

PIN IT TO WIN IT

Jeff Jordan has led Graham High School to 16 straight state wrestling titles

BY HALEY JENA



Hard work equals success: A philosophy proven true time and time again by Graham High School—17 times in a row, to be exact.

The Graham High School wrestling team has won 17 consecutive Division II team state titles under the coaching of Jeff Jordan, a Graham alumnus and wrestling legend.

During his time as a student at Graham Jordan captured four Ohio high school state titles and had a high school career record of 159-1, the best four-year record in the history of Ohio wrestling. He went on to receive a full athletic scholarship to the University of Wisconsin where he was a two-time NCAA All-American and Big Ten champion.

After graduating Jordan was an assistant coach for the Purdue University wrestling team before turning down opportunity to be head coach. Instead, he wanted to move back to his hometown of St. Paris in Champaign County to coach at his old stomping grounds and open his own wrestling camp for male high school wrestlers coming from all across the nation.

“I wanted to come back and coach for

Graham High School has captured the state wrestling championship 17 times, including 16 years in a row.

Graham, which I always wanted to do,” Jordan says. “I wanted to come back and coach for Graham to give back to the community—they were so loyal to me and I wanted to be loyal to them.”

Even though Graham is a wrestling powerhouse today the Falcons haven’t always been state champions.

“When I came back from Purdue in 1993 [to coach at Graham] we didn’t have one single returning district qualifier—and that’s not very good,” Jordan laughs. “I talked to coach (Ron) McCunn and asked about his goals.”

McCunn was Graham’s high school wrestling coach. Jordan worked as assistant coach to McCunn for six years until he retired in 1999.

“I told [McCunn] in five years, we need to win a state title and every year after that we need to be in a position to win a state title. And the amazing thing is that

exactly five years later, in 1998, we won a state title—Graham’s second one ever. In 1999 we placed fourth; in 2000, third; and from 2001 to the present we have not lost a state title,” Jordan says.

Jordan says that the incredible winning streak comes from hard work and discipline.

“It’s simple, you put more hours in than other people you’re gonna be better. We wrestle teams that have more talent than us but we get them tired in matches and that evens the playing field to get them on a level that we can beat them on—we beat them from hard work.”

And it’s called hard work for a reason. Jordan says his team is practicing, conditioning and strengthening more often than others.

“When the season starts on Monday, Nov. 13, it’s two practices a day until the state tournament,” Jordan says. “Not too many other Ohio schools get as much practice time as us ... I’m kind of a hardcore coach, but I’ve got kids that’ll run through the wall for me. And I’ll run right back through the wall for them. That’s the magic at Graham.”

And the future of Graham wrestling is looking just as bright as the past couple decades—Jordan predicts more victories for the Falcons this upcoming season.

“Next year Graham is gonna win state,” Jordan says. “You know why? Because it’s what we do.” ■