

return of

THE PURPLE GANG

*Thanks in part to alumni generosity,
wrestling is back on the Defiance College campus*

*by Debbie Richard, '02, '04, Assistant
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Defiance College has announced that it will begin offering club wrestling to provide an opportunity for wrestlers to continue their sport after high school. The club will compete in the National Collegiate Wrestling Association's North Central Conference, an association which supports more than 150 men's and women's club wrestling teams in colleges across the nation.

"It is thanks to the generosity, hard work and commitment of many wrestling alumni that wrestling is now able to come back to campus," said Mark Gordon, DC president. "We are excited to be able to provide this opportunity for students who wish to continue their wrestling careers."

The NCWA uses the same weight classes, rules and officials as the NCAA, so students will see little difference at the club level. The wrestling club plans to participate in the 2011-12 season with a partial schedule.

Tony Gonzales has been hired as head coach. A Paulding native, Gonzales wrestled in high school, competed in NCAA Division III wrestling at Heidelberg University, and was a two-time runner up at the Amateur Athletic Union National Championships. He has coached wrestling for nine years, most recently at 3D Wrestling formerly known as Paulding Wrestling Club.

"I'm looking forward to the opportunity to take this program from the ground-up," said Gonzales. "This will offer an exciting experience for the students interested in wrestling in collegiate competitions."

Defiance's wrestling team began in 1965 as a student organization. It eventually gained varsity status in 1976 and continued until 1994. Alumni of the program approached President Gordon two years ago and



New wrestling coach, Tony Gonzales

expressed a willingness to raise funds to bring wrestling back to DC. The success of the campaign has made the return of wrestling possible.

"Offering a wrestling club for our students enhances the broad array of co-curricular opportunities available to our students. It will be exciting to see our students exhibiting their characteristic dedication and school spirit in this new activity," said Ken Wetstein, vice president for student engagement and dean of students. ◆

Forty years ago I attended my first wrestling matches at DC. The Purple Gang was an impressive group of athletes who won often and competed at the highest levels. Weaner gym was filled with student and community members watching and encouraging these marvelous athletes as they extended themselves to the very limit of the ways a human body can be twisted and contorted in the name of competition. While the contests did not involve the showmanship of today's WWF, the flinging of bodies through the air, or the bravado of calling out opponents, they contained just as much excitement. The contests were measured in seconds as clocks ticked down and wrestlers attempted to either make the final take down, avoid being taken down, or find the surprise move that would allow them to escape what seemed like certain defeat, turning it into a heart stopping victory.

With over 30 former wrestlers and coaches accepting President Gordon's challenge to raise the money necessary to bring a wrestling program back to DC they have once again shown the same strength of character they showed on the mats. My hat is taken off to them and I pray that when the newest members of the wrestling club take center stage they will relish in the challenge of taking on the proud moniker of being the Purple Gang.

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