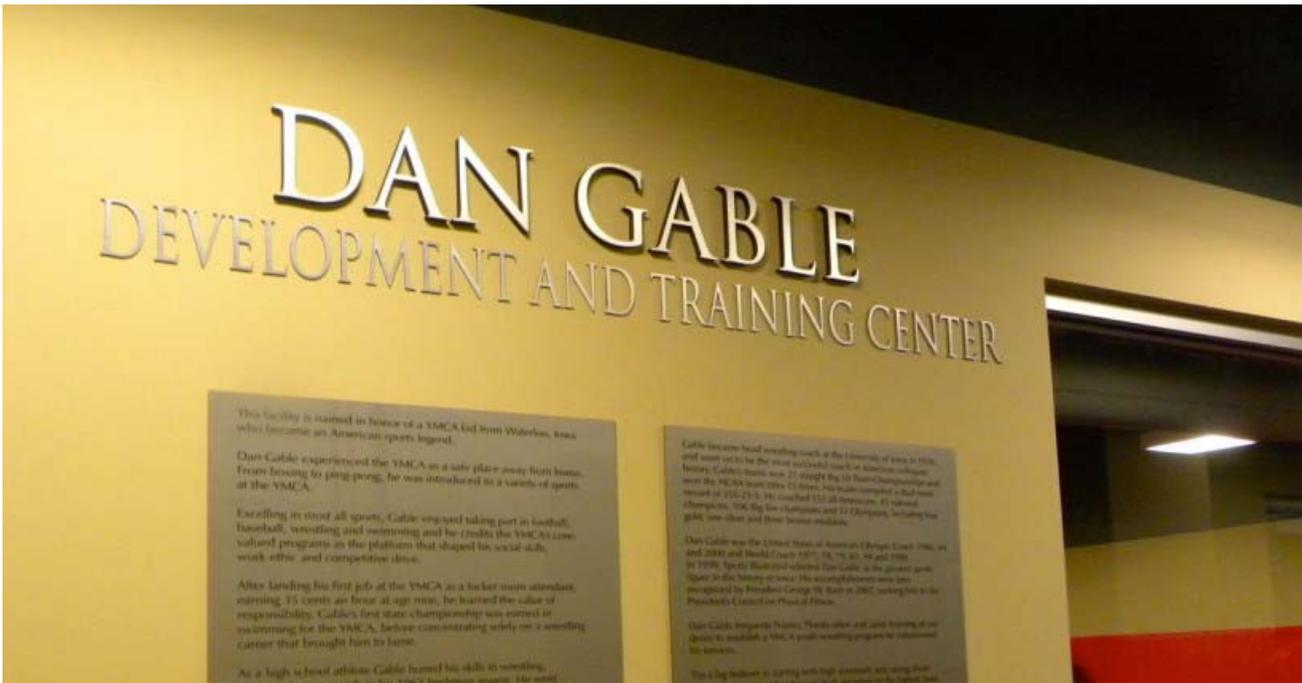


LOCAL

A slice of Iowa history: Dan Gable honored by Naples YMCA

DAILY

By Tyler Mosher @TMosh4UI Jan 16, 2016



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The face and the name behind United States wrestling, Dan Gable, sat at the head of the media table within the Greater Naples YMCA walls on Thursday evening. Wearing an Iowa-based hat and speaking with passion about the sport that has guided every step of his life, the international figure continued to provide a voice of opportunity.

For Gable, the blue-collar town of Waterloo, Iowa, and the town's local YMCA, was where his first chances to develop into a winning individual all started to take shape.

But his iconic story didn't begin on a mat.

Instead, his parents enrolled him in the swimming program where his short-lived days in the swimming pool went on to mean much more than

just a way to get involved.

"My first job was at the YMCA handing out towels, some keys and cleaning things up. I learned the value of a dollar, which was great. Competition, social skills, learning how to compete, getting a job—what more is there—it's a great way to have a background that's going to set somebody up for the rest of their life and have an edge on a lot of people," Gable documented, sharing his widespread experiences.

"I do have to say, at the YMCA I was a back-stroker and then I had to make a decision. I didn't like to be on my back."

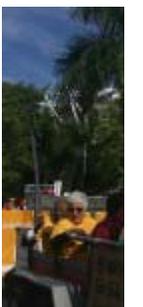
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Gable spoke like any true wrestler would, the type of person that would much rather have their hand raised after a win than being pinned by their opposition in a loss.

On Thursday, Gable's journey came full circle in his return to the YMCA.

On this night, he wasn't just a kid finding his way but a champion being crowned with the ultimate trophy. Gable, a vacationer to Naples for month-long periods of time throughout the year, was here to speak on behalf of the Greater Naples YMCA naming their new wrestling room after the former U.S. Olympic wrestling champion.



Legendary wrestling coach Dan Gable speaks with Golden Gate Titans head football coach Mike DiGrigoli at the Naples YMCA. © Tyler Mosher / Naples Herald

The Dan Gable Development and Training Center is the latest inscription on Gable's everlasting wrestling legacy.

"We have kind of settled into the Naples area, it's a great time, I love it," he said.

"It's an honor to be at this YMCA, to have my name associated with the wrestling facilities here. Even though I got my start in a YMCA, this particular one has some administration that has some wrestling background. They have a wrestling room here, they needed an upgrade a year ago, and I was able to help them out and raise some funds for some good quality mats. Now they want to go to another level."

That next-level vision includes purchasing a competition-grade wrestling mat and a \$40,000 mat hoist so that the Greater Naples YMCA can host practices and events. And who better to assist in that than Gable, who has succeeded at every corner he's turned, to help Naples, the state of Florida in

particular in providing the opportunity he had as a child.

"The YMCA took this kid off the streets even though I had good parents at home. When I say good parents, there's flaws, that's pretty normal in a town where there's a packing company," Gable admitted.

In that right, providing kids with an escape through wrestling, Gable feels Florida still has a long ways to go despite what he says is very good wrestling within the state as a whole.

"We have a lot of very good wrestling down here in Florida. Of course, in Iowa that's what we do, every year you're in and out. We win national titles or Big Ten titles or Big 12 titles—University of Northern Iowa, Wartburg—at all levels we're winning in wrestling in Iowa," he realistically boasted.

To him, Iowa is at wrestling's highest level. Florida is still looking up from the bottom, but that's because there's simply a lack of options for local wrestlers.

And that's why the Dan Gable Development and Training Center could turn into a center for growth. After all, it is coined after America's number one wrestling spokesperson and promoter.

"Florida is underdeveloped, only from the standpoint that they don't have enough places to go once you get out of high school. We have to have more college programs in Florida because we're not looking out for our Florida students coming out of high school. They want more, and you could keep them in state, so let's get with it," he put into perspective.

In Naples, "getting with it" all started with the aid and presence of Gables, just like the Olympic version of the sport was saved by he himself.

Thursday, crowds flocked—from Hawkeye fans to the Texas Christian University men's tennis team to local kids that strive to achieve in wrestling—all because they had the unique opportunity to meet a living legend that wants for others what he was given in wrestling's stomping grounds.

Simply put, Gable is yet another Iowan taking to Florida for brighter days, trying to lead the way for the greater good of wrestling.

"I just take it as a kid that had an opportunity, took that opportunity and affected millions of people because of that opportunity. And because of that opportunity, that means we have to keep looking out for people. There has to be leadership out there so people that can do this or that can affect other people in a positive manner," he likened.



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Behind Gable's leadership, Naples not only brought the man behind the name of The Dan Gable Development and Training Center to Southwest Florida—where he and his family stay—but it has also given wrestling another place to call home in paradise.

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