

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE  
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS**



**NEWS RELEASE**

**Wyoming Wrestler Selected as National Recipient of  
NFHS National High School Spirit of Sport Award**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: John Gillis**

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (March 25, 2009) — **Dakota Dana**, a student-athlete at Star Valley High School in Afton, Wyoming, has been selected the 2009 national recipient of the “National High School Spirit of Sport Award” by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

The “National High School Spirit of Sport Award” was created by the NFHS to recognize those individuals who exemplify the ideals of the spirit of sport that represent the core mission of education-based athletics.

Dakota is one of the top wrestlers on the Star Valley wrestling team, which comes as no surprise to the community. His father, who grew up in the same town, also was an outstanding wrestler for the school. Dakota's family was always there to support him, and rarely missed any of his matches.

On the way back from a tournament in Riverton, Wyoming, in February 2008, the Dana family vehicle was hit coming down a mountain by a semitrailer truck that had lost control. Dakota's parents and older brother Scott were in the vehicle at the time of the accident. Dakota's mother was killed on impact, and his father died several weeks

later in the hospital. His brother was bedridden for several months, but is learning to walk again after the accident.

Although it is now up to Dakota to keep up the family farm and take on other responsibilities beyond his years, he also has set an example to his team. Dakota continues to participate in football and wrestling and never misses practices or tournaments, during the season or out of season. Through his relationships with his teammates and coaches, Dakota has set an outstanding example of how the spirit of sport has truly helped him overcome devastating tragedies.

In addition to the selection of Dakota as the national winner, the NFHS National High School Spirit of Sport Award Selection Committee chose seven other individuals for section awards. Following are the 2009 National High School Spirit of Sport section winners:

Section 1 – James Orrigo, student-athlete, Reading (Massachusetts) Austin Preparatory School

Section 2 – The 2008 Berwick varsity baseball team, Berwick (Pennsylvania) High School

Section 3 – Lonny Schraeder, coach, Hattiesburg (Mississippi) Oak Grove High School

Section 4 – Amy Brechon, student-athlete, Belvidere (Illinois) North High School

Section 5 – Derek Johnson, student-athlete, Aberdeen (South Dakota) Central High School

Section 6 – Steve Hohenberger, coach, Irving (Texas) Nimitz High School

Section 7 – Heather Meyer, student-athlete, Blanding (Utah) San Juan High School

Section 8 – Dakota Dana, student-athlete, Afton (Wyoming) Star Valley High School

Nominations for this award were generated through NFHS member state associations and reviewed by the NFHS National High School Spirit of Sport Award Selection Committee composed of state association staff members. While the national winner will be recognized June 30 at the NFHS Summer Meeting in Chicago, the section winners will be recognized within their respective states and will receive awards before the end of the current school year.

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*This press release was written by Paige Flynn, a spring semester intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department and a sophomore at Butler (Indiana) University.*

#### **About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)**

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and Rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing Rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches nearly 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including almost 7.5 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS Web site at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

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