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(Neb.)-Ritzen inducted into NWCA Hall of Fame

By: Andrew Lacy Posted at: 03/08/2013 10:42 AM

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – Scott Ritzen finally acknowledged he missed the sport he coached for 25 years at the National Wrestling Coaches Association Hall of Fame Banquet Thursday evening.

Ritzen, who retired from coaching in the summer of 2012 but remains as the department chair of health at Chadron State College, joined six others during the induction ceremony of the 17th NWCA Hall of Fame at the Birmingham Civic Center.

"It's a real honor and I'm thrilled to have this opportunity," he said. "People have asked me all year long if I miss wrestling and this is the first time I can say that I do honestly miss it. I see a lot of friends and colleagues in the crowd tonight."

In addition to Ritzen, the other inductees included James Makovsky, longtime coach at Minnesota State University-Mankato, Central Oklahoma's Cole Province, Mark Dodgren and Shawn Silvis, and San Francisco State's Morris Johnson and Mauricio Wright.

Ritzen thanked many influential people in his life during his speech, including his wife Donna, and sons John and Joe, who were in attendance. He also thanked his daughter, Nikki, but she was unable to make the trip because the CSC softball team plays at Black Hills State Friday and Saturday.

Ritzen also thanked interim Chadron State College coach and former national champion wrestler Brett Hunter and sports information director Alex Helmbrecht, who were in attendance.

He also spoke about his parents and coaches.

"I started wrestling in seventh grade and I was fortunate to have coaches who left an impression on me and my parents were supportive and influential during my competitive years," he said. "I've been involved with it for 40 years now and it's a huge part of my life."

Ritzen, who coached the Eagles from 1987 to 2012, retired as the longest tenured coach in Chadron State's history. He is the school's winningest wrestling coach with a record of 134-139-8 and he tutored 33 All-Americans and three national champions.

In addition, Eagles have earned first- or second-team academic honors conferred by the NWCA 31 times during Ritzen's tenure as the coach. Nineteen of those honors have been since 2000.

For all his success as a collegiate wrestler and coach, Ritzen has been inducted into several halls of fame. His first honor came in 1989 when he was inducted into the NAIA Wrestling Hall of Fame. Following that, he was inducted into the Adams State Athletic Hall of Fame in 2005. He was also recently inducted into the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference Hall of Fame as a member of the national champion Adams State squad and he's in the Chadron State Athletic Hall of Fame as a coach.