

RON RUSSO

Great High School & College Coach

Ron began his wrestling career at Seaford High School under the tutelage of "Hall of Fame" coach Bob Gerbino. a four year starter (1962-65) and team tri-captain in his senior year.

He would continue his career as a wrestler by attending Bloomsburg State College. Coached by Russ Houk who was the assistant coach and manager of the 1972-1976 Olympic teams. Ron was a three year starter for the "Huskies" and co-captain his senior year. He captured the 1968 and 1969 Pennsylvania State College Champion while also earning the Pennsylvania AAU crown. On the national level, he was NAIA national runner-up in 1968 and champion in 1969. Ron was also a two-time All-American Division 1, placing 6th and 4th respectively in the 1968 and 1969 NCAA championships. Ron also in 1968 qualified for the "Olympic Trials" finished 4th losing to the legendary Dan Gable.

Ron ended his wrestling career by representing the East squad in the "East-West All-America" meet at Penn State University. Ron's victory over Lenny Groom (NCAA runner-up) helped seal the victory for the East. It was the first time the East had ever defeated the West. An interesting footnote, the official was none other than "Hall of Fame" official Pascal Perri. For his efforts on the mats, Ron earned the "Redman Trophy" for the top athlete at Bloomsburg State.

Ron received his college coaching start at Cortland State University, as an assistant coach under Vince Gonino. Their squad won the dual meet portion of SUNYAC Conference and runner-up in the tournament. Ron had the good fortune to coach life time achievement members Mike Davey and Lynbrook great Larry Glenz.

Ron's Division I career started with a phone call from Jerry Seckler. Jerry offered Ron the assistant coaching position at Columbia University which would begin a twenty year relationship. This opportunity also enabled Ron to represent the New York Athletic Club on the mats. Bill Farrell, distinguished member of the "Hall of Fame," and 1972 Olympic coach was the squads coach. Ron won two "Senior metropolitan" titles and "Eastern AAU" crown and a 4th place finish in the National AAU's. The "club" would garner both the Eastern AAU and National AAU trophies.

Russo coached teams would win three straight "Ivy League" titles (1980-82). The squads would record a 134-91-2 overall record and a 60-35 record in the "Ancient Eight." Ron produced 26 first team "All-Ivy" 26 EIWA place winners including Eastern champ Steve Hasenus, and two Division I All-Americans Jerry Reid and Dave Galdi. Ron had the opportunity to coach Andy Barth (outstanding American member of the "Hall of Fame") and TV news



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anchor (Rhodes Scholar) George Stephanopoulos. For Ron's efforts, he was named New York State "Coach of the Year" in 1981 and was admitted to New York Coaches "Hall of Fame" in 1993. One of Ron's most cherished honors in 1985 was to be admitted to "Bloomsburg Athletic Hall of Fame." Upon retirement from Columbia in 1991, he received from the "Varsity C" club the heralded "Columbia Lion" award.

During Coach Russo's final two seasons at Columbia, Ron acted as assistant coach and interpreter for National Wrestling Coaches All-America team which participated in the international freestyle tournament the "Trofeo di Milone" (Italian for the Milone Trophy). The squad won the title in 1989 and runner-up in 1990. These squads would produce numerous world and Olympic metal performers such as world champions Zeke Jones, Tom Brands, Terry Brands, and Kurt Angle. Tom Brands and Kurt Angle would go on to win Olympic gold medals, Zeke Jones and Junior Sanders Olympic silvers and Terry Brands a bronze.

After leaving Columbia, Ron moved to Michigan where he now resides. Ron started what was to be a short stay to save a high school program which was about to drop wrestling. Twenty years later he is still coaching Kalamazoo Central High School. He has won over 200 matches, 5 conference titles, 4 district crowns and 4 "Greater Kalamazoo" County titles. Coach Russo is most proud that his teams achieved 6 times "All-State Academic" honors.