

**Huskerland Hall of Fame
Class of 2005**



2006 Hall of Fame Inductees (l-r): Ken Benton, Rick Johnson, Andy Pflaster, Lane Kinnan



**20 Year Veterans Front (l-r): Dave Hartman - Rusty Hunt - Jeff Schoepf -
Back: Travis Stutzman - Karen Hunt - Craig Hellwege - Doug Denson**

Rick Johnson, Lincoln

When I think of a leader, I think of someone who has a strong mind, a kind heart, and the will power to set an example for everyone watching. A leader, in my opinion, does not only lead but also teaches others how to be a leader. My leader is a man by the name of Rick Johnson.

Rick was my little league wrestling coach for six years when I was growing up. He volunteered his time to coach a club up in Lincoln called the Lincoln Warriors. Kids ranging from Kindergarten to Eighth grade come in from Lincoln and surrounding areas to try and improve their skills. When I first walked in the wrestling room as a third grader, I didn't know anybody. A short man, who weighs 135 lbs. soaking wet, approached me and paired me up with another kid in the room who was about my size. After practice, my dad and I talked to Rick for awhile about my hometown and about wrestling in general. He told us how things were usually ran and he was glad to see me join the club.

For some time I thought Coach Johnson was talking to me because maybe he thought I was better than a lot of those guys in the room, maybe I was one of his favorites. I went on to wrestle for Rick all the way through my eight grade year. Along the way I realized he wasn't just interested in me, he was interested in getting to know every wrestler in the room. He didn't care whether you were the best, the worst, or in between, he was there for one reason and that was to make a difference in the lives of the hundreds of kids he has coached over the years. If I told you I respected anyone more than Rick Johnson, I would be lying. He not only teaches you how to beat the best wrestlers you run up against, but he also teaches you things you can take with you for the rest of your life. He is very passionate about the sport of wrestling and every kid in the room can sense that controlled emotion that he carries with him. He is one of those individuals that I would rather have yell at me than for him say he is disappointed in me.

This family man works during the day and takes time out of his life to go work with kids at night. He has never received a penny for the countless hours he has put in. Rick also takes time after practices to talk about his faith to a Fellowship of Christian Athletes group. I have never heard a bad word spoken about Coach for as long as I have been around. All the parents I have ever spoken to have nothing but good things to say about Coach Johnson.

I myself have went on to have a successful high school wrestling career. I feel that Rick is the reason I did so and I will always feel that way. A lot of my old teammates are enjoying the same kind of success. The things he taught me will stick with me for a long time. He taught me how to wrestle and become one of the best in the state. He also taught me that winners would act like champions even if they lose. He taught me that hard work and determination will always pay off and to be passionate about your dreams. He taught me that life outweighs anything you may accomplish through sports.

I think it is important for a leader to also be a role model and Rick is exactly that. All leaders must be respected and shouldn't treat others like they are inferior, again Rick takes on these characteristics. Hopefully, someday I will hold a position where I have to be the leader, and when I do I hope I can make it look as easy as Rick does.

*Kyle Sorenson***

***This was written by Kyle the summer after he graduated high school, just 2 months before he was tragically killed*

Andy Pflaster, Cozad

For the past 22 years, Cozad's Pee Wee Wrestlers have called him "Andy", "Coach", and a few other things, as he blew his whistle and told them to do yet another drop step, cross face, sprawl, or run another lap.

During his career, Andy has helped coach many Huskerland Champions. Andy started coaching at Cozad's Middle School in 1982 and is also a long time Cozad High School assistant.

Andy has done many things for Cozad Wrestling and asked for nothing in return. His only comment is "It's all about the kids!" Andy feels very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with these kids and their parents. As we all know, it takes more than just coaching to achieve their goals. Without these parents and their support Cozad Wrestling would not be where it is today.

Thank you for recognizing Andy for all he has done for these kids and our community.

Cathy Pflaster

Lane Kinnan, Cozad

Lane started his wrestling career as a sophomore in High School. He was a two time state champion in 1976 and 1977, also enjoying the thrill of the team titles.

He then went to wrestle for Kearney State College, was a two-time HAIA National Tournament, and as a junior he finished fourth in the nation in 1980. Lane suffered a season - ending injury during his senior season, which prevented him from attempting to earn his third All-American honor. He was selected as a member of the 1970's Team of the Decade at 158lbs and was inducted into the Loper Athletic Hall of Fame in 2000.

His love of wrestling continued after graduation, coaching one year at Shelton High School. Lane went on to referee and officiated two years at the High School State Wrestling Tournament. In 1989 when his twin boys started High School, he coached at the High School level, coaching his boys to four state medals, along with many others to numerous medals. He also headed the Cozad Pee Wee program of over 100 kids and continued with this until 2003.

In 1977, Lane received a Distinguished Service Award by the Cozad Jaycees for his unselfish service given to the Pee Wee program while serving with outstanding leadership, vision and ability.

Lane is currently farming in Cozad while still supporting the Cozad wrestling program as an avid fan.

Ken Benton, Waverly

Ken started wrestling in 1957 at the age of ten, with the start up of the Nebraska Olympic Club in Lincoln. Wrestling for Lincoln High School, Ken placed 2nd at state in both 1964 and 1965. He received a wrestling scholarship from UNL Coach Orval Borgialli for the 1965-66 school term but was unable to pass the physical to compete. He continued to wrestle with the Olympic Club in Freestyle and Greco at the open level for a couple of years with a 4th place finish at the Rocky Mountain Regional Freestyle Tournament.

Ken's major influences were his Nebraska Olympic Club coaches, Newt Copple, Russ Camilleri, John McIntyre, Harold Thompson and at Lincoln High School, Melvin Simpson. These coaches all had a great

dedication to wrestling and passed it on with true unselfishness.

He helped start the Waverly Mat Club in 1983 along with Carol Atkins, Bruce Craig, Steve and Sandy Smith. That same year Ken also took on the duties of an assistant coach for the Waverly Jr and Sr High School Wrestling teams. In 1988 he turned the Waverly Kids Club over to Randy Colton but continued as an assistant for the Waverly Jr and Sr High teams and head coach for the older club wrestlers through 1995. In 1992, Ken and Rick Allgood coached the Nebraska USA Wrestling team at the Midwest Junior Regional Freestyle and Greco Tournament in La Crosse Wisconsin.

Ken thanks current Waverly High School coach Dan Davenport for nominating him and bringing great enthusiasm and expertise to the program. Dan's assistant coach of recent years, Doug Craig, carries on Ken's legacy at Waverly. Doug wrestled for Ken from Kindergarten through High School and is the son of Bruce Craig, one of the co-founders of the Waverly Mat Club.