

# For Immediate Release

## EIWA Hall of Fame Committee

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### EIWA Hall of Fame Announces Class of 2019

**Bethlehem, PA** – The Hall of Fame Committee of the Eastern Intercollegiate Wrestling Association (EIWA), college wrestling’s oldest conference, is proud to announce that four new members have been elected for membership into the EIWA Hall of Fame.

Members of the Class of 2019 include James Bennett of Yale University, Mark Kerr of Syracuse University, Jordan Leen of Cornell University and Larry Sheridan of Lehigh University. The induction ceremony will take place on Saturday, March 9, 2019 at Binghamton University in Binghamton, NY, immediately preceding the finals of the annual EIWA championships.

EIWA Hall of Fame Chairman Jamie Moffatt comments on the new inductees: *"The EIWA Hall of Fame Committee has selected four outstanding individuals to be inducted into the 2019 EIWA Hall of Fame. Each of these inductees have had a tremendous impact on the EIWA. James Bennett, Mark Kerr and Jordan Leen all won individual NCAA championships as undergraduates and continued to contribute to the sport beyond their college years. Larry Sheridan maintained his life-long close connection to wrestling and the EIWA in various capacities for more than 50 years. We are honored to include these gentlemen into our Hall of Fame."*

#### **James Bennett, Yale, Class of 1976**

Jim Bennett grew up in Corry, Pennsylvania and graduated from Corry Area High School where he competed in cross country, track and field and wrestling, winning three state championships in two different sports. He won two PIAA Class A State Championships in the pole vault and the PIAA State Championship in wrestling.

Bennett graduated from Yale University in 1976 with honors in economics and Russian Studies. During his collegiate wrestling career, he amassed a dual meet record of 49 wins and 4 losses. He was named All-Ivy all four of his years at Yale.

A two-time EIWA runner-up, Bennett also twice achieved All-American honors. As a junior competing at the NCAA Division I National Championships, he won the NCAA title at 142 pounds. He came from an unseeded position to take home the championship, beating the first seed from Oklahoma State in the

quarterfinals, the fifth seed from Purdue in the semifinals, and the third seed from Northwestern in the finals.

In 1976, his senior year, Bennett medically defaulted in the EIWA finals to place second. At the NCAAs, he placed fourth in a very tough weight class, coming in behind only Chuck Yagla, Pete Galea and Mark Churella.

While studying at Harvard Business School, he was Assistant Coach for the Harvard University Wrestling team. Bennett also trained for the US Olympic team winning the Northeast Regional Olympic Freestyle Trials and finishing in the top eight at the National Trials in 1980. Bennett has been elected to the Corry Sports Hall of Fame, the Erie County Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame and the Pennsylvania State Wrestling Hall of Fame.

As President of the Yale Wrestling Association he has sought to reinstate Yale varsity wrestling since it was dropped in 1991. He has been actively assisting wrestling programs at the youth, high school, college and national levels through various organizations. Bennett and his wife, Amy, are active in athletic and educational philanthropy through the James and Amy Bennett Foundation. Bennett has been selected as the Team Leader for the USA Women's National Team for the four-year cycle ending with the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

After receiving an MBA from Harvard, Bennett began his career in investment banking at Kidder, Peabody. Thereafter, he has worked in the investment business and is the founder and President of Bennett Management.

Currently, Bennett resides in New Canaan, Connecticut with his wife and their two daughters.

### **Mark Kerr, Syracuse, Class of 1992**

Syracuse University was known for its NCAA championship 'big men' – Art Baker, Jim Nance, Tom Schlendorf – in the collegiate wrestling era of the 1960s. A generation later, Mark Kerr joined that exclusive group.

A native of Toledo, Ohio, Kerr played football, baseball, track and wrestling at Toledo Waite high school. He was best at wrestling, winning the Ohio Division 1 state championship at 175 pounds in 1986.

Kerr then headed to Syracuse University where he excelled on the mats. Kerr placed second at the EIWA tournament during his freshman year. His sophomore year, Kerr won the 190-pound EIWA title, defeating Lehigh's future NCAA champion, Matt Ruppel, in the finals.

He sat out the following season but came back in 1991 to take home another EIWA title at 190 pounds. Although just a junior, Kerr won the Fletcher Award, presented to the wrestler who has scored the most team points during his EIWA tournament career.

Kerr's senior year was his finest. He won his third EIWA title at 190 pounds breezing through the tournament by earning bonus points in all his matches. He became just the second wrestler in the history of the EIWA to win the Fletcher Award twice.

While shut out at the NCAA tournament during his first three years of qualifying, Kerr dominated the 190-pound NCAA field in 1992 at Oklahoma City. Seeded fourth, Kerr defeated the top-seed, Rex Holman of Ohio State, in the semifinals. He then faced 28-year-old Randy Couture of Oklahoma State, the prior year runner-up, in the finals. Kerr won his NCAA title by recording a 12-4 major decision over the local favorite.

Kerr enjoyed a successful Freestyle wrestling career after college. In 1993 and 1994 he was the USA World Team Trials champion. He placed 7<sup>th</sup> at 220 pounds in the FILA World Championships in 1993 in Toronto. In 1994 Kerr won the USA Senior Freestyle championship at 220 pounds and finished second at the World Cup. He was a silver medalist at the 1995 Pan-American Games.

After narrowly missing out on making the 1996 USA Olympic team, Kerr turned his attention to a career in Mixed Martial Arts where he became a two-time UFC heavyweight champion.

Kerr resides in Scottsdale, Arizona.

### **Jordan Leen, Cornell, Class of 2009**

Jordan Leen is believed to be the first wrestler from the state of Tennessee to be inducted into the Eastern Intercollegiate Wrestling Association (EIWA) Hall of Fame.

In high school, Leen was four-time state champion at the Baylor School, winning titles in four different weight classes from 2001 to 2004. He was named the Most Outstanding Wrestler at the state tournament his senior year. Upon graduation, Leen was the all-time winningest wrestler in Tennessee with 214 victories. During his senior year, he was the 130-pound national champion at the National High School Seniors Championships. For his efforts at the nationals, he was featured in Sports Illustrated's "Faces in the Crowd."

Leen compiled an impressive collegiate record at Cornell University posting a career record of 118 victories against 29 defeats while garnering All-Ivy League First Team honors all four years and NCAA All-American honors in three seasons. A two-time champion, one-time runner-up and one-time third place finisher in the EIWA, Leen qualified four times for the NCAAs. He won the NCAA tournament in 2008, placed third in 2009 and eighth in 2007.

As a junior, Leen entered the NCAA tournament as the eighth seed at 157 pounds. He caught fire and defeated a returning All-American in the first round, the returning national champion in the quarter-finals and the tournament's number two seed in the finals to become the NCAA champion. He was named the EIWA Wrestler of the Year for the 2007-08 season

Leen captained Cornell's EIWA championship teams both his junior and senior seasons. Based on his 3.4 GPA in a pre-med curriculum, he was named to the first team Academic All-American squad on three occasions.

The son of a former college wrestling coach from Oklahoma, Leen's Hall of Fame career has come full circle, as he now is a college coach himself. He is currently the associate head coach at the University of Pittsburgh after serving as an assistant at Duke University and associate head coach at the University of Virginia.

Leen and his wife, Paige, live in Pittsburgh with their two sons, Judah and Elijah.

### **Larry Sheridan, Lehigh, Class of 1958**

Larry Sheridan has been around EIWA wrestling for 86 years – his entire lifetime.

The son of Billy Sheridan, Lehigh's iconic Hall of Fame wrestling coach, was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania where he still resides. As a teen he wrestled for Bethlehem High School (now Liberty High School) and for Mercersburg Academy, winning the National Prep School title at 154 pounds in 1950. He wrestled briefly for Lehigh University, but had to curtail competing in the sport as a sophomore due to repeated knee injuries.

Shortly after his graduation from Lehigh, Sheridan became a wrestling official, a position that he excelled at for nearly 20 years. In 1968 he began announcing wrestling matches for Channel 39 in the Lehigh Valley along with EIWA Hall of Famer, Shel Siegel. The twosome covered all Lehigh meets, the EIWA finals, the PIAA finals, several East-West duals and several Russia vs USA matches. He retired from wrestling announcing for Channel 39 in 1994.

In 1996, Sheridan succeeded Gene Mills as Chairman of the EIWA Hall of Fame committee, a post that he held for 17 years.

During his wrestling associated career, Sheridan received awards from numerous professional groups including the Lehigh Valley Wrestling Officials Association, the EIWA Wrestling Officials Association, the EIWA Coaches Association, the Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters and the National Wrestling Media Association. He has previously been inducted into the following Hall of Fames: District XI (PA); PA Wrestling Coaches; and the National Wrestling Hall of Fame (Pennsylvania chapter).

Sheridan carved out a successful business career in the real estate field. He spent 26 years with Bethlehem Steel, retiring as Assistant Manager of Corporate Real Estate. He then worked for ABE Airport as Director of Real Estate and closed his career as Managing Director for Marquard Real Estate.

Sheridan has four children: William (Bill) Sheridan, Meg Fogarty, Mary Kate McKenna and Betsy Sheridan, along with seven grandchildren. His wife of 58 years, Ellen, passed away in January 2015.