

# **Jon Wagner Retires As Edwardsville Wrestling Coach, Coaches Three State Champions, Many Placers, Will Have Very Fond Memories Of Tiger Program**

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March 19 2023 10:47 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville head coach Jon Wagner coached Mackenzie Pratt to the 140-pound championship at the IHSA girls' state wrestling tournament recently at Grossinger Motors Arena in Bloomington as Pratt pinned three of her four opponents to win the title.



After the tournament, Wagner officially retired as Tigers head coach in both the boys and girls programs, leaving behind a legacy of excellence for the team in a Hall of Fame career for Edwardsville.

"You know, it's time for a change," Wagner said during a recent phone interview. "I don't want to make it bigger than it is, but I've got some good coaches underneath me and it's time to pass the torch."

A native of West Allis, Wisc., Wagner wrestled for West Allis Central High School and was an all-state wrestler at 167 pounds. He then wrestled at SIUE under famed head

coach Larry Kristoff, where he wrestled for the Division-II national championship team in 1986. After coaching at both Clayton and Riverview Gardens in St. Louis County, Wagner took over the wrestling program at Edwardsville in 1996 and also helped to form the Edwardsville Wrestling Club, which has also become a powerhouse in local club wrestling.

While coaching the Tigers, Wagner won nearly 500 dual meets and coached 97 boys wrestlers in the state tournament, along with 16 All-State wrestlers who placed in the IHSA Class AA and 3A state boys tournaments, in addition with two in the girls tournaments, along with two boys state champions, Noah Surtin and Luke Odom. He helped start the girls wrestling program in 2021-22, which produced Pratt as its first state champions this past weekend.

The records, awards and championships are great things, but to Wagner, there's one much more important thing he's accomplished in his career with the Tigers.

"Honestly, the biggest thing is the relationships I've had through the sport of wrestling," Wagner said, "with our wrestlers, coaches and families. It's just been really a great thing."

The first significant win of his tenure came against Granite City, who was the main wrestling power in the area when he started.

"When I was young, getting that first win at Granite City," Wagner said. "They were the best in the area and to get a win was a big thing."

That win started the Tigers into becoming the main power in the area and in his time, Edwardsville has won 18 Southwestern Conference and 15 IHSA regional titles, the last 12 conference and 15 regionals consecutively, and also finished fourth in both the 2006 and 2009 Class 3A dual meet team tournaments.

Eric Pretto, a longtime assistant under Wagner, will take over the program next season and Wagner knows that Pretto will continue the tradition of Tigers wrestling.

"It's going to be seamless and Eric will do a great job," Wagner said.

Wagner's favorite memories of coaching the Tigers will be his wrestlers and the out-of-town trips the team made to major tournaments, including one of the most prestigious of its kind in the nation.

"Probably the time I've spent with our athletes," Wagner said, "and the trips to Chicago and the Cheesehead (tournament in Wisconsin), the camps and the getaways with the guys and coaching staff. I'll never forget them."