

Nathan Day watched last week as his 8-month-old granddaughter, Rylynn, crawled on the gym floor at **Battery Creek High School**.

The Dolphins **wrestling** team had just clinched its second consecutive Lower State duals title. The coach might have been reminded of his earlier years on the job, when his daughter was tagging along in diapers.

Day stopped coaching in 1998 to watch T-ball instead of duals. He had coached **Battery Creek** to four team titles, including three in a row from 1994 to 1996.

He returned to coaching after his children were grown.

The 51-year-old now has the Dolphins **wrestling** for their sixth state championship and the second in the three years since Day has returned as head coach. They will face **Liberty** at 11 a.m. Saturday at Dreher High School.

Battery Creek wrestling team gets a special send off as they leave for the state championship.
pic.twitter.com/HFU0PoFVW8 — IP/BG Photo (@LowcountryLens) February 13, 2015

Day has frequented the stage. He still wants the “big trophies,” but his motivation is in helping each new group of wrestlers create a lasting memory

“Once this time’s gone for them, it’s gone,” Day said. “Coach (Roger) Beech and I, we’ve been down this road before. You just want it for those kids to look back on their glory days and say I was part of this.”

As Day and the **Battery Creek** program try for a sixth championship, here are five thoughts from a conversation from the veteran coach:

1. There may be such a thing as starting too young (Day’s son, Ryan, was on the mat at age 4):

“I don’t even try to get them out that young anymore. Years ago, we did that with our youth program. By the time they get to high school, they’re like ‘Man, I’m tired of this.’ Plus, whenever you coach them at that age, you’re like ‘hey, let’s play a game,’ and they get to your high school team and they’re like ‘where did this monster come from? This isn’t the same guy I knew.’

We’re going to work with fourth grade on up at Robert Smalls and practice in their gym. We’ve got to get the youth program rolling if we’re going to get where we need to be.”

2. Wrestlers haven’t changed that much during the course of his career:

“A lot of people will say kids have changed these days. I don’t think that much. There may not be as many that want to work as hard, but they’ll still do right and work hard. There’s not a big difference in now and 20 years ago, I don’t think. A lot of them love a challenge. They love to be challenged. There are plenty of them out there that like that. In the beginning of the year, kids who haven’t wrestled before, if you throw them in the meat grinder right away and say ‘let’s gowork, work, they’re like ‘forget this.’ You kind of get them where they like it and turn the heat up in January and make it tougher and hope they peak at the right time.”

3. Duals requires a different mentality than an individual tournament:

“Everybody has their role — your state-level type guys, they have a role. The guys who are about .500, their job is to try to go the distance with somebody and try not to get pinned. Even the second-string kids, they’re going to push those guys in practice. That’s why I like the dual meets so much. Everybody has a purpose. We try to stress all the time ‘don’t relax.’ You never know when you’re taking a break for a second and you end up with a decision rather than a major. That might cost us a match, that one point here or there.”

4. The right influence helps:

"I grew up in Goose Creek. The Borellis lived across the road from me. They had seven kids. The dad was a Pennsylvania state champ. All the brothers wrestled. Tommy ended up being my coach. He is at Central Michigan now (more than 20 years) and was the national coach of the year in the mid-90s. My first teaching job was at Summerville. I started helping Steve LaPrad for three years. As far as career, working for Steve was probably the best move I could have made."

5. Plaques and team photos work better than rings:

"My wife's got some T-shirts in the attic. You get the medal every year. The best thing, though, is our principal years ago, he had the idea to get a team plaque with the picture of the team on it. You always look back and say 'I remember that joker,' and funny stories about this or that. He said, 'if you get them rings, when they're 22 years old, they will be in a drawer and never see them again. If you get them a plaque, later when you have a wife and kids, you'll look at it.'

"They all like the hoodies. If they win, we try to get them a hoodie and a T-shirt for the springtime. But you have to win first."

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