

Beyond the Mat: The Legendary Legacy of the Harvey Twisters

Coach Shan AI

1. A Chicagoland Powerhouse

Three Olympians. Over 100 individual state titles. One Park District in Harvey.

The Harvey Twisters are more than just a wrestling club; they are a Chicagoland institution. Operating out of the grit and hustle of the Martin Luther King Recreational Sports Center within the Harvey Park District, this program has spent decades carving its name into the granite of Illinois sports history.

This isn't just about wrestling moves. It's about a blueprint for life. The mission is simple but grueling: build character, demand discipline, & forge elite athletes who can handle the world stage. It is a community pillar that has transformed lives by turning raw potential into refined excellence.

2. The 37-Year Architect: Coach Quintroy “Quint” Harrell

The story of the Twisters is the story of Quintroy “Quint” Harrell. A product of Thornwood High School and a standout captain at the University of Wisconsin–Superior with a 64–13 record, Harrell's coaching journey began at the most grassroots level imaginable.

Long before the Hall of Fame inductions, Harrell was teaching wrestling moves in his basement to his cousins—whom his mother had adopted—and other neighborhood kids. His talent for mentorship caught the eye of club founder Don Whitted, who noticed Harrell bringing a disciplined group of kids to high school matches and invited him to join the Park District program.

Harrell took the reins as head coach in 1984 and didn't let go until 2021, a definitive 37-year tenure that earned him an induction into the IWCOA Hall of Fame (Class of 2005) and a feature on Chicago's NBC affiliate — Channel 5 News as “Someone You Should Know.”

“Nobody can beat you but yourself.” — Coach Quintroy Harrell to Joe Williams

This philosophy was the heartbeat of the room. It wasn't just advice; it was a demand for self-discipline that echoed from the practice mats to the collegiate and Olympic arenas.

3. The Olympic Triple Threat: From Harvey to the World Stage

The Twisters' training system is a factory for the world stage. The club has achieved the rare and incredible feat of producing three separate Olympians:

- **Joe Williams (2004, Athens):** A 3X NCAA Champion and a legend of the sport, Williams took his Harvey-bred toughness to the Athens Games, where he secured a 5th-place finish for Team USA.
- **T.C. Dantzler (2008, Beijing):** Representing the club's dominance in the Greco-Roman discipline, Dantzler carried the Twister legacy to the world stage in Beijing.
- **Kamal Bey (2024, Paris):** The latest addition to this prestigious lineage, Bey competed in the Greco-Roman 77kg weight class in Paris, proving the Twister system remains elite in the modern era.

4. The Stats of a Dynasty: By the Numbers

Founded in the early 1980s by Don Whitted, the program exploded into a national force under Harrell's guidance. The metrics of their success are, by any definition, unprecedented:

- **20+ IKWF Team State Titles:** A decades-long reign of dominance in the Illinois Kids Wrestling Federation.
- **100+ Individual State Champions:** The most individual titles in the history of the IKWF, a record that stands as a testament to the program's consistency.
- **6 NCAA Division I National Titles:** Earned by alumni who took the "Twister Mentality" to the highest levels of collegiate wrestling.
- **A Family Legacy:** The program was built on the backs of greats like the Williams brothers (Steve, Joe, & T.J.). Steve Williams, often cited as one of the greatest Twisters and a potential successor to Harrell before his untimely passing, remains a cornerstone of the club's history.

5. The "Twister" Mentality: More Than Just Wrestling

The Harvey Twisters are famous for an "old-school" philosophy that prioritizes the human being over the trophy. Technical mastery starts with "stance & motion," but life mastery starts with respect. Wrestlers are taught to greet every adult, dress with pride, & prioritize academics.

Coach Harrell was more than a coach; he was a father figure and a "sage" for kids from single-parent homes. He fostered a "safe space" environment, often hosting fish fries & gatherings that turned a wrestling club into a family.

This culture produced trailblazers like Tony Davis, Illinois' first 5X IKWF champion. It also created a powerful coaching tree. Former student Travis Hammons—who famously became the

first Chicago Public Schools wrestler to win a state title in over 25 years—returned to lead the program after Harrell. Today, that lineage continues with leaders like Phil Rembert, ensuring the "Twister" way survives.

6. The Enduring Impact

The Harvey Twisters didn't just win matches; they changed the landscape of Chicagoland wrestling forever. Their influence has gone national, with alumni like Donovan Whitted taking the system to Texas through his "Whitted Trained" program, proving the Harvey blueprint works anywhere.

As a "living legend" in the wrestling community, the club remains a beacon of hope and a house of champions. From a basement in Harvey to the bright lights of Paris, the Harvey Twisters have proven that with the right discipline and a dedicated mentor, there truly is no limit to what a kid from Chicagoland can achieve.

For more, please view coachshannyn.com/resources, coachshannyn.com/articles, & coachshannyn.com/international-blog.