

NEWA Hall of Fame Inductees & Recipients

2014 NEWA Dual Meet Championship



Craig Buckley, Bridgewater State University

A two-time All-American, Craig Buckley is arguably the greatest grappler in the history of the Bridgewater State University wrestling program. Buckley competed for the Bears for three seasons from 2001 to 2004 and captured the New England title and advanced to the NCAA Division III Tournament in each of those three seasons. He earned All-American honors at the 197-pound weight class by placing seventh at the NCAA Championships in 2002. Buckley achieved the honor again, this time competing out of the 184-pound weight class, as he finished sixth at the national championship meet in 2004. A three-time New England Champion and Pilgrim Wrestling League All-Star, Buckley holds the BSU program record for career winning percentage as he posted an impressive record of 110-16 (.873) in his three seasons with the Bears. He also set the school single-season mark with a .923 winning percentage in 2001-2002 when he went 41-3. Buckley's 110 career wins ranks third all-time at BSU and his 29 pins is good for fifth all-time. Craig earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise Science from Bridgewater State in 2004 as well as a Masters degree in Strength and Conditioning in 2006. A 2013 BSU Hall of Fame inductee, Craig resides in Slatersville, Rhode Island with his wife, Melodye, and daughters, Kaedence and Ariana.



Kyle DeForest, Plymouth State University

Kyle DeForest made his mark on Plymouth State and New England Wrestling in the mid-1990s. A 118-pounder, DeForest was a three-time All-New England wrestler (1994-1996) for the Panthers. He captured New England championships in both 1994 and 1996, and was named the Tournament's Outstanding Wrestler in 1996. He helped Plymouth State capture the 1996 New England Championship with his performance. DeForest advanced to a pair of NCAA Division III Tournaments, placing tenth in 1994 and earning All-America honors in 1996 with a sixth place finish. A native of Warren, New Hampshire, DeForest posted a 59-16 record over his final two seasons, including 33-8 mark as a senior in 1995-1996.



Ken Shull, MIT

Ken Shull, an All-American (1984) and a two-time Academic All-American (1983, 1984), enjoyed a decorated four-year wrestling career at MIT that spanned from 1980 to 1984. During this time, he compiled a record of 82-9 with 24 pins, falling in just one dual match over four years. As a senior, he had a 24-match winning streak on his way to a 24-2-1 record. He capped off that season by earning All-America honors at the NCAA Div. III Championships. He was the Northern N.E. Tournament champion each of his four years, winning in the 134-pound weight class as a freshman and sophomore, and the 142-pound weight class as a junior and senior. Shull finished first at the N.E. College Conference Wrestling Association (NECCWA) Championships in the 134-pound weight class for three consecutive years (1982-84) and was named the meet's Outstanding Wrestler as a senior. He competed at the NCAA Championships each of his final three years at MIT, compiling a record of 5-5. He was also invited to wrestle in the N.E. All-Star Meet every year after his first season. Shull received a Bachelor of Science in Materials Science and a Master's degree in Electronic Materials, both from MIT, before earning his Doctorate in Materials Science from Cornell. He is currently a professor of materials science and engineering at Northwestern University.

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William Tirone, Plymouth State University

A four-time New England Champion, Bill Tirone still ranks as one of the top all-time wrestlers in Plymouth State and New England history. Tirone captured New England wrestling titles in 1969, 1970, 1971, and 1972, all at 177 pounds. A two-year captain of the Panthers, Tirone earned All-America honors his junior and senior year and posted a career record of 54-6. He helped the Panthers to top-three finishes at the New England Championships all four years. Tirone competed in the 1972 Olympic Wrestling Trials, and was inducted into the Plymouth State Athletics Hall of Fame in 1996. After receiving his Bachelor's degree from Plymouth State in 1972, Tirone served as a New Hampshire high school wrestling official for 25 years, and was the recipient of NH Parade of Champions Officials Award in 2000. A long-time elementary school administrator, Tirone retired in 2012 as Principal of Ashland (N.H.) Schools after 40 years in the Ashland School system. He was the recipient of the National Principal of the Year Award in 2008. Tirone and his wife, Gwen Blair, have five children and seven grandchildren.



Administrator of the Year: Mel Graf, Johnson & Wales University

Mel Graf is entering her 2nd year as the Exec. Director of Athletics at Johnson & Wales. Under her leadership, Wildcat Athletics is experiencing unprecedented growth and success. With the addition of field hockey and men's & women's lacrosse, a \$1.5 million renovation to the Athletic Center, and the opening of the Scotts Miracle Gro Outdoor Complex, JWU has quickly become a strong regional contender headed for the national stage. As Associate Dean, Graf leads strategic planning and provides guidance to athletics programs on all four JWU campuses (Providence, Charlotte, Denver, No. Miami). Responsible for athletics development and fundraising, alumni engagement, strategic marketing and promotions, Mel guides each campus in providing a comprehensive athletics program that includes more than 40 NCAA, NAIA, USCAA programs. Graf is also a Colonel in the U.S. Army, with more than 28 years of service. She served on two deployments, including a 15-month combat tour in Iraq where she earned the Bronze Star, Combat Action Badge, Iraq Campaign Medal, Valorous Unit Award and the Meritorious Unit Citation. Mel received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Cornell, a Master of Arts degree in Education from Connecticut, and a Master of Science degree in Strategic Studies from the Army War College.



Man of the Year: Steve Eldridge, U.S. Coast Guard Academy

Coast Guard Academy veteran wrestling head coach Steve Eldridge announced his retirement after 47 years on Thursday. Eldridge, who ranked 55th all-time among collegiate wrestling coaches with 314 wins, played football and wrestled at the University of Missouri before coming to the Coast Guard Academy in 1966. During his 47 years, Eldridge earned four Coach of the Year honors and led the Bears to five New England team championships. He coached nine All-Americans including two-time National runner-up Chris Fertig ('01) and most recently Nate Giorgio, who placed fourth last season at 125 pounds in 2012. Eldridge also served as the men's cross country coach for 43 seasons, the last being 2011. He coached four All-Americans in cross country and led the Bears to the NCAA Division III Championships in both 1989 and 2001. He was the New England Women's and Men's Athletic Conference (NEWMAC) Coach of the Year in 2008 and 2010. He was inducted into the Coast Guard Academy Hall of Fame in 1989 and the National Wrestling Coaches Association (NWCA) Division III Hall of Fame in 1995. Eldridge was the Lifetime Service to Wrestling Award recipient by the NWCA Hall of Fame last year.