

## KUTZ RE-UPS, HEADS ARMY TEAM



**Sept. 29, 2011, Bethlehem, PA:** After more than six years of service to Lehigh and Lehigh Valley Athletic Club Wrestling (3<sup>rd</sup>-most at LU since 1994), **JASON KUTZ** departed Sept. 28 to become the 1st-ever freestyle coach for the U.S. Army's World Class Athletes Program in Colorado. Said Kutz a few days ago: "I regret the timing of leaving at this time in the coaching calendar. The LVAC Board and Pat made it a difficult decision for me, as I leave open one of the best coaching positions anywhere in the country....."

".....when you think about the complex nature of job descriptions for college coaches, including recruiting, admissions, financial aid and the NCAA Rule Book, I think being a Club head coach represents one of the most pure coaching opportunities in the sport." Speaking of his alma mater's future: "It's a program you can deeply believe in, with one of the top coaching staffs nationally. The wheels are in motion to make a serious run at an NCAA team title."

A former Sargeant during ten prior years of service, Jason has re-enlisted in the Army with full benefits, including accrued pension. He'll report to wrestling coach Shon Lewis, who coached Jason during his competitive career. Lewis will retain the Army's Greco-Roman team coaching role, which currently boasts 11 of the USA's Top 21 and three of seven spots on the 2011 U.S. World Team.

Kutz's freestyle team will train at the Olympic Training Center and also in Fort Carson, CO – where Jason was last stationed before joining Lehigh's coaching staff. Jason's versatile coaching resume (including a year as East Stroudsburg U's Head Coach before they dropped to Div. III), includes two years as full-time LU asst, five as bench coach and the last four plus years as Head Coach for the LVAC. Serving two Lehigh head coaches, **Pat Santoro** and **Greg Strobel** (for whom Jason served as senior captain), Kutzy will be fondly remembered as a spirited 'go-to' guy."



Jason worked side-by-side with Santoro ....



....and closely with LVAC events, Board and donors

Among LVAC roles, he helped recruit and coach wrestlers from age 10 up to Olympian Steve Mocco and world class Keith Gavin (whose stock in freestyle soared since arriving in Bethlehem). Jason's Club line-up at times featured eight elite athletes, with five ranked Top 3 at times in Senior freestyle rankings of USA Wrestling (Mocco, Gavin, Pat Cummins, Matt Valenti, Mike Poeta).

At the 2009 Sunkist International Open, he coached a then record number of Lehigh Valley Athletic Club athletes (5) sponsored, with the quintet earning the tournament's best pct. of places won vs. entries (5-for-5). The LVAC led all clubs with five pins (among 23 total) and placed 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. At the 2011 World Team Trials, Mocco and Gavin became the Club's first duo to earn alternate berths on a U.S. World Team.



Whether Kutz as athlete (rt) or ...



.....Kutz as Coach, his intensity abounded

He also oversaw all LVAC youth clinics – on top of assisting Pat Santoro in the LU practice room, especially with the light weights (still weighing low to mid-140's). Kutz also helped improve the Club's logo and other apparel, including singlets that stand out in national competition vs. other clubs. Says Denny Diehl after 11 years of PR and fund-raising work for the Club: "Kutz has been certainly been my go-to guy administratively, not just vital to the wrestlers and coaches. He's done as much for the organization as humanly possible, and then some. He'll be missed – and it'll be hard to replace his feisty spirit on our behalf, but he's helped mold the position into one greatly respected by many nationally, not just his local supporters."

In the past two years, Kutz also served as an additional assistant coach to USAW National Coach, Zeke Jones, assisting at the Pan Am Championships in Rionegro, Columbia, the Outstanding Ukrainian Wrestlers Memorial International and other overseas locations.

A former wrestler for the U.S. Army, Kutz is the only Lehigh wrestler since Olympic Champion, Bobby Weaver to earn a berth, or alternate spot, on a USA World Team. Competing at 125.5 and 132 pounds, he placed 6<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the U.S. World Team Trials; 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> at the 2000 and 2004 Olympic Trials, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> at the Senior National Open and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the World Military Wrestling Championships. Before college, Kutz placed 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in Greco-Roman in the Junior World Cadet Championships. In high school he placed third at PA States, before adding a University National Freestyle title during his junior year at Lehigh.

At Lehigh, Kutz started out 5-13 W/L in duals, but finished with 24 straight dual wins (6<sup>th</sup>-best in LU history at the time). In his final (33-4) senior year in '96, he won 24 straight season bouts as team captain, then won an EIWA title at 126, before earning a #6 seed at the NCAA Championships.

A native of Altoona, PA, Jason earned a B.S. in biology. He and his wife, Christen, a physician's assistant and medical research specialist, who was also wooed with a new job opportunity out West, will return to the Rocky Mountains while looking for a new home near Colorado Springs with their two girls, Payton (9) and Emerson (5).