

TS - Tim Shiels

DF - Dave Frisch

TS – Dave, how were you first introduced to the sport of wrestling?

DF – I had 3 older brothers who wrestled, they dragged me to wrestling practice when I was in elementary school. By 7th grade, I thought I could be pretty good at wrestling. As an 8th grader, I broke into the high school JV team and as a 10th grader I made the varsity squad near the end of the season. During my 3 years on the Varsity at St. James High School in Minnesota, we never lost a dual meet and we won the One Class 1972 State Championship - a huge accomplishment for a small school from a town of 4,000.

TS – What were some of the triumphs, disappointments and favorite memories you recall both as a high school and college wrestler?

DF – In high school and college I had great teammates, many of my college teammates, Jerry Schmidt, Chuck Seifert, Steve Wenker and Bruce Campbell are my closest friends to this day. Bruce Campbell was a great wrestler and helped me tremendously at Worthington Junior College. Paul Kruger at St. James and John Oxtan at St. Cloud State University were outstanding coaches. Many of my teammates at St. Cloud State, like me, started at Junior College, we connected and were truly a team.

My greatest disappointment as a wrestler in both high school and college, was that I always finished 1 match short. In my senior year of high school, the top 2 finishers at the Regional Tournament advanced to State – I placed 3rd. My sophomore year at the Junior College Nationals, I won my match in the round of 12, but lost my next match. At that time only the Top 6 were recognized as All-Americans, there was no 7th place match. As a junior at St. Cloud State, I qualified for the Division II Nationals in Pennsylvania, but the wrestling budget, including

coaches would only allow 8 to travel – other guys on the team had better records, so I wasn't able to go and compete.

My senior year at St. Cloud State, I was a Captain on the team and qualified for the Division II Championships. I wrestled well all 3 days of the tournament, again won my match in the “blood round of 12”, lost my next match and again finished 1 match short. There was no 7th place match. Junior College, NAIA, Division I, II, and III in 1977 only recognized the Top 6 finishers as All-Americans.

TS – When did you first start officiating, and who encouraged you?

DF – I started officiating high school matches my senior year in college. Roger Wilson from St. Cloud assigned me a number of matches and my coach John Oxton, was also helpful. I enjoyed officiating - like most college athletes, I had no money, so getting paid to referee was great!!

TS – Who were your mentors, officials, coaches throughout your officiating career?

DF – Without question, the person who changed my officiating and career was Darold Henry*. Only two years into officiating, I officiated the Division II Nationals and the Junior College Nationals with Darold. I was so impressed with Darold's quickness, hustle, positioning, mechanics and the way he confidently awarded points, that I wanted to make certain that as an official, I had those same qualities.

***Note:** Darold Henry officiated 31 Division I National Championships and 31 Finals. As a high school coach at Pleasant Grove High School in Utah from 1968-1993, Darold coached 60 State Champions and his teams won 10 State Championships. Darold was inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in 1996.

TS – Dave, you went on to a HOF career – do you recall a match that you wished you got a “do over” or a Mulligan on?

DF – I remember a Heavyweight match between and University of Wyoming and North Dakota State, where I was confident that in a hip to hip situation there was no control and no takedown. Looking at the situation the next day (no video review back then), while the wrestlers were hip to hip, the one wrestler established control by being behind the opponent’s armpits. I missed the call, the takedown should have been awarded and the wrong wrestler won the match.

TS – Do you recall any embarrassing moments in your career?

DF – I remember officiating a high school match where I ripped out the crotch of my officiating pants, fortunately, and I’d recommend this to all officials, I had on a black undergarment, so I was OK. I also recall officiating a Division I National Championship finals match, awarding a takedown, only to realize that I forgot to put on my red and green wristbands. One of the on-deck officials went to the side of the mat on the stage and tossed out the wristbands, that I put on as nonchalantly as possible.

TS – What are you most proud of in your officiating career?

DF – Two things – being selected to officiate Cael Sanderson’s final college match to finish his career as the only undefeated four time National Champion, was a tremendous honor, and, being inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that a small town kid from St. James, Minnesota would be in the Hall of Fame.

TS – What qualities do you like to see in officials, and what do you dislike about some officiating styles?

DF – Be humble, leave your attitude and ego at the door. Be prepared by knowing the rules, hustling and by being in position to make the right call. First and foremost, it's about the wrestlers and making certain the match is officiated fairly. Officials who don't hustle, stand in one spot like a traffic cop, or after making a call look at coaches for approval – I'm not a fan of.

TS – In 2019 and 2020, you and Lynn Dyche have served at Co-Head Officials at the JUCO Nationals, with you taking on the role as Independent Reviewer. What have you learned from that, and what rules that didn't exist when you officiated, do you like and dislike?

DF – I think taking the difficult call out of the hands of the official and going to an Independent Reviewer, has been a very positive and huge improvement for the sport of wrestling. We all want to get the call right - having qualified and trained Independent Reviewers, produces the fairest outcome. I personally believe having Independent Reviewers at the Division I Championship is terrific. As far as rules, I don't care for all the visual counting and drop-down situations. I'd like to see the Stall Call made, rather than so many counts. I think the Stay on the Mat rule in the neutral position, the out-of-bounds line being a cylinder and opening up the whole mat, for scoring situations, are great rules that have produced more scoring and excitement.

TS – What are the most important lessons you've learned from wrestling and officiating that have helped you as a highly successful businessman?

DF – The best lessons that I've learned from wrestling is that even though I came up 1 match short throughout my career, it didn't mean that I ever quit. I'm not certain that if I had been more successful as a wrestler that I would have had as strong of desire and commitment as an official – I may never have become an official. The most important lesson that I learned from officiating that has helped me in life is that most things aren't as bad as you first believe. I was booed very loudly by 10,000 plus Hawkeye fans for calling their 190 lb. wrestler 3 times for stalling in a match against Iowa State, in a dual meet between the number 1 and 2 ranked teams in the country. I was certain that before I left the arena, and certainly the next day in the paper, I was going to be blasted. However, Coach Gable simply stated that at the 190 lb. match, we allowed Iowa State to wrestle the way we expect our guys to wrestle and be the aggressor. Coach Gable never said a word to me!