



### Jesse Castro Head Coach Third Season

For most head coaches, taking a non-existent program to the highest level of competition takes years of blood, sweat and tears. But not for Flames head wrestling coach Jesse Castro.

Castro was hired as the program's third head coach on Aug. 8, 2005, the second step in reestablishing a program which had been dormant since the close of the 1994 season.

Castro wasn't satisfied with merely restarting the program, but rather helping it quickly regain its prior status as a program of focus in the wrestling community.

However, not even the most devoted of Liberty's wrestling alumni could have foreseen what took place during the 2006-07 season. What began in a multi-dual meet at Virginia Tech on Nov. 5 ended with what every wrestling program dreams of, when Liberty sent four grapplers to the 2007 NCAA National Wrestling Championship in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Along the way, Castro managed to lead the Flames to a 16-8 dual meet record, a perfect 5-0 record at home and a team championship at the NCAA East Regionals. Castro was duly honored prior to the NCAA National Championship, as he was named the NCAA East Regional Coach of the Year, a first for Liberty's wrestling program.

To prove that his Flames were not just a one-year wonder, Castro challenged his squad the following year, testing Liberty by entering the Flames into some of the tougher competition across the country.

The daunting 2007-08 schedule featured events like the Hoosier Duals, the Brockport/Oklahoma Gold Tournament and the Wendy's Big Classic Duals, giving Liberty an opportunity to grapple with the nation's elite programs.

Although the Flames' dual meet record wasn't as jaw-dropping as the previous season, 11-12-1, Liberty proved that it belonged at that top level of competition, including an 18-18 draw with defending ACC champion N.C. State and a victory at the Eastern Regional Duals.

The battle-tested Flames used the stiff competition to their advantage, as on March 9, in front of their own home crowd, Liberty captured its second straight NCAA East Regional title. The day ended with Liberty claiming six weight class victories, to go along with another NCAA East Regional Coach of the Year honor for Castro.

Two weeks later, Castro took a program-best six wrestlers to the NCAA National Championship, where two of his grapplers advanced to the Round of 16, another first for the ever-growing program.

Castro came to Liberty from Kingsway Regional High School in Woolwich, N.J., where he served from 1997-2005 as a health and physical education teacher (grades 9-12), head wrestling coach, head cross country coach and head tennis coach (1997-2001).

During his eight seasons at the helm of the Kingsway Regional wrestling program, Castro guided the program to a 124-29 record, five conference and South Jersey sectional championships, four district titles and a state championship in 1998.

Kingsway Regional High School was ranked in the Top 20 of the state of New Jersey six out of his last eight years (out of 384 schools) at the school. Castro, a three-time District Coach of the Year, coached 34 individual district champions, 10 state place winners, four regional

champions and one state champion, while 11 of his graduates currently wrestle at the collegiate level.

"I am both thankful and excited about the upstart of Liberty University wrestling," commented Castro. "This program has in large part contributed to who I am today, under the influence of former coaches Bob Bonheim and Don Shuler. To offer high school wrestlers an opportunity to compete at an NCAA Division I level, while receiving an education at a highly reputable Christian university is an honor and a privilege."

Castro got his start as a head coach at Norwich University in Northfield, Vt., where he served as head wrestling and cross country coach from 1988 to 1997 and as an assistant professor in the Health and Physical Education Department.

While at Norwich, the Cadets were three-time New England College Conference Wrestling Association runners-up, as he guided the program to a 103-47 record. Four times, the Cadets were ranked in the Top 20 in the country, while Norwich produced 53 All-New England wrestlers, nine All-Americans, two national finalists and one national champion during Castro's tenure.

He was named New England College Conference Coach of the Year twice and was inducted into the Norwich University Athletic Department Hall of Fame in 2001.

Castro, no stranger to Liberty University, graduated from the university in 1981, after earning his bachelor's degree in physical education. Castro was the first four-time national champion in the history of the National Christian Collegiate Athletic Association (NCCAA), compiling a career 101-20-2 record (1977-81). Castro ranks among Liberty's elite, as he is one of six wrestlers in program history to be part of the Eagle Medal Gold Club (100 or more career wins).

In each of his four years at Liberty, Castro posted 20 or more victories, including a career-best 29-5-1 record as a senior, while finishing fourth at the NAIA national championship in 1981.

After graduation, Castro served with Athletes in Action and Campus Crusade for Christ as a competitor (1981-83) and served as the head coach of teams which traveled in Japan, Russia and South Korea from 1987-89. In 1983, Castro returned to Liberty as an assistant wrestling coach and instructor in the physical education program, where he served until 1988.

During his five-year stint with the coaching staff, Liberty had five Top 25 NCAA Division II national finishes, including three Top 10 rankings and a program best fifth-place finish at the conclusion of the 1985-86 season.

The Flames also compiled a 49-22-4 dual meet record against Division I opponents and had 19 student-athletes garner Division II All-American honors.

The native of Santa Clara, Calif., earned his master's degree in education from Lynchburg College in 1986. He and his wife, Elizabeth, have three daughters – Sarah (13), Rachel (11) and Hannah (9).





**Pat Sole**  
Assistant Coach  
Third Season

Pat Sole is in his third year as a member of the Flames wrestling coaching staff and serves as an assistant coach.

Sole played an instrumental role in helping reestablish Liberty's wrestling program, following a 12-year hiatus. During its first season back on the mats since 1994, Sole helped guide four wrestlers to the NCAA National Wrestling Championship and Liberty to a team championship at the NCAA East Regional.

Last year, Sole helped ensure that Liberty's return campaign to the wrestling mats was not a fluke, as he assisted in guiding the Flames to their second straight NCAA East Regional title.

The veteran high school coach's Parkersburg South connection played a vital role in the successful season, as Chris Daggett (184 pounds), Aaron Kelley (174 pounds) and Chad Porter (165 pounds) all came out of Sole's high school program to earn berths into the NCAA National Wrestling Championship.

Sole, a 1983 Liberty University graduate, returned to his alma mater after 18 years as a wrestling coach at Parkersburg South High School in Parkersburg, W.Va. A graduate of the prep school, Sole helped guide his alma mater to 10 state championships and three state championship runner-up finishes.

He also had five nationally-ranked teams at Parkersburg South. Individually, he coached seven high school All-Americans. Eleven wrestlers from his program went to participate in NCAA Division I programs and two wrestled at NAIA programs.

As a competitor, Sole was a high school All-American at Parkersburg South, capturing the state title twice and finishing as the runner-up once. He was the 1978 Junior World Champion and a member of the 1978 United States Junior team, while placing four times nationally in Freestyle and Greco wrestling.

Under head coach Bob Bonheim at Liberty, Sole was a National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) All-American, a 1980 Olympic Trials regional champion and a 1980 Olympic National Trials final place winner, qualifying him as an alternate for the 1980 Olympic team.

Sole finished his career with a 50-29 record, earning him a spot amongst Liberty's wrestling elite on the Eagle Medal honorable-mention club (wrestlers with 45 or more career wins).

He also served as the Flames' team captain in his junior and senior seasons. Sole and his wife Vickie have two sons, Dustin and Cody.



**Chris Gibbs**  
Graduate Assistant  
First Season

Chris Gibbs is in his first year with the Liberty Flames wrestling program, serving as a graduate assistant after recently completing a

successful collegiate career at West Liberty State College in Wheeling, W.Va.

Gibbs was a four-year letterwinner for the Hilltoppers, qualifying for the NCAA Division II National Championship three out of his four years and earning All-America honors as a senior in 2008 at 174 pounds.

The native of Ona, W.Va., continually competed against the nation's elite wrestlers, including tournament appearances at the Midlands Championships in 2006, and back-to-back years at the NWCA National Duals Tournament in Cedar Falls, Iowa in 2007 and 2008. He helped guide his squad to a seventh-place finish at the NWCA National Duals in 2007.

Gibbs completed his collegiate years ranking among West Liberty State's best in escapes, three-point near falls, technical falls and shutouts. During his senior year, he compiled a 26-9 record, placing sixth at the national tournament for head coach Brian Davis.

In May 2008, Gibbs completed his undergraduate degree at West Liberty State in business administration, with a specialization in management. He was the recipient of the "Loir Doty Memorial Award," which recognizes extraordinary commitment and exemplary effort in the pursuit of educational goals. At Liberty, he is currently pursuing his MBA in business administration.

Gibbs was a decorated high school wrestler, finishing his days under head coach Ernie Sparks at Cabell Midlands High School with a 152-22 record. He placed four consecutive years at the state tournament, including a runner-up finish in his sophomore year.



**Jonathan Peters**  
Volunteer Assistant  
First Season

Jonathan Peters is in his first year as a member of the Liberty Flames wrestling coaching staff, serving as a volunteer assistant coach.

Peters comes to Liberty after compiling a 78-12 record between the Apprentice School in 2002 and Pensacola Christian College in 2006, being able to compete only two years due to injuries.

As a freshman in 2002, Peters was a NCWA national champion at 141 pounds, while finishing as the NCWA national runner-up in 2006 at 149 pounds.

Peters captured tournament championships at seven different events during his career, including Most Outstanding Wrestler status as the 2006 NCWA South East Conference tournament and the 2005 Georgia Tech Open.

He was named the Pensacola Christian College Most Valuable Player in 2006 and was a two-time Most Valuable Wrestler at the Apprentice School (2001 and 2002).

Peters finished his high school career with a 117-28 record, posting 46 wins by fall at New Westlake High School in Waldorf, Md. He was the 2001 Maryland state champion, after finishing as the state's runner-up the prior season.

He was a first-team all-conference, Washington Post Winter All-Extra and All-Metropolitan Washington, D.C., wrestler for the Wolverines, completing his prep days ranked No. 1 in the final Maryland State wrestling association rankings.