

Owings Mills Honors Longtime Coach Guy Pritzker

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Pritzker Retires After 30 Years at the Eagles' Helm

Former wrestlers, fans, and coaches gathered at Owings Mills High School on Tuesday night to pay tribute to one of wrestling's greats, Guy Pritzker. Pritzker retired from coaching after last season.

The wrestling community will miss one of the true characters to ever grace the sport. Guy dedicated his life to the sport he loved. In return he earned a spot in the hearts of all who came into contact with him.

I was never coached by Pritzker, but that never kept him from treating me as one of his own. To this day, whenever I see him he always asks, "How's that headlock." Then we proceed to talk about the sport we both love, and more. Guy always made you feel good. He had a way of talking to you that was humorous, yet still engaging. I will certainly miss seeing him at tournaments and striking up a conversation.

The Eagles came through on this night of celebration winning both matches of the tri-meet. They defeated Carver A&T and Loch Raven on a night that was about more than the team scores or individual matches.

I'm going to leave the list of his accomplishments to one of his assistant coaches, Justin Ott. Ott worked with Guy for 17 years. He was kind enough to allow me to share his speech from the evening with the wrestling community. Please take the time to read it. It is a great tribute to a man the sport will greatly miss.

Guy Pritzker

Guy Pritzker has been actively involved in the sport of wrestling for almost 45 years. Guy began his career at Milford Mill HS, wrestling under Hall of Fame coach John Lowe. After graduation in 1972, Guy continued his career at Towson State College, where he was a four year Varsity letterman. He was a 3-time placewinner in the Mason-Dixon Championships, and was selected as team MVP his senior year at Towson State. During his time in college, he became actively involved in coaching with the rec council program as well.

Following his graduation from Towson State, Guy returned to help Coach John Lowe as an assistant coach, this time at Randallstown HS, while also taking over as the Junior League coach full time. Guy came to Owings Mills HS in 1983 to take a teaching position and the wrestling head coaching opportunity. He was able to join his former college assistant coach, Ray Groszkowski, who was the Athletic Director and who became Guy's JV coach. Guy has now coached at the Junior League level for 40 years and at Owings Mills for 30 years! Wow!

During his tenure as head coach, Guy has won 20 MD Junior Wrestling League titles, and 3 Junior League State titles. At Owings Mills, he has won 13 Baltimore County Championships, 19 Regional Championships, 17 Dual Meet Regional titles, and 11 State Championships. His accomplishments include over 300 Junior League wins, 100 tournament titles, and over 500 career dual meet victories, the most ever by a MD High School coach. He has coached 28 individual state champions at Owings Mills, and over 60 wrestlers through Junior League and High School who have gone on to win state titles in MD. He has had two 3-time MD state champions at Owings Mills, as well as the only 4-time undefeated state champion in MD history.

Guy was inducted into the Baltimore County Hall of Fame in 2003 and the MD State Hall of Fame in 2005. He is continually recognized for his contributions both on and off the mat to the sport, as well as to his community. One of Guy's proudest moments was being able to both teach and coach his son Ryan for 4 years at Owings Mills. His plan is to spend more time with his family, especially his grandchildren, as they grow older.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Justin Ott, and for the past 17 years I have been Guy's assistant coach. I stepped down last year to spend more time with my children, and I still marvel at the dedication of this man. I am proud to have had a hand in hanging many of the banners you see on the wall there. The time he has put into this sport and his athletes is unparalleled. Many coaches coach a sport for a long time. Many coaches win championships. But there are NO coaches who coach both at the junior league and high school level for this amount of time, with the continued success that he has had. He has lived and breathed wrestling for the past 40 years.

Now, I see so many former wrestlers and parents of wrestlers here in the stands tonight. And I know every single one of them has a dozen Pritzker stories to tell. And anyone who knows Guy knows that he has a thousand stories to tell. And I am going to tell you that after 17 years, I have heard every one of them - more than once. And I laughed at each one - every time. Because that's what Guy does - he makes you laugh. He makes you smile. He makes you feel special. He makes you feel important. He treats everyone as an equal, so don't feel TOO special if you think you are the only one getting the 11pm phone calls - so is every other kid on the team! Guy has the most amazing ability to relate to each and every person, regardless of age, gender, race, career, you name it. This is integral to his success as a coach - he can relate to every single kid in one way or another. He is a positive influence in a time when there are many negative influences for some kids. There are more than a few wrestlers who might not have ended up where they are today without Guy's influence on them.

The other thing that sets him apart from every other coach is his ability to get the most out of each and every kid. Lots of coaches can get their teams up for the biggest game, or they can get their best player to play a little better than everyone else. Guy does that too, but what Guy also does is he gets the "not as" great kids to believe in themselves and give more than they expect to give. He gets every single kid to realize that they are as important to his team as the state champs are. He gets his kids to give 10%, 20%, 30% more when they need to. Guy is the greatest motivator I have ever seen. The funny thing is, when I first started working with him, I was amazed at his ability to motivate these kids. 17 years later, I am still amazed every time I see him interact with a kid. He still impresses me after all this time, and he continues to motivate and inspire kids today.

I may be a bit biased, but I honestly believe that Guy has set a standard for this sport as a coach that will probably never be seen again. His wins and titles and championships will all be some of the top achievements in the state for years to come, even if they are eventually beaten. But what we will never ever see again is someone who works so tirelessly on behalf of the kids - giving every ounce of his time and energy to helping these young men become better wrestlers, but more importantly, better people. We have always said that our program is a family, and each kid on the team works for each other. But nobody worked harder for this family than the man right there. I am proud to have worked beside Guy for many years and I have learned many things from him. I have seen him as a teacher and a coach, as a father and a husband, as a leader and a mentor. But most importantly, I see him as a friend. Congratulations on your career Guy, and enjoy your retirement. Thanks for everything.