, and a Suffolk County finalist for Coach Charlie Davison, Tony wrestled for Hofstra University in 1963 and 1964. Upon graduation in 1966, he returned to West Islip to begin a career as educator and coach.

After serving an apprenticeship of eight years as an assistant, Tony became Varsity Wrestling coach in 1974. Entering what is now his 32 year at the helm, his teams have compiled a dual meet record of 300 wins, 109 losses, and 4 ties. In the highly competitive world of Section XI wrestling, West Islip turned out 48 individual league/conference champions, 257 league/conference place winners, eleven Suffolk County Champions, 56 Sectional place winners, three New York State individual titles, and eight State place winners. The Lions also brought home nine league/conference championships and, in 1986, won the Section XI Class B County Title. His teams' efforts led to Tony's eight "League Coach of the Year" awards and last year's "Suffolk County Wrestling Officials Coach of the Year" award. Coach Mellino is equally proud of the four teams that were honored with Section XI Sportsmanship Awards and the three squads that earned recognition as New York State Scholar-Athlete Teams.

Tony's passion for the sport of wrestling extends beyond his role as varsity coach. Along with his long-time friend and co-coach Stu Meyerson, he established the West Islip Kid Wrestling Program more than 30 years ago. Always deeply involved in the affairs of the Suffolk County Wrestling Coaches Association, Tony has served at various times as Secretary, Vice President, and President. He was Chairman of the original Section XI Seeding Committee and still serves on the Coaches Scholarship Committee. Tony's life-long



connection with the sport of wrestling includes not only his involvement as a competitor and as a coach, but as a devoted fan of the sport on the college and international levels as well. Coach Mellino is particularly proud of the fact that seventeen of his former wrestlers have gone on to careers as wrestling coaches at various levels, including current West Islip coaches, Nick LaGiglia, Jim Baucher, and Tom Rowers, and Varsity coaches Brad and Rick Brzezinski (Central Islip), Paul Harvey (Copiague), Mike Ferrugiani (Child Spring Harbor), and Tony Mellino, Jr. (Clarkston North). Many others have stayed connected with the sport of wrestling as kid coaches, officials, and enthusiastic parents of wrestlers.

Tony's career at West Islip High School has extended beyond the wrestling mat. In recognition of his career as a social studies teacher, he was presented with an Honorary

Lifetime Membership in the P.T.A. He has also received two Golden Apple pins from former students upon their induction into the National Honor Society. Tony is currently a faculty advisor to the Student Senate, and he has also coached junior high lacrosse and baseball; this past fall he received his fourth Boys Junior Varsity Soccer Coach of the Year Award.

Tony Mellino is deeply indebted to "man's oldest and greatest sport," for it will forever serve as a special bond between him and his son, Tony, Jr., with all of the young men he has had the good fortune to have coached, and with all of the many coaching colleagues and officials with whom so many

memorable moments have been shared over the years. Special mention should be made of Charlie Davison, Stu Meyerson, and Bob LeVien for the friendships, guidance, and support they have extended to Tony over the years in the West Islip Wrestling Program.

Above all, Tony owes his greatest debt of gratitude to the one individual who more than any other has made it possible for him to have spent so much of his life so deeply involved in the sport of wrestling, his wife, Edie.



Tony and son Tony Jr. at West Islip.