

# MICHAEL DERGARABEDIAN



In the fall of 1973, freshly cut from the 7th grade basketball team, Michael followed his older brother Dean, an 8th grader, into the Baldwin Junior High School cafeteria and was introduced to the sport of wrestling. That day, according to Michael, was the onset of a forty year relationship with the "finest teacher" in the world.

Wrestling was a surrogate teacher to Michael and he took to wrestling like an obedient student, eager to learn and anxious to please. Under Clark Crespi, one of Long Island's unheralded wrestling coaches, Michael went undefeated in 8th and 9th grade. He won the Nassau County, Suffolk County, New York State and Eastern Coast Nationals titles.

In high school, under the tutelage of Iowa State Hall of Fame All American, Steve Shippos, Michael earned three Nassau County place finishes (3rd, 3rd, 1st), a 5th place in the 1980 New York State Championship and the Outstanding Wrestler Award in the prestigious Pittsburgh Classic.

Michael's love of the sport and excellence on the mat earned him a scholarship to the University of Michigan. He wrestled for Wolverine coaches' Dale Bahr and Joe Wells for five years (1980 -85), and earned a spot in the starting line up four of those years and placed in the Big 10's Championship multiple times. As a nationally ranked wrestler, Michael's last year in college was met with a life altering decision, wrestling in the Big 10 Championship or sit for the Law School Admission Test. Michael, governed by

a "wrestling lesson", chose the latter and never looked back.

Upon graduating law school, Michael accepted a job in Hartford, Connecticut. While there, he continued to volunteer as an assistant coach. This time at Central Connecticut University under Head Coach Ken Destefanis.

Michael moved back to Long Island in 1990 and "hung a shingle" in Rockville Centre. He continued to use the "mat lessons" to build what is now considered to be one of New York's most prominent law firms. Michael is consistently quoted in local papers, national legal publications and has been featured on prime time TV legal documentaries. His trial record is unmatched by any other attorney in our region and he attributes all of his success, in and out of the court-room, to one "wrestling lesson".... "No one will ever out work me".

Michael always finds the time to assist the wrestling community. You can always find him offering free legal services and support to any wrestler in need, or spending many evenings a week instilling his love for the sport to the newest generation of wrestlers at the club he started five years ago, The Teeth of the Dog Wrestling Club at North Shore High School.

The Teeth of the Dog Wrestling Club was started, according to Michael, in "a dual effort to continue to pay back to the sport of wrestling that continues to give him so much while simultaneously teaching his four sons the virtues of wrestling, which has become the cornerstone of his character". Unbeknownst to Michael, the sport taught him yet another invaluable lesson, "the power of a generous heart". Michael has approximately 30 elementary school athletes whom he now considers his own children and their parents his dear friends.

He resides in Old Brookville with his very supportive wife, Lauren, and their five children - Olivia Lee (13), Michael Dean (11), Andre (8), Calvin (5) and Brock (3).

*Michael demonstrating a move to one of his young wrestlers at the Teeth of the Dog wrestling club.*

