**Venturi Takes the Reigns of the UTA Wrestling Program**

**7 minutes with Coach Venturi**

**4/21/18**

**MAV**: *How did you first get involved in the sport of wrestling?*  
**COACH VENTURI**

I started as a freshman at South Houston HS in Houston, TX. I tried out for the basketball team but didn’t make the cut. As part of my fallback plan, I approached the wrestling coach Bernie Gordon and he invited me to join the team. I was not familiar with scholastic wrestling before approaching Coach Gordon. I enjoyed the first practice and stuck with it.

**MAV:***Coach please tell us about your wrestling background starting out in Houston and ending in the Olympic Training Center in Colorado?*

***COACH VENTURI:***

I didn’t have a wrestling pedigree before joining the SoHo team. Coach Gordon’s strategy as a wrester was to attack relentlessly and work for a pin. He would often say, “Your best defense was a good offense”. This is what he taught and what we learned. As a senior, I won State and placed at High School Nationals. I was approached by a few colleges (OU, UTC) but chose Princeton for the academic prestige. At Princeton, I had a good experience and great coaches. There, I realized some wrestling success but wanted more, so I continued wrestling after graduating in 2002. During the 2000 Olympic year, I took a sabbatical to train at the Olympic Training Center (OTC) in Colorado. During that time I was a member of the Resident athlete program. After graduating in 2002, I was re-invited to train at the OTC and was a member Freestyle resident athlete program from 2003 -2004. The experience and coaching staff was amazing.

**MAV**: *How long have you coached the sport of wrestling?*  
**COACH VENTURI**:

I coached at the University of Dubuque for one season before returning to the Olympic Training Center. I returned to coaching in the fall 2015 at the University of Houston – Downtown.

**MAV**: *Who was your biggest influence in the sport?*  
**COACH VENTURI**:

I have been most influenced by my high school wrestling Coach Bernie Gordon. There are many people who would identify with this. He introduced me to wrestling and was one of my biggest fans.

**MAV**: *What do you enjoy most about coaching?*  
**COACH VENTURI***.*

I enjoy working with the wresters to develop a mat strategy and skillset that works and watching them execute this successfully in competition.

**MAV**: *What was attractive about the opportunity to take on the Head Coaching position at UT-Arlington?*  
**COACH VENTURI**:

Gene Brown and his predecessors have created a successful program. The DFW area is a good market to pull from. UTA is an attractive and affordable school with many wrestlers already walking the campus.

**MAV:** *What are your plans from this point until the beginning of the 2018 season?*

**COACH VENTURI**

Raise awareness and market the program to local high schools and develop an offseason program with the existing team to prep for the upcoming season.

**MAV**: *When it comes to recruiting, what type of student athlete are you looking for in a wrestler?*  
**COACH VENTURI**

Ideally we want a student athlete who is serious about graduating and competing at the college level. Eligibility and accountability matters as well.

**MAV:***What are your short and long-term goals for the program?*  
**COACH VENTURI**:

Short term: Market the program and complete a full roster for both the men’s and women’s teams. Place 3x All-Americans. Long-term: Win conference and place a full team into Nationals.

**MAV**:*In your opinion, what can the Texas Wrestling Community do to grow support of College Wrestling?*  
**COACH VENTURI***:*

Wrestling ambassadors must lobby with Universities to fund programs. It also helps to have a wrestling advocate in the Athletic administration to sponsor the program. Aligning gender equity laws with the growing women’s programs in TX also makes sense.

**Mav**: *What do you foresee happing with college level wrestling in Texas in the next several years?*  
**COACH VENTURI:**

With the growing number of youth and high school programs, improved quality of wrestling and growing student-led initiatives, I expect a growing interest in TX College wrestling. As programs mature, I expect that the Texas schools will be more competitive against their non-Texas peers.

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