

## Former Blugold Wrestling Coach Don Parker Honored

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (UWECBlugolds.com) - In a career full of milestones, former UW-Eau Claire wrestling head coach Don Parker was able to claim yet another one this summer.

On August 15 in Wisconsin Dells, Wis., Parker was inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame as part of the Wisconsin chapter and was also awarded the Medal of Courage.

"It is a great honor to be among the many great wrestlers that make up that museum," Parker said.

He certainly fits in with that prestigious company. In his Eau Claire career, Parker has coached a national champion, 13 All-Americans and 15 conference champions. He has won Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) Coach of the Year honors and his team has taken third in the conference championship twice. His teams' highest finish at nationals was a tie for 16th. Before the Blugolds were in the NCAA, Parker's teams advanced to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Championships nine times. The best finish for those Blugolds was 15th place. He coached at Eau Claire for 32 years before retiring in 2009.

This summer's induction, which included a social hour, a banquet and a presentation, was not the first hall of fame induction for Parker. He also is in the Glen Brand Wrestling Hall of Fame of Iowa and the NCAA Division II Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

As for the National Wrestling Hall of Fame ceremonies, Parker said reminiscing with former Blugolds was one of the highlights.

"At the social hour I was reunited with a number of UWEC alumni," he said. "It was nice to catch up on what is going on with them and their families."

Parker was given a jacket and a trophy during the speeches and presentations. A replica of the trophy will be on display at the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in Stillwater, Okla.

Parker is the first member of the Wisconsin chapter to win the Medal of Courage, which goes to someone who has overcome misfortune in their wrestling career. Parker's journey involved coaching and teaching after a fall from a tree stand in 1998 caused a severe spinal cord injury that put him in a wheelchair.

Parker, who was an All-American and national title winner in his wrestling days at Northern Iowa University, said this special honor was just like his other accolades -- it came with great surprise.

"It was a shock," he said. "I have been inducted into other hall of fames and didn't expect any of them. My family members were happy for me."