

Our Third Meritorious Inductee in the Class of 2012 is:

Ricky Bonomo

Ricky Bonomo, along with his twin brother Rocky got their first taste of wrestling in grade school at Lake-Lehman. Rick recalled that we really didn't like it. The twins wrestled perhaps a dozen bouts and turned their attention to mini football, baseball and other youth sports. In junior high, the twins again wrestled; Rick was a district champ and Rocky did well, too. In ninth grade the twins again went out for the team, but heading into their sophomore year, they figured they had enough. Wrestling was too stressful.

But the decision turned out not to be theirs alone. That year the Lake-Lehman High School had a new wrestling coach, Floyd Shorty Hitchcock, who won an NCAA title at Bloomsburg in 1977 at 174 pounds.

Hitchcock had heard about the twins and heard that they weren't planning to wrestle. He set out to convince them otherwise. He was trying to fill out the lower weights, 105, 112, and 119. Rick said, I can remember him knocking on the door while we were in class, biology class for instance, trying to talk us into it. He was very persistent.

In the end, Hitchcock got his way. The twins wrestled the next three years and in their senior seasons, each won a state championship, Rick at 112 and Rocky at 119.

Throughout, Hitchcock kept a close eye on the twins making sure they did not miss a practice. In hindsight, both Bonomos are grateful for Hitchcock's hectoring.

If it wasn't for that guy, Rick said, I don't know where we'd be.

After graduating from Lake-Lehman High School, neither of the twins intended to go to college. Instead, they both took jobs at a

book factory in Dupont, but as the months went by, college began to look a lot better. Hitchcock got word that the twins were interested in college and alerted Roger Sanders, wrestling coach at Bloomsburg University.

As a freshman at Bloomsburg, Rick went 26-5-1, won the PA State Athletic Conference 118-pound crown and finished second at the EWLs. As a sophomore, he went 34-2 and reached the NCAA final at Oklahoma City, where he beat Iowa's Matt Egeland, 17-3. The following year, Rick went 28-3 and downed Al Palacio of the University of North Carolina 9-4 in the NCAA final. As a senior, Rick went 28-2 and again reached the 118-pound final, meeting Penn State's Jim Martin, a Danville native, for the fifth time in their college careers and beating him for the fifth time, 8-4. This earned Rick his third straight national championship.

"He was one of the most complete wrestlers I've ever seen," said Roger Sanders. "He is the best athlete I have ever coached. He had such God-given talent."

Rick Bonomo is the most decorated wrestler in Bloomsburg University history. Three times an NCAA, EWL and PSAC champion, he put together a career record of 116-12-3. Rick also won three PSAC and EWL Wrestler of the Year awards. He joins his brother Rocky as a member of the Bloomsburg University and Luzerne County Halls of Fame and is also a Pennsylvania and EWL Hall of Famer. He is one of only three Pennsylvania-born three-time NCAA Champions. He is regarded as one of the best wrestling clinicians in the country.

After College, Rick became the assistant wrestling coach at Cedar Cliff High School and also started his own wrestling training clinic.

Rick currently resides with his wife Tanya and their three children in Harrisburg where he recently started a new commercial venture called "Grapplers Crab Shack" selling fresh crabs - retail and wholesale to restaurants.

