



John Christopher

Year of Induction: **2018**

Year of Graduation: **1997**

Legendary Green Bay Packers Head Coach Vince Lombardi famously once said, “The greatest accomplishment is not in never falling, but in rising again after you fall”. Throughout his amazing career on the mat, Johnson City’s John Christopher, class of 1997, forged a reputation as a tireless worker who persevered through every challenge presented to him. Whether the opponent was the wrestler standing across from him or the enormity of the task he faced, John earned the respect of all who watched him compete.

John accumulated 12 varsity letters during his time at Johnson City—3 each in football and track and 6 in wrestling. He became a starter on the Wildcats’ varsity wrestling team as an 8th grader in the 1992-93 season. It was clear from the beginning that John had the potential to become another in Johnson City’s long line of championship wrestlers. He recorded 18 wins as an 8th grader in the 91-pound weight class, and he was a major contributor to his team that won the Section IV team championship. After the scholastic season ended, John continued wrestling throughout the summer at the USA Cadet/Greco National Championships. It was there that he achieved All-American status with an 8th place finish in the 94.5-pound weight class. John entered his 9th grade year ready to rise to the top. He was a centerpiece of a Wildcats team that set a school record with 17 dual meet wins in the 1993-94 season. The Wildcats captured their 3rd straight STAC team championship and their 4th straight Section IV team title. Individually, John ended the season being crowned the STAC, Class A, and Section IV champion in the 98-pound division, earning his first trip to the state tournament. His amazing freshman year season ended with a 5th place finish in the NYS tournament after earning 32 victories on the mat throughout the season. After finishing as the runner-up in the Section IV tournament as a sophomore, John finished his high school career with two spectacular seasons in 1995-96 and 1996-97. He tallied an impressive 77 wins over the course of those two seasons, winning the Class A, STAC, and Section IV championship both years. John’s performances in the New York State Tournament in both his junior and senior seasons speak volumes about the reputation he earned in the wrestling community.

In both state tournaments (1996 and 1997), after months of training and preparation, John suffered heartbreaking defeats in his first match of the championship weekend. When a wrestler loses his first match at states, he is faced with a decision—pack it in and wrestle without enthusiasm knowing that a title is not possible or give 100% effort in every match to earn the highest possible 3rd place finish. In both state tournaments, John chose the more difficult path; he beat four opponents on the second day of state tournament competition to finish in 3rd place overall as both a junior and a senior. After his final match was wrestled, head coach Peter Capone had this to say about John: “Four straight wins

shows character. He'll be missed as a leader and a role model." In the storied history of Johnson City wrestling, John was the first Wildcat to earn a trip to states 3 times via Section IV championships.

The Johnson City Athletic Hall of Fame is proud to welcome a wrestler who exemplified the true character of a champion in every sense of the word, John Christopher, JCHS Class of 1997.