

GEORGETOWN WRESTLER WANTS TO INTRODUCE KIDS TO THE SPORT

FORGET CHOKESLAMMS AND CLOTHESLINES - SHAWN GERIS TEACHES THE REAL WRESTLING

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For Shawn Geris wrestling came naturally, the son of Harry Geris, the six-foot-five, 240-pound wrestler who represented Canada at the Olympics three times - the sport was in his blood. Now, Geris wants to introduce youth to the world of amateur wrestling.

Born in the Nether-

lands, Harry immigrated to Canada as a child, and being one of eight siblings, discovered wrestling to keep himself occupied.

"I always wanted to run something in a community," Shawn Geris said. "We lived in Mississauga but it didn't feel like a community."

When the family moved to Georgetown, Geris started training out of the Georgetown Aikido club.

"It's been in my blood," Geris said. "I've got three brothers and we all wrestled. I still don't know how to skate."

Now, about a dozen students, aged six and up, faithfully train, including Geris' own children; Montana, Baxter and Piper.

"Wrestling is inexpen-

sive," Geris said. "All you need is a pair of shoes."

With a low bar for entry, Geris said the rewards are high.

"It teaches kids goal-setting and self-confidence," he said. "You see yourself get progressively better after each practice."

Geris said he makes sure students leave a practice knowing they've improved.

"If they leave not feeling that, they don't come back," he said.

All of Geris' children are multi-sport athletes, using wrestling to augment their training for sports as varied as rugby, competitive swimming and parkour.

"It's important for kids to have structure in their life," Geris said. "A kid



Bryan Myers/Torstar
Shawn Geris, owner of Harry Geris Wrestling Club Halton, with his children, Piper, Baxter, and Montana. Geris' father was three-time Olympian Harry Geris.

needs a role model and structure to keep them out of trouble, and wrestling is one of the better things to do."

As far as role models go, the club's namesake, is a symbol of determination.

In a book written by Shawn, Blood Sweat and

Determination: An Adventure in Wrestling (available on Amazon), Geris shares stories about his father's illustrious career.

"He used to hitchhike everywhere," Geris said. "If he wanted to do something, he did it."

Determined to pursue a wrestling career, Harry hitchhiked from London, Ont., to Chicago, Ill., to compete for a scholarship.

Sadly, Geris was pinned in his first match.

"The tournament was for collegiate wrestlers only," Geris said, "but he'd begged the convener to let him compete."

As the rumour spread about the Canadian who'd hitchhiked to compete, Geris was offered mentorship and eventually qualified for a scholarship.

The Harry Geris Wrestling Club trains out of Georgetown Aikido's gym on Friday from 6:30 until 7:30 p.m. More information about the club is available on Twitter at @GerisClub.

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