

JON TUSH

Jon Tush's New York Legacy



"New York City has always had wrestlers," says Jon, who has wrestled and coached for almost 40 years. "But very few people ever really cared. Now they do and that is fantastic."

Jon's journey started at a small private school on West 63rd Street in 1976, and it continues today. What Jon has done in the past 38 years is compete in hundreds of matches and mentor dozens of champions. Whether coaching or wrestling, Jon carries a passion to any task at hand. Now a vice president of a medical supplies company, Jon attributes success in almost every endeavor to wrestling. "If I hadn't found a home within this sport, I never would have gone to college".

The first time he walked into the wrestling room, he felt like he belonged. There, he found coaches who told him that what you get – in the classroom or on the mat – is the direct result of the work you put in. "This is where you even it out," Joe Puggelli, then McBurney's wrestling coach, would whisper to Jon during wrestling practice. "Jon expanded the horizon of what a wrestler in New York City was supposed to do to be successful". "He had the courage to get his ass kicked and fail. And it didn't discourage him. It actually encouraged him."

Jon went to freestyle wrestling tournaments on Long Island. Jon's effort translated into success. He won the New York State Private School Wrestling Tournament twice, finishing his high school

career with a record of 84-10 and about a dozen scholastic tournament championships. Jon attended East Stroudsburg University, where he started as a freshman and as a sophomore, placing in the Pennsylvania Conference Championships. With a change of academic direction, Jon transferred to Hunter College in New York City. A two-year co-captain, Jon posted a career record of 57-21-1. He was a Metropolitan Conference place winner, two-time NCAA East Regional place winner. In 1984, he participated in the NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships. Jon's success won him a spot in the Hunter College Athletic Hall of Fame in 1997.

After graduation, Jon competed from 1986 to 1992, including internationally on the New York Athletic Club freestyle team. In 1988, he earned a fourth place finish at the NYAC Holiday Tournament.

During those years, Jon developed his passion for coaching young wrestlers. His first stop was his old high school. "Jon was working one-on-one with our wrestlers and taking some to the NYAC," says Sean Somerville, a high school teammate who coached at McBurney with Jon for four years. Jon went on to help coach at Poly Prep, Manhattan College, the Millburn, N.J. Youth Team and Seton Hall Prep.

In this period, Jon also kept wrestling himself. He became a US Open Champion in the Veterans Division. Finally he won Bronze and Gold Medals at the Veterans World Championships in Ankara, Turkey and Tirana, Albania. In all, Jon has wrestled in matches in five different decades, starting in the 1970s and ending in the 2010s.

His status as a competitive wrestler gives Jon a unique style. "When I work with kids, I wrestle with them," he says. "It gives me a sense of what they are trying to accomplish and how they are trying to accomplish it. That way I can help them."

Then came "The Garage," which brought Jon's commitment to a new level. "We moved to this house in Maplewood in 2003," says Santa Tush, Jon's wife. "A couple of years after that, he asked me if he could turn our garage into a wrestling room. I said it's not attached the house, it serves me no purpose. Yeah, go right ahead." The Garage became a dojo for aspiring wrestlers, a refuge where they could drill their craft and analyze their mistakes. Today Jon is the New York Athletic Club Wrestling Club President.

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