



## VAWA Announces 2015-16 National Team Coaching Staff

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Richmond, VA - The Virginia Wrestling Association (VAVWA) is happy to announce a new coaching staff structure and personnel to lead the Olympic style coaching program for the 2015-16 season. Roy Hill will serve as the Virginia Coaches Coordinator with Mark Strickland (VA Team Predator), Sonny Close (Christiansburg/ VA Elite), and Israel "Izzy" Silva (George Mason University/ Patriot Elite WC) assisting as national team coaches.

VAVWA State Chairman, Bill Swink offered his thoughts on the 2015-16 national team staff, "I am excited about the staff that the Executive Committee has put together to help develop the olympic styles in Virginia. We had a lot of outstanding candidates for these positions, which made the selection process both difficult and challenging. One of our tasks will be to involve those not selected for one of these positions because they will be valuable assets to Virginia Wrestling. I feel good about the direction we are going as an organization and the changes to the structure of the national team coaching staff. I am looking forward to working with them to continue to improve and provide opportunities for Virginia wrestlers and Virginia wrestling."

VAVWA Executive Director, Andrew Farrar, described the new structure by saying, "having one state coaches coordinator and three national team assistant coaches, resembles the coaching structure of major college programs and other successful state chapters of USA Wrestling. In addition to being proven coaches, these guys are magnets who attract wrestlers to their respective greco and freestyle programs. These are the core coaches that will be working with our athletes and representing VAWA at regional and national events. We are excited to have Coach Hill and a proven staff leading the charge and promoting the olympic styles around Virginia."

Coach Hill has been a loyal son of Hayfield Secondary School since 1980. As a student-athlete (Class of '84), he excelled in three sports, as an All-District performer in football and baseball and a district champion/state qualifier in wrestling. He then became a three-sport VMI Keydet, receiving his B.S. degree in 1988. Returning to Hayfield, he was a full-time biology teacher and head wrestling coach by 1992. He proceeded to build one of the dominant wrestling programs in the Northern Region: his Hawks won 11 district/conference championships, 6 regional championships, and 4 top-five finishes at the state level. In 2013, he won his 300th dual-meet victory. For his sustained excellence, resulting in many of his wrestlers winning scholarships at dozens of colleges, Roy has been recognized throughout the years with honors too numerous to list completely, including the Washington Post All-Metropolitan Coach of the Year (2004) and the VHSL Order of Merit Award (2006). Finally, Roy Hill is a terrific teacher. He was the 1997 Teacher of the Year at Hayfield, and most impressively, a finalist for Fairfax County Public Schools Teacher of the Year in 2002.





Israel "Izzy" Silva is the head assistant coach at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. In addition to his work with Joe Russell's Patriots, Silva just served as an assistant coach for the USA Wrestling women's freestyle world team that finished third in the 2015 World Championships in Las Vegas, Nevada. Prior to Mason, Silva worked on Chris Bonos' South Dakota State wrestling coaching staff from 2012-2014. Silva brought enthusiasm, intensity and international wrestling experience to the Jackrabbit program.

Silva served as an assistant coach at the Northwest Wrestling Regional Training Center in Corvallis, Ore., from 2009-2012. The NWRTC is an Olympic-level regional training center that provides services for senior-level athletes to achieve national and international success. The majority of his time was spent with student-athletes at Oregon State University.

Prior to his time at the NWRTC, Silva was a volunteer assistant under Bono at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga for three seasons. A two-year starter for the Mocs, Silva earned a degree in sociology. He claimed the Southern Conference heavyweight title as a senior and was part of the Mocs' SoCon team championship in 2006.

Silva put together an impressive post-collegiate career on the international wrestling stage, as well. He is a four-time World Team Member for Mexico, three-time Freestyle Pan American medalist and 2012 Olympic alternate with over seven years of international experience.

Before wrestling at UTC, Silva was a two-time Junior College All-American at North Idaho College. He placed second at the national tournament his sophomore year and was third as a freshman. Silva led the team to the Junior College National Championship in 2002.

Mark Strickland was a 2x State Champion and a High School All-American for national powerhouse Great Bridge High School in Virginia. From there he went to Garden City Junior College, where he was an undefeated National Champion his first year. He then had the honor of starting for John Smith at Oklahoma State University. After OSU, Mark returned to finish his career at ODU where he won the CAA Conference and the Most Outstanding Wrestler award (1988). After college graduation, with Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Old Dominion, Mark went back to his Alma Mater, serving as an assistant for three years at Great Bridge. He then moved to New Orleans, where he was an assistant for one year before taking over the reigns as head coach at Jesuit High School. Leading Jesuit to win 3 State Championships in a row and ranked among the top 25 teams in the USA by WIN Magazine.

Coach Strickland's former pupils have gone onto enjoy successful careers at all levels of collegiate wrestling, most notably Joey Dance and Brandon Jeske who are both ranked in the preseason Division One Top 20 at 125 lbs. Few coaches care for their athletes as much as Coach Strickland. Known for his passion and intensity, Mark Strickland will continue to bring positive energy to the Virginia national teams.





Sonny Close has been an integral part of the Christiansburg High School, Virginia Elite Wrestling Club and the Blue Demon Wrestling Club since 2011. Originally from New York, Sonny wrestled under Virginia legend Dick Glover at the Woodberry Forest School in Orange, VA. He was captain of his high-school team, earning the most falls award and making First Team All Central Virginia. Coach Close attended the University of Virginia, where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees. Before coming to Christiansburg in 2011, he served as an assistant coach with Woodberry Forest's wrestling team. A true student of the sport, Coach Close is a very technical coach who has produced Fargo All-Americans, Fargo champions, age level world team members and Division one All-Americans. No stranger to USA Wrestling, Coach Close has served as the Junior Director and member of the VAWA National team coaching staff since the summer of 2010.

