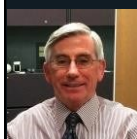




Army West Point Wrestling

ALUMNI QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



From the Editor in Chief

By LTC (R) Larry Baltezare '72

Greetings, fellow alumni, and welcome to the first edition of our second year publishing the Army West Point Wrestling Alumni Newsletter! We have some exciting news and great articles to share with you. First and foremost is our introduction and welcome to the new Class of 1972 Men's Head Wrestling Coach Troy Nickerson. Read about what brought him here and his vision for moving the program forward. Second, we are excited to announce that a Women's Wrestling Club has been officially established here at West Point. Learn how this came about and begin following the club's activities and progress in future quarterly newsletter columns.

Read about WPWC/RTC's impressive accomplishments at national level tournaments, which wrestlers and coach are representing Team USA in world competition, and find out details for the 15th Annual Golf Scramble. Read about LTG Benchoff's experience as an Army wrestler and his unique military career. Checkout a report about USMAPS and a few interesting Alumni news items.

We hope you enjoy reading this publication as we continue to strengthen the Army Wrestling brotherhood and keep our wrestling community informed and connected.

LTC (R) Larry Baltezare '72 Editor-in-Chief

Army West Point Alumni Newsletter

Inside This Edition

- **COACHES CORNER | COACH NICKERSON'S TALKS ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE PART OF ARMY WRESTLING** — page 2
- **WEST POINT WELCOMES COACH TROY NICKERSON |** — page 3
- **WEST POINT WRESTLING CLUB AND RTC NEWS | ACTIVITIES, SPECIAL TRAINING, FREESTYLE AND GRECO NATIONAL CHAMPIONS AND PLACEWINNERS** — page 9
- **WOMEN'S WRESTLING CLUB | HOW IT ALL CAME ABOUT AND MEMBERSHIP** —page 11
- **LTG DENNIS BENCHOFF '62 | EXPERIENCES OF AN ARMY WRESTLER AND HIS UNIQUE CAREER** — page 13
- **UP THE HILL | PLANS FOR THE 25/26 SEASON**—page 18
- **ALUMNI NEWS**—page 19
 - Advancements and Career News
 - Family News
 - Wrestling Involvement and Other Accomplishments
 - Networking and Mentoring Support

Do you have Alumni Related News To Share?

Please send contributions to:

Alumni.newsletter@westpointwrestlingclub.org



Coaches Corner

By Class Of 1972 Head Men's Wrestling Coach Troy Nickerson

West Point Wrestling Alumni and Fans of Army Wrestling,

It has been a chaotic past 8 weeks as I settle into the chair as the Class of 1972 Head Men's Wrestling Coach at Army West Point. Firstly, I am honored to be at the helm of such a historic program. Secondly, I would be remiss to not thank my predecessor Coach Kevin Ward for leaving this program in such a great position. I look forward to the challenge of continuing to elevate Army West Point Wrestling for years to come. While it is my priority to connect with Alumni and get to know you all, please bear with me as it will take some time to get to all of you.

These past two months have consisted of getting to know our current Cadet-Athletes and assembling my coaching staff. As for our Cadets, I have really enjoyed the conversations I have had thus far and believe we have the right leaders within our program. I look forward to getting them all back to Post as we begin the next academic year and developing those relationships further.

As for the staff that will be tasked with helping me continue to move this the program forward, you will not see a lot of change. I believe much of what is going well with this program right now has to do with the people who are already here, and we are in a great spot moving forward. Coach Green, Coach Bleise and Coach Breese are all staying on for this next chapter in our journey. Additionally, I have added Alan Clothier to our coaching staff. Alan wrestled for me at Northern Colorado and will be a great asset for our bigger guys moving forward.

As we begin the next academic year, there is much I am being brought up to speed on. I believe it is critical that I understand all that West Point is and in doing so, it will allow me to coach our Cadet-Athletes at a higher level. Special Thanks to Doug Williams '90 for a copy of "Bugle Notes". It has been very helpful in understanding how this place operates and the core values that we are trying to instill in our Cadets. While we are still a few months away from the start of the 2025-2026 season, we will have a few athletes competing over the next month in some international competitions. Plebe Arvin Khosravy will be representing USA in the U20 Greco Roman World Championships which will be held in Bulgaria later this month. Coach Green is also representing us as the Head Coach of the U20 Freestyle Team at the World Championships. Additionally, Charlie Farmer and Lucas Stoddard will represent Team USA at the U23 Pan-American Games in Paraguay around the same time.

All in all, good things are on the horizon for Army Wrestling and I look forward to leading the charge! My wife, Allie, and our children (Gavin- 8, Asher- 4) are excited for this next chapter and being a part of the Army Wrestling Family.

BHAW!

ARMY WEST POINT WELCOMES TROY NICKERSON AS NEW CLASS OF 1972 MEN'S HEAD WRESTLING COACH

By Staff Writer Eric Bantz '72

Recently West Point Director of Athletics Tom Theodorakis announced the hiring of Troy Nickerson as the new Class of 1972 Head Men's Wrestling Coach. Coach Nickerson becomes the 10th head coach in Army's proud 104-year history of wrestling. He brings a proven championship pedigree to WP, both as a coach and previously as a wrestler. For the past 11 years, he has been the Head Coach at the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) where he transformed the Bears into a consistent Top 25 program both on the mat as well as in the classroom. He coached his UNC wrestler Andrew Alirez to a NCAA Championship in 2023 and has produced multiple All Americans (including two in 2025) and several Big 12 champions. We were fortunately able to reach out and interview Coach Nickerson for our Newsletter (NL). Here is what he had to say to us.



NL: Hello Coach Nickerson. I know I represent the entire Army Wrestling Family in saying “Welcome to West Point and THANK YOU for coming!” We are all extremely excited about you becoming the new Class of 1972 Men's Head Wrestling Coach.

TN: Thank you. I am very excited to be here.

NL: Coach, you were extremely successful at UNC and were in a very nice position. Why did you decide to come to West Point?

TN: There are a lot of reasons. I have always had the utmost respect for the military. The necessary traits to be a good officer are often the same as needed to be a good wrestler. I have had job opportunities probably every year over the past 10 years but Army was always on my “short list.” I also found the leadership at the Academy to be outstanding and admire them for wanting to do things the “right way.” To succeed in life and in wrestling often requires the need to embrace doing hard things. West Point does that. The recipe for success is definitely here. When they reached out to me and interacted with me (and my wife) in such a professional and pleasant manner, I knew this was where I wanted to be. We look forward to the further success of Army Wrestling. We are excited to now be part of the West Point community and raising our family here. I believe in West Point, and I believe being here makes me a better version of myself.

NL: Please tell us about your relationship with Army Associate Head Coach Scott Green.

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ARMY WEST POINT WELCOMES TROY NICKERSON AS NEW CLASS OF 1972 MEN'S HEAD WRESTLING COACH (cont'd)

By Staff Writer Eric Bantz '72

TN: I have known Coach Green for the past 30 years. He was my Freestyle and Greco coach while I was growing up. He was in my corner when I wrestled in Fargo in HS. When I received the position at WP, my first phone call was to him. His lovely wife Jen was one of my teachers in Middle School. I am thrilled that he will be here with us. He is one of the best wrestling coaches in the country. In addition, he “knows” our cadet wrestlers and WP, and has done an awesome job in developing the program with Coach Ward. There has been much success but there is still work to be done. He and I both look forward to Army Wrestling reaching even greater heights.

NL: How do you feel about Army's present team?

TN: It is a very good team and probably Army's strongest in the past 20 years. We return 8 National Qualifiers. After contacting Coach Green, my first priority was to contact our individual wrestlers including some in Germany, Korea, and all over the world. I drove to Fort Carson, CO to meet a few in person. I look forward to developing a strong relationship with all the members of the team. Our team depth is very helpful for dual meets. I called Coach Ward to personally thank him for the great work he did at WP and leaving such a strong program for me to coach. Again, we plan to reach an even higher level.

NL: Army has had some recent success in bringing in strong recruiting classes. Would you please share some of your thoughts about recruiting, particularly to an academy like WP in these days of NIL and revenue sharing.

TN: Recruiting is the “Life Support” of ANY college athletic program. Wrestlers are now developing at a younger age than ever before which makes recruiting even more important. Army can recruit well by telling HS recruits the truth that we are “America's Team” without the drawbacks of NIL and Revenue sharing that so many programs are experiencing. We provide an opportunity for them to receive an “incredible” education, serve their country, have excellent career opportunities and be successful in life while also excelling on the wrestling mat.

NL: Coach, I know you are aware of our mantra BHAW and Army Wrestling. Would you please comment on that.

TN: The mantra of the Army Wrestling Team is BHAW, an acronym for Brotherhood, Heart, Attitude, Warrior. In my conversations with cadet wrestlers in my first weeks after being hired, I would always ask them what was “Going well” with the program. More than 75% said the Brotherhood on the team was a true blessing. Many other college programs may mention this but it is not a reality with them. Our guys are serious. This is a true family or brotherhood of Army wrestlers. Wrestling is a very tough sport. The Brotherhood makes the experience much more enjoyable.

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ARMY WEST POINT WELCOMES TROY NICKERSON AS NEW CLASS OF 1972 MEN'S HEAD WRESTLING COACH (cont'd)

By Staff Writer Eric Bantz '72

NL: By the way, thank you for doing the ARMY BHAW radio podcast episode.

TN: I was happy to do it. Brian Rowan does a great job with the podcast.

NL: Coach, it is no secret that prior to the arrival of Coach Ward, Navy was often getting the best of us. Coach Ward turned this around with Army winning 7 of the last 11 Star Meets including the past two. Please comment on your approach to this important rivalry.

TN: Again, I thank Coach Ward for the phenomenal job he has accomplished at WP. Now, we never want to lose to Navy again. This rivalry is serious and I respect it. During my first days at WP, I probably saw 300 "BEAT NAVY" signs. However, as I discussed with Superintendent LTG Gilland, (who agreed with me), we do not only want to beat service academies and perhaps end up with a "losing" overall record. Rather, we want to challenge our cadets to be All Americans and National Champions. Again, I do not mean to down-play the rivalry but I know that our wrestlers can and will Beat Navy and do so much more as well.

NL: Army wrestles in the EIWA (Eastern Intercollegiate Wrestling Association), the oldest wrestling "conference" in the country. You wrestled in the EIWA with Cornell but the Ivy League has now exited and established their own conference. Please give your thoughts about our conference as well as our schedule.

TN: The EIWA is strong. Navy and Lehigh always come prepared. Our goal every year will be to win the conference. We want our guys to go to the National Tournament and become All Americans and National Champions. That means we first have to do well at the EIWA. Our schedule is set for the year. It will prepare us for the Nationals.

NL: Coach, as many of our readers are aware, an RTC (Regional Training Center) is vital to the success of many collegiate wrestling programs. Would you comment please?

TN: Absolutely. Essentially all major college wrestling programs today need (and even require) an RTC to thrive. I am pleased with the West Point Wrestling Club (WPWC) and West Point RTC filling this role here at WP. Under LTC (Ret.) Messitt's leadership, they have been providing outstanding benefit to our cadet wrestlers. I anticipate the Club and RTC playing an ever increasing role as part of our team's success as we move forward.

NL: Coach Nickerson, have you had time yet to consider what your long term goals or vision for the Army Wrestling Program might be?

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ARMY WEST POINT WELCOMES TROY NICKERSON AS NEW CLASS OF 1972 MEN'S HEAD WRESTLING COACH (cont'd)

By Staff Writer Eric Bantz '72

TN: Yes. Three long term goals would include (1) Expanding our RTC, (2) Increasing our wrestling endowment, and (3) Building a "stand alone" wrestling facility here on post. Each of these would greatly benefit our cadet wrestlers and lead to greater success on the mat. Another short term goal would be to further increase our fan base. We want to continue to produce exciting wrestling which will fill seats and make Christl Arena a challenge for visiting teams.

NL: Besides your success in coaching, your personal wrestling career is legendary. I am from New York and I remember you in high school becoming New York State's first 5 time State Wrestling Champion! And that was in the days of only one division in NY! You then went to Cornell where you became a National Champion and 2 time finalist, 4 time All American (you never finished lower than 4th despite serious injuries), 4 time EIWA finalist and 3 time EIWA champion. Your final career record was 97-8 with 38 pins! You had a 14 second pin in the NCAA quarterfinals and a 13 second pin in a dual meet. You were a 2 year Cornell Team Captain and you led your team to the EIWA Team championship 3 times. That is an awesome career! Please share with us how it all started. Where are you from and how old were you when you started wrestling?



Coach Nickerson wrestling for Cornell University. (Photos courtesy of Tom Gaube and Cornell University.)



TN: I am from Chenango Forks, NY which is right outside Binghamton. That is how I got to meet Coach Green at a young age as he was in the area. I was probably 5 years old when my father started to throw me around a little bit on the living room carpet and show me some wrestling moves. I soon started to enter "Juniors."

NL: Did you have success immediately or did it take a while?

TN: It took some time. I remember that my first match was against a pretty tough girl and she beat me. I was not happy. I don't think I wrestled again that year but came back the next year and did much better. By 7th grade, I started to take ownership of my wrestling and I was much improved and wrestled 96 lb. varsity on my HS team. I only weighed about 85 lbs. at that time and I lost in the Sectional Finals. The loss really motivated me and I did much better beginning in 8th grade. Rick Gumble, my High School Coach, was great.

ARMY WEST POINT WELCOMES TROY NICKERSON AS NEW CLASS OF 1972 MEN'S HEAD WRESTLING COACH (cont'd)

By Staff Writer Eric Bantz '72

NL: What do you attribute the most to your outstanding achievements on the mat?

TN: I believe that technique was probably my strongest attribute. I know that I had opponents who were stronger and faster than I was.

NL: Did you have a favorite takedown?

TN: While I always tried to have a variety of set ups and takedowns, a Lefty Single Leg takedown was probably my favorite.

NL: Were you "known" for any particular type of wrestling or a certain position in wrestling?

TN: I believe I was probably best known for my wrestling in the top position. I worked on it a lot.

NL: With all those pins, your top wrestling must have been good! What do you believe are the major differences between High School and College wrestling?

TN: College competition is obviously much more challenging. There are also significant differences between high school and college in the technical, physical (primarily hand fighting), and especially mental aspects of the sport. It is very important for wrestlers to truly BELIEVE they are as "good as they are." They should think "I am the best" rather than "I can be the best." A Sports psychologist can often be very useful.

NL: With your history of strenuous academic requirements at Cornell (and now Army), how do you help your wrestlers meet their goals in the classroom as well as on the mat?

TN: First and foremost, we have to communicate the importance of this to our cadets. There is life after wrestling. I emphasize "How you do anything is how you do everything!" I remind them to "Be centered where your feet are." Time management is very important.

NL: Please comment on the major differences you find between wrestling and coaching.

TN: To be a successful wrestler, one will sometimes need a certain degree of "selfishness" to ensure optimal performance. You take care of "Numero uno." Coaching, however, should be the complete opposite. A coach has to understand what works best for his individual wrestlers and what is best for the team and not for himself. For example, something as simple as the times to conduct practice may have to be changed to benefit changes in cadet schedules.

NL: Would you like to say anything to our Army Wrestling Alumni?

ARMY WEST POINT WELCOMES TROY NICKERSON AS NEW CLASS OF 1972 MEN'S HEAD WRESTLING COACH (cont'd)

By Staff Writer Eric Bantz '72

TN: Definitely. I thank you for your support of the Army Wrestling Team. I would like to personally meet each and every one of you. I want to know more about you. Army Wrestling is a community or family of different people, all with the same goal. Please come and watch us. You will not be disappointed.

NL: Please tell us about your family.

TN: My beautiful wife Allie is originally from Nebraska. I am blessed that she married me 11 years ago. We have two wonderful little boys. Gavin is almost 8 years old and Asher is 4.

NL: Was your family excited about coming to WP?

TN: After Allie came and visited the Academy, she became "All in" on coming here. I would not have made the decision to come to West Point without her support.

NL: Would you like to now recognize anybody for how they helped you and your career?

TN: Oh, Gosh! There are so many people who have poured into me and blessed me on my journey. My loving family, my coaches, and my training partners were all HUGE factors in any success I experienced. I appreciate my training partners who beat me up every day and made me better. Without them, I would not have grown as a wrestler nor experienced any success.

NL: Is there anything else you would like to add?

TN: Yes, there is. I again want to say how excited I am to start this new chapter in my life at West Point. I have looked forward to this for a long time. We have a great system already in place and we will look to add to it and build it up further. I have great leadership and staff all around me. With the present direction of college athletics, nobody is positioned to move forward better than Army West Point. I guarantee you that all our Army wrestlers will scrap and battle for 7 minutes every time they step on the mat. That is the core of who we are.

NL: Again, Coach, thank you for your time today and for coming to West Point. We all wish you and Army Wrestling the very best. We know you will do well. God bless you and your family.

TN: My pleasure. Thank you.



- TUNE IN TO BHAW ARMY WRESTLING RADIO SHOW -

All Things Army Wrestling—Interviews, Match Recaps, Catchups with Old Grads

Available on Spotify, YouTube, Apple Podcast, and Facebook

West Point Wrestling Club and Regional Training Center News

By LTC® Todd Messitt '87

First, we welcome the Class of 1972 Head Men's Wrestling Coach Troy Nickerson and we are looking forward to continuing our growth with Troy at the helm.

It's been a busy 3rd quarter of 2025 for the WPWC and RTC. Our training and competition schedule impacted all age-group components of the Club and RTC.

We started the summer off with a bang by sending a contingent of Army Wrestlers to a training camp in Ithaca NY. This week-long experience allowed our studs to develop while training with top-level wrestlers and coaches from both Cornell and Buffalo. We've participated in these summer training camps for several years now, and the experience gained while working with powerhouse teams outside our conference has provided tremendous growth. The training camp was the lead-in to the U20 World Team Trials and U23 National Championships ... and the training paid huge dividends. WPWC continues to excel at the national level with two Champions (Arvin Khosravy/U20 Greco and Joe Couch/U23 Greco) and four place winners (Noah Tonsor/U23 Greco, Lucas Stoddard/U23 Freestyle, Charlie Farmer/U23 Freestyle and Wolfgang Frable/U23 Freestyle). Congratulations to all of our athletes as we plant our flag and continue to exploit the offensive.

Our prowess at the national level has translated to the world stage. By virtue of winning the U20 World Team Trials, Arvin Khosravy will represent Team USA at the U20 World Championships in Sofia, Bulgaria. Arvin has been working hard through Beast Barracks to become an outstanding Cadet while simultaneously squeezing in a few wrestling workouts and completing all his travel paperwork. We know he will represent our country and West Point well. Following the U23 Championships, both Lucas Stoddard and Charlie Farmer were selected to the USA Pan Am Games team. They will proudly wear USA across their chests when they take on the best of the Western Hemisphere in Paraguay.

For the second consecutive year, WPWC was selected to host the Team New York training camp for middle school and high school wrestlers headed to the USA Wrestling Junior Nationals in Fargo, ND. Our coaching staff was honored to prepare Team NY for the challenge of competing and succeeding in this prestigious national event.

15th Annual Golf Scramble Presented by Spartan Combat and Decisive Point – September 6, 2025

We'll welcome a field of 144 golfers for the Golf Scramble at the newly refurbished West Point Golf Course. We have planned a fun weekend of golf, fellowship and a shared passion for West Point Wrestling. We kickoff the weekend on Friday night with a social at the Zulu Rooftop Lounge at the Hotel Thayer. All are invited – we welcome golfers, spouses and Army fans of any stripe to meet the coaching staff and mingle with a spectacular view of the Hudson River. Saturday golf includes friendly competition over 18 holes at the premier course in the Hudson Valley, followed by Uncle Chick's 19th Hole, dinner and awards. Tied into the Golf Weekend is our online auction where you will find unique Army Wrestling items. You may pre-register for the online auction to receive notices of opening and closing times, and special items. We will post sneak peeks of auction items on our social media accounts leading up to the auction. The auction runs September 3rd – 7th so bid early and often.

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West Point Wrestling Club News (cont'd)

By LTC® Todd Messitt '87

How you can help support us:

- Golf Scramble - join us on the course or sponsor the event. Golf information, sponsorship and registration: <https://www.westpointwrestlingclub.org/golf/>
- Auction - We are always looking for auction items, so donations of goods or services with interest to our varied audience are welcome – Army or wrestling themed items, sporting event tickets, gift certificates, vacation packages, spa packages ... almost anything. Please spread the word about the auction and freely share the link to increase our bidder base. Online Auction Information and registration: <https://yourcharityauction.com/auction.php?a=3876&ca=0c5233>

Note: The WPWC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization so donations may be tax- deductible.

These are exciting times for Army West Point Wrestling and the WPWC and we're honored to have you with us.

**15TH ANNUAL
WPWC GOLF SCRAMBLE WEEKEND**

SEPTEMBER 5-6, 2025

WEST POINT GOLF COURSE

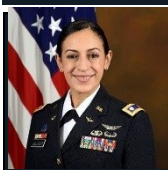
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West Point Women's Wrestling Club News

By LTC Vijay Navarro

Greetings Army Wrestling Alumni Community! We are thrilled to announce that the Women's Wrestling Club was officially approved as a cadet club this summer. This has been a long time in the making, going at least as far back as circa 1997 with two women members of the Freestyle Wrestling Club. Then in 1999, the USCC Brigade Open included a women's match between two competitors from USMA '02, who had been in the sport before becoming cadets, starting in their respective home states. In the following years, what was then known as the Freestyle Wrestling Club sponsored some regional travel for tournament competition that offered a limited number of female competitors. Over the years, several women with a background in wrestling have successfully sought out opportunities to train and maintain involvement with the sport and other combative sports in and out of the Army, to include cadet intramural matches, officiating, and championing the sport in their own localities. Yet, there never existed a dedicated, official women's program for cadets until now.

The most recent chain of events that led to the official club include the momentum and training support provided by Vayle-rae Baker and Sofia Macaluso both woman wrestlers from the WPWC's Regional Training Center.

During the past 2+ years, and before Vayle headed off on her own journey to Army Basic Training, Vayle and Sofia supported a group of women cadets 2-3 mornings a week with training and setting the conditions for an organized club entity. The coaching staff of the men's team and wider WPWC provided a range of assistance. Coach Green designated CPT Nathan Santhanam, a former Corps Squad wrestler, to assist the cadets with preparing the requirements for review by the committee that approves cadet extracurricular activities. As this review is rigorous and approval is limited by a range of considerations both specific to and external to each application, it took multiple attempts before the club proposal advanced to approval. Considerations leading to the committee's approval include development of the club concept, demonstration of long-term viability, level of cadet-driven organization and effort, and the overall cadet club landscape.

The women cadets were led by now-2LT Ava Purifoy, USMA '25, who placed at last year's Princeton Open and in 2021 was the Virginia State recipient of the Tricia Saunders High School Excellence Award for female wrestlers demonstrating success, standout performances, and sportsmanship in wrestling; competitive academic performance; and participation in activities in the interest of character and community.



West Point Women's Wrestling Club News (cont'd)

By LTC Vijay Navarro

In January 2025, the women hosted the U.S. Coast Guard Academy's club team for a weekend of training. Then, in February 2025, six cadets and one Prepster traveled to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy for the first women's dual meet competition between service academies.



West Point Women's Wrestling at U.S. Coast Guard Academy for first ever women's dual competition.



CDT Lorelai Megery in action at the dual meet with the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

Looking ahead, the vision is to grow the club's numbers, organize its dedicated support staff, establish the training schedule, and grow the members' exposure to the sport outside of the programs that they have already had experience with. The club cadet and staff leadership will work on the practical considerations that any new program must attend to, including supplying the necessary gear, growing funds for travel and competitions, and establishing training and storage space.

This year's Cadet-in-Charge is Katelyn Guth, '28, a multisport scholar-athlete with state championship experience in Missouri. The OIC is LTC Vijay Navarro, who has a wrestling and officiating background and teaches in the Department of English and World Languages. Quite notably, Clare Booe, a 2025 NCAA women's finalist, joins the women's club, WPWC, and the Regional Training Center as a member of the Class of '29.

The club roster includes women from a wide range of competitive experience and U.S. regions:

- Class of 2027: Grace Kelley and Taylor Root
- Class of 2028: Katelyn Guth, Lorelai Megery, Loren Osborn, and Carissa Choi
- Class of 2029: Clare Booe and Emma Blackwell

We thank all of the current and past West Point Wrestling Club staff, and our encouraging families, faculty, mentors, and the community supporting this endeavor. We look forward to this new chapter of growth and development for the women's club and its wrestlers. More to come in November.

LTG Dennis Benchoff '62 and Army Wrestling

By Staff Writer Eric Bantz '72

LTG (Retired) Dennis Benchoff '62 is a former Army wrestler who had an extremely successful, distinguished, and interesting Army career. We were recently fortunate to catch up with General Benchoff to interview him for the Army Wrestling Alumni Newsletter (NL).

NL: General, thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.

DB: I am pleased to do it.

NL: Sir, to say that you had an extraordinary Army career while serving our country is a tremendous understatement. To begin, what did you branch out at graduation in 1962?

DB: I branched out Infantry and then went to Infantry Officer Basic Course, Airborne, and Ranger schools and then Panama. I subsequently transferred to the Chemical Corps and then went to the Chemical Officer Career Course and Pathfinder schools. I then went to Vietnam. Later in my career I branch transferred again to the Ordinance Branch.

NL: Wow! I am not sure if I have heard of any other General officer who actually served in 3 different branches! During your career, you served with distinction in multiple command positions. Overseas tours included Panama, Vietnam, and several tours in Germany and you supported Desert Storm. Your more than 36 years of active duty service also included multiple command positions and several post graduate degrees. You were eventually the person responsible for the storage, maintenance, and security of ALL of our country's nuclear and chemical weapons in the US European command (as well as their eventual disposal). Sir, thank you for your outstanding service to our country.



Editor note: For the benefit of our readers, we are enclosing a link for our Army Wrestling fans to view an abbreviated resume giving further details of LTG Benchoff's Army career. <https://army-wrestling-insiders.ghost.io/lieutenant-general-dennis-l-benchoff/>

Now, let's get to wrestling!

NL: General, as an Army wrestler, you were a varsity starter at WP for 3 years (Plebes were not allowed to compete in varsity sports until 1970). After graduation, you had a truly successful Army career. What led to you thinking about going to WP and pursuing a career in the Army?

DB: As a child, I always had an interest in the military. My dad had 2 enlisted tours in the Army, most of my uncles served in WWII, and my favorite uncle also served with distinction in the Korean War. I did a lot of reading about WP and I enjoyed the TV show "Men of West Point."

NL: Where are you from and please tell us how you started wrestling.

LTG Dennis Benchoff '62 and Army Wrestling (cont'd)

By Staff Writer Eric Bantz '72

DB: I am from Waynesboro (near Gettysburg), PA and did not wrestle until I went to college! I went to a new high school (Plymouth White) that did not have a wrestling team. My senior year I applied to WP but did not get in. I wound up going to Waynesburg College (Division III). I thought being active in sports might help me get into WP the next year. I was too short for basketball, too small for football, and too slow for track. I thought I could "handle myself" so I went out for wrestling. I was so fortunate that the Waynesburg wrestling Coach was Bucky Murdock who was an incredibly great (HOF) coach who taught me so much in one year. I applied to WP again and was fortunate that I was accepted. The Head Army Wrestling Coach at that time was Leroy Alitz who also taught PE. Plebes were required to take PE wrestling classes in those days. When Coach Alitz saw me beating everybody up in gym class, he told me to go out for the team. I did so and became the 137 lb. starter my final 3 years.

NL: How good was Army's team in those days?

DB: We definitely held our own. We beat Navy twice. I received two gold stars!

NL: Good job! (Later while on active duty, you DID receive a third star!) Who were the assistant wrestling coaches while you were a cadet?

DB: The two I remember the most were Doug Blubaugh and Greg Ruth. Both were prior NCAA Champions and both wrestled in the Olympics. In fact, Doug won a Gold Medal in the 1960 Olympics in Rome defeating the Iranian defending Olympic and World Champion in the finals.



Dennis Benchoff in action on the mat exploding from the bottom about to get an escape.

NL: Who was the Army Team Captain your Firstie year?

DB: Al Rushatz. Besides being a great man, leader, and wrestler, he was also an awesome fullback on the football team.

NL: He sounds like my teammate and classmate, Ray Ritacco '72. Sir, do you have any particular wrestling memories from West Point that you would like to share?

DB: Again, beating Navy was very nice! Mike Natvig '63 became Army's first National Champ when he won the NAAs my Firstie year (1962). We were all very proud of him. He won the title again in '63. He was at 147 lbs. (one weight up from me). Al Rushatz '62 was my classmate and teammate who took 3rd in the

LTG Dennis Benchoff '62 and Army Wrestling (cont'd)

By Staff Writer Eric Bantz '72

DB (cont'd): NCAAAs as a yearling but unfortunately had major medical issues at the end of his Cow and Firstie years. I also remember that we used to enter a very big tournament at the Coast Guard Academy every year. Mike, Al, and I all won that tournament my Firstie year and Coach Alitz was very pleased. I also remember how we all loved going on trips for Away matches. However, we would occasionally have to fly in C-47s. It would be freezing in those planes which was not good for guys who were trying to lose weight! A somewhat negative memory I have is when I separated my shoulder when we wrestled Syracuse. That injury kept me out of the lineup for a short time.

NL: Sir, please tell us about your involvement with wrestling after you graduated. First of all, did you ever compete again after you graduated?

DB: Yes. In 1963-1964 I was stationed in Panama as a platoon leader with the 3rd Bn, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment. They held a US Army Southern Command Wrestling Tournament. I was able to enter at 147 lbs. (I was pleased I was only up 10 lbs. from my West Point days!)

NL: How did you make out?

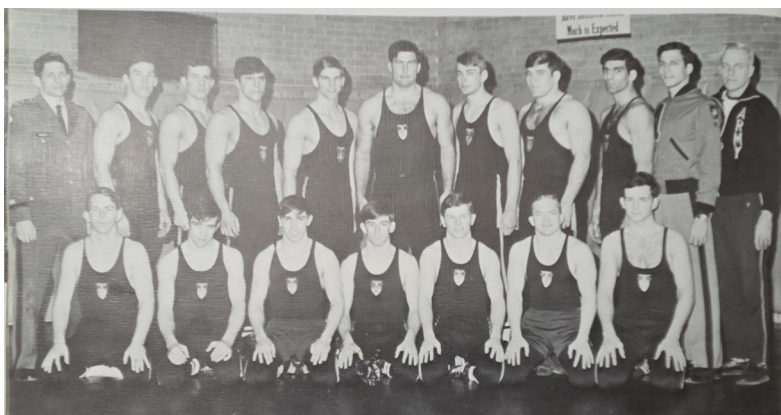
DB: I was fortunate I won the tournament. There was no Mike Natvig now at that weight! I never wrestled competitively again!

NL: Please share with our readers some of your subsequent involvement in wrestling.

DB: In 1971, I went back to West Point to teach Math and Statistics. I was blessed to become the OR of the Army Wrestling team. West Point was an assignment I truly loved. It was great to be with cadets and the wrestlers.

NL: Sir, as you know, I was on the team at the time you were the OR. I remember vividly what a great OR you were due to your outstanding leadership skills, your concern for us, and the mentoring that you provided. I also remember you still putting on your wrestling gear (no singlets in those days!) on occasion and going at it with some of my teammates.

DB: Due to my age and conditioning (or lack thereof) at that time, I was kind of hoping nobody would remember that! The cadets were very kind and fortunately took it easy on me!



Officer Representative Major Benchoff with 1972 Wrestling Team

LTG Dennis Benchoff '62 and Army Wrestling (cont'd)

By Staff Writer Eric Bantz '72

NL: I also remember you instructing some of us in our wrestling technique on occasion. During your career, did you ever have the opportunity to coach wrestling?

DB: Yes. When I was at the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Leavenworth, I coached a Grade School Wrestling Club. It was a lot of fun and I really enjoyed it.

NL: If I remember correctly, were you also a wrestling referee?

DB: Yes. I was also a high school wrestling official while I was at Leavenworth. Years later after I retired from the Army, I refereed middle school matches for another 10 years. I finally had to give it up as the "Getting up and down" got to be too much for me physically.

NL: Have you been involved more recently with our great sport?

DB: Yes. Naturally I follow Army Wrestling and will attend a match when possible. Last year's Army – Navy Star match was really great! It was so exciting being there!

NL: It sure was! We dominated them!

DB: I also am involved with the National Wrestling Coaches Association (NWCA). I am attempting to get the NWCA as well as the National Wrestling Foundation connected more closely with the Army. I believe it will assist in recruitment by helping former (and in some cases active) wrestlers enter the Army! We are attempting to get Army recruiters to be allowed to come to wrestling practices and competitions and be visible for and to interact with possible recruits. Coach Ward often said how Army Rangers had told him that they loved having Army wrestlers lead them! That is for sure. We have also seen how the Marines have sponsored the Fargo HS Wrestling Tournament every year as well as other senior level competitions. I believe there is a lot of potential for recruiting there.

NL: You had both a successful wrestling career (2 stars for beating Navy) and exemplary military career (earning 3 stars for outstanding service to your country!) Do you believe there is a "connection" between the two?

DB: Absolutely. There were many times while I was on active duty that I believed my wrestling experiences helped me significantly. The discipline that West Point and Army Wrestling taught me was invaluable. Having to control my weight (and often not eat) in wrestling definitely really helped me in Ranger School!

NL: Sir, is there anybody in particular that you would like to acknowledge as helping you in your wrestling career?

- Continues on Next Page -

LTG Dennis Benchoff '62 and Army Wrestling (cont'd)

By Staff Writer Eric Bantz '72

DB: There are truly so many people who really helped me during my wrestling career. However, if I had to pick just one, it would have to be Coach Bucky Murdock. For a coach to spend so much time with me (who had no prior wrestling experience) and teach me so very much was a true blessing. It really helped me get into West Point and after I was admitted as well. She was not a wrestler but my lovely wife (of 63 years) Barbara has always been such a blessing to me.

NL: Very nice. Sir, would you like to mention anything else to our readers

DB: Yes. I think West Point is great. I am very proud that both my son and my daughter are WP grads (and both are married to grads!) (Editor note: General Benchoff's son is a MG still on active duty). I also have 2 grandchildren and a grandnephew who are West Pointers. I would also encourage all grads to support the Academy and especially Army Wrestling!

NL: Sir, it has been a true pleasure talking with you. Thank you for your time. God bless you and your family.

DB: Thank you, the pleasure has been mine. I look forward to seeing you at future Army wrestling matches.

Locker Naming Opportunities

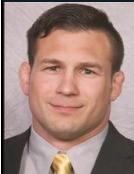
Sponsor a locker in the Army Wrestling room

- Show your support to the next generation of Army Wrestlers
- Celebrate your connection to the team and its storied tradition
- Mark your locker with a personalized locker dedication

Reserve your locker now

- 30 lockers available
- Naming rights secured with a \$10,000 donation
- Individual and group options are available

Interested parties should contact Doug Williams ddwillia08@gmail.com for additional information



News from “Up the Hill” (USMAPS)

By WPWC Head Wrestling Coach Jeff Breese

After a quiet summer at USMAPS, activity is ramping up. At the time of writing this the CCs are in the their final week of CCBT and will be fully entrenched in ReOrgy week by the time this is published. Not a ton to report- but here are the key details.

- 1) Coach Breese returns in his role as Director of Wrestling Development/WPWC Coach and USMAPS “volunteer” Head Coach. He is assisted by 2LT Kyle Swartz (Athletic Intern), and Johnny Stramiello (5th sea-son). Some potential WPWC help could also be on the way.
- 2) The USMAPS team is comprised of 9 recruited athletes and a couple potential walk-ons that will com-pete only during their USMAPS year.
- 3) The always tentative USMAPS schedule. This is close to a final schedule, but as in years past the schedule is always subject to change. We were able to beef up the schedule some this season and get to compete at home more often. Being home more often provides the potential for some bigger road trips to get the Prepsters used to the type of travel they will see as Plebes.

Date	Event
2-Nov 2025	Princeton Open
8-Nov 2025	Fairmont State Duals, W&J Open
15-Nov 2025	Shorty Hitchcock
16-Nov 2025	Army Open
22-Nov 2025	NYS Open
7-Dec 2025	Bob Quade
19-Dec 2025	Wilkes Open
4 Jan-5 Jan 2026	Training Camp/ Soldier Salute
9-Jan 2026	F&M Open
18-Jan 2026	TBD
28 Jan or 29 Jan	NYMA at Home, Edinboro Open
31-Jan 2026	Edinboro Open
12-16 Feb 2026	Air Force Prep, RMC Open
TBD	Zingo Nationals
April TBD	US Open

Alumni News

Advancements and Career News

Nate Lukez '24 Upon graduating from the US Marine Corps The Basic Course as an Honor Graduate, Nate was assigned to Naval Air Station Pensacola as a Student Naval Aviator where he is undergoing flight training. He has successfully completed the academic phase and has begun the flying phase.



Dominic Carone '24, Matt Williams '24, and Thomas Deck '24—have all successfully completed Ranger School and are on way to their first assignment. **Tyler Morris '24 and Tanner Craig '24** have started Ranger School and **Dalton Harkins '24** is queued up to go soon.

Bryce Barnes '16 was recently promoted to the Director of Innovations at the Hardaway Construction Company in Nashville, TN. **Tye Reedy '05**, also an army wrestler, was the one who got Bryce started at the company by linking him up with the CEO who happens to be a navy grad. Just goes to show that the Army Wrestling network is strong and a wonderful display of legacy.

Dalton
Harkins

Brian Harvey '16 is set to graduate from SEAR. We are waiting to hear officially but he’s a shoe in for that.

Family News

Jack Wedholm '18 Jack and his wife Maggie welcomed Kelly Eileen Wedholm to the Army Wrestling Family on July 23, 2025.

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Army West Point Wrestling

10K likes • 14K followers



Alumni News (cont'd)

Wrestling Involvement and Recognitions

Treavor Erney '89

Congratulations to Treavor for his selection to the NY Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame as the Chapter's Outstanding American for 2025. Treavor is currently coaching with Beat the Streets in Washington, DC. The induction ceremony is Sunday, September 21st in Syracuse, NY.

For info on the ceremony: <https://nwhof.org/state-chapters/new-york-upstate>



Treavor Erney '89 1st row far left with some of his Beat the Streets wrestlers posing with the Army Wrestling Team after the 2025 Army - American University dual meet.

Alumni News (cont'd)

NETWORKING AND MENTORING SUPPORT

- ATTENTION ACTIVE DUTY ARMY WRESTLING ALUMNI -

Have a need to network during your Army Career?

Seeking advice on Branch/Post Experiences, Future Assignment Networking, Post Command Mentoring, General Army Career Mentoring, Transitioning from Service.

Then leverage the **Brotherhood of Army Wrestling!!**

***Fifty of our current active-duty** Army Wrestling Alumni have volunteered to serve in an informal networking capacity, available to all current and former Army Wrestlers.*

Take advantage of their collective experiences, knowledge and willingness to connect.

Check your personal email inbox for a Career Networking & Mentoring Program Announcement that provides additional details, list of advisors/mentors and their respective contact information.

If you didn't receive or cannot locate that program announcement, then contact doug.williams@westpointwrestlingclub.org to get plugged-in.



- Next Issue of the Army Wrestling Alumni Newsletter—November 2025
- Suggestions/Ideas for Content?? Please Let Us Know What You Think!!
 - Alumni News should be sent to Larry Baltezare
@ Alumni.newsletter@westpointwrestlingclub.org

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In accordance with IRS regulations this will serve as notice that West Point® Wrestling Club is an approved 501(c)3 non-profit organization.