

# I'm Just Saying: Crystal Lake South grad Nick Fontanetta, wrestling coach

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Nick Fontanetta graduated from Crystal Lake South with the best individual wrestling record in school history (143-11). He took third place at the 2010 state tournament as a sophomore and sixth place as a junior in 2011. He was 19-1 in his senior year when a shoulder injury ended his high school career. Now, he's moved on to coaching. He joined Marian Central as an assistant for the 2014-2015 season and ISI Wrestling club earlier this year.

I was pretty young, like 31/2 or 4, and my brother was a couple years older. My dad saw an ad in the newspaper for the Crystal Lake Wizards. He asked us, "Do you guys want to give it a shot?" My older brother said, "Yeah." So, of course, I'm like, "Yeah, I'm going to get in there and do what my older brother is doing."

I came in and I fell in love right away. I was a pretty aggressive little kid. Once I got a little bit of technique, I started excelling.

I think you need to be able to motivate yourself and motivate the people around you. You have to really, really buckle down and know what you're there for. If you're just in there every day thinking you want to go home, you're not going to succeed. You're just going to fall behind and get left in the dust. The guys who are working really hard, the guys who are in there every day with a goal and expectations for the end of the season, those are the guys who are usually sticking it out.

(My record) just shows a lot of hard work can pay off. It was really an honor to earn that. It's not something a lot of people can do, so I'm very proud of that.

I dislocated my shoulder (my senior year) and had some problems with my rotator cuff. It was kind of a letdown. It was hard at first. But over the years, I've kind of come to terms with it. It's one of those things that it just happened. Now I'm kind of giving back to the sport in a new way.

(Coaching) is not that much different in the room, because I like wrestling around with the guys and showing them some technique here and there. But when you get out there in the meets and the tournaments, it's a whole different feel. You're not just worrying about yourself. You're worrying about 14 other guys on the mat and fighting for calls for them and stuff. It's a whole different game once you're at the meets.

My goal is just to motivate them. It doesn't have to be wrestling. Some guys have different abilities, I realize that. You just want them to be able to succeed in whatever they do. Let them know that they can put their head down and get through any problem, whether it's work, school, anything.

When I saw Crystal Lake South's Eric Barone win the state championship for the first time in school history, that was awesome. I was so ecstatic. That's a great accomplishment for him, as well as the

school. It can really bring some more kids through there. They've got someone now to look up to. They can follow in his footsteps to get more state championships.

I would definitely like to run either the Crystal Lake Wizards club or something like that or a high school club. It doesn't really matter.

My love is wrestling. I'll always be around this sport until I die.

- I'm Just Saying is a regular Sunday feature with sports reporter Mike DeFabo. If you have a suggestion, send it to [mdefabo@shawmedia.com](mailto:mdefabo@shawmedia.com) or on Twitter @MikeDeFabo.

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