



## Tucker Hurst awarded 2016 Michael Jackson Scholarship

Tucker Hurst, a senior wrestler for the Woodford County High School wrestling team, was named the 13th recipient of the Michael Jackson Memorial Scholarship award in a short ceremony in the high school library on Thursday, June 19.

According to Debbie Jackson, Michael Jackson's mother and one of the creators of the scholarship award, there were a number of key factors that led to Hurst's selection as this year's award winner.

"Tucker truly deserves the honor of being awarded the Jackson Memorial Wrestling Scholarship," said Debbie Jackson. "I was impressed with Tucker's motivation, determination, and work ethic which enabled him to become one of the best wrestlers in the state. Tucker was a positive role model on the wrestling team by always exhibiting team spirit and good sportsmanship."

Added WCHS head wrestling coach Rusty Parks Jr., "In his entire high school career, Tucker has been a natural born leader. He's led the team and wanted to win. That's the bottom line when it comes to Tucker. He's very competitive. ... His work ethic is contagious in the wrestling room and he really helped out with our younger kids, and even our older kids when he was younger; winning captains' awards when he was a young kid. So, a great work ethic, great mentality and he's got a bright future ahead of him. I wish he would have wrestled though."

According to Hurst, there will not be any wrestling in his future college plans. He will be attending Western Kentucky University in the fall where he will major in engineering.

Hurst joins 12 other Mat Jackets who have received this award, which was named in honor of former WCHS wrestler Michael Jackson, who was killed in a car accident in 2002.

Past winners of the award include Jack Fallon (2015), Nathan Boston (2014), Wesley Morris (2012), Curtis Graham (2011), Robert Bracco (2010), Harrison Courtney (2009), Chad Scott (2008), Steven Butler (2007), Rusty Parks Jr. (2006), Nick Neessen (2005), John Barrett (2004), and Jamison Large (2003).

The award was created by Jackson's parents, Debbie and Guy Jackson, to ensure their son's legacy lives on through this award.

According to the Jacksons, "The Michael Jackson Wrestling Scholarship was created in memory of Christopher Michael Jackson who was fatally injured in a car accident on December 15, 2002.

Michael was a varsity wrestler for four years at Woodford County High School (1996-2000). He won the 135-lb. Kentucky High School Wrestling Championship title his senior year. Michael's relentless determination, unceasing work ethic, team spirit, exemplary sportsmanship, and respect for his coaches, fellow teammates, referees, and opponents made him a true champion.

"The Michael Jackson Wrestling Scholarship is awarded annually to a Woodford County High School senior wrestler who is planning to attend college. The recipients of this award exemplify the qualities exhibit by Michael as an athlete at Woodford County High School."

Hurst began his wrestling career while in elementary school, where he participated in youth wrestling and went two-and-out at state in fifth grade.

He then moved up to middle school and in sixth grade finished fourth at state, and then in seventh grade finished second at state.

Hurst's success in middle school helped him move up to high school varsity in eighth grade and under the direction of co-head coaches Joe Carr Sr. and Joe Carr Jr., and when they retired, under head coach Rusty Park Jr., his career blossomed.

All told during his high school career, Hurst was a five-year varsity wrestler and a three-time team captain. He won 161 matches, was a three-time state placer (1st in 2014, and 4th in 2015 and 2016), and a two-time region champion.

His biggest wrestling accomplishment occurred in 2014 when he won a state championship in the 106-pound weight division. However, for Hurst, the biggest highlight of his wrestling career was something much more personal.

"The highlight of my career would probably just be being part of the Woodford (wrestling) family," said Hurst. "It just makes you feel more at home having everyone around you and everything; every time you practice, every time you're on the mat, every tournament you go to. And, I just think that's just the best part of wrestling for Woodford County."

One of the keys to Hurst's success at Woodford were the coaches he had throughout his career.

"Well it started out with the best coaches in the state, Joe Joe (Carr Jr.) and Coach (Joe) Carr (Sr.) in high school, who were really good to have," said Hurst. "They helped me learn a lot more. They helped me get more into my technique then just going out there and trying to wrestle. They really helped me out a lot.

"Then when they stepped down, and Rusty went up, it was not much different because he was already in the (wrestling) room with me in high school. He was coaching me most of the time in practice and stuff. And, he's also family, so he was sometimes harder on me then everyone else. So, it didn't really take much away when they (the Carrs) left. It just made it more family oriented. Also, all the younger guys coming into the room that Rusty brought to wrestle around with us was nice, too."

While the coaches were a positive influence in his wrestling career, Hurst makes sure to note how important his teammates were to him as well.

"If it weren't for my teammates, I probably wouldn't be the wrestler I am now," said Hurst. "I probably would have quit a long time ago; having to cut weight and everything. Just being around other people doing the same thing, helping you go through practice and everything, it just helps out a lot."

So with high school now complete and college just on the horizon, what is the biggest lesson Hurst will take with him into his future that he learned during his career as a WCHS Mat Jacket?

"(Life) has its ups and downs, and you've just got to stay along for the ride," he said. "Ride it all the way through and you always end up on top if you try hard enough."

For more information about the Michael Jackson Wrestling Scholarship, and the story of Michael Jackson, the scholarship's history, its past winners and how you can donate to the scholarship, go to [MichaelJacksonWrestlingScholarship.org](http://MichaelJacksonWrestlingScholarship.org).