BRAD VADNAIS

 As the owner of a small business, Brad Vadnais said he would hire a former wrestler before he’d hire a 4.0 student.

 “A good wrestler knows how to get back up after he gets knocked down,” Vadnais explained. “He has a good work ethic and makes good decisions under pressure. I can teach him to be a good employee.”

 Vadnais should know. He was a standout wrestler at Castro Valley High, Chabot College and the University of Utah before starting his own home alarm company.

 At Castro Valley, Vadnais twice was the North Coast Section runner-up, losing both times in the finals to Lee Noble of Del Valle by scores of 5-4 and 3-1.

 At Chabot, Vadnais won the 1978 Northern California championship in the 142-pound class, earning Most Valuable Wrestler honors. He finished runner-up to Greg Porter of Moorpark in the junior college state meet that year. As a freshman at Chabot, Vadnais set the state record for “fastest pin” (15 seconds) in the 142-pound division, a mark that still stands.

After Chabot, Vadnais went to Utah on a wrestling scholarship and was named the Utes’ Most Valuable Wrestler in 1980. His plaque still hangs in the school’s Special Events Center.

As outstanding as his own wrestling career was, Vadnais takes even more pride in his accomplishments as a wrestling coach, a labor of love that began immediately after his graduation from Utah. He served as an assistant at Hillcrest High in Utah for one year before moving back home and helping out at Moreau High in Hayward (now Moreau Catholic) for a couple of seasons.

In 1983, Vadnais assisted his former coach and Castro Valley Sports Hall of Famer Zack Papachristos at Chabot. It’s probably no coincidence that Chabot won the state championship that year.

Moving to the Sierra foothills in 1993, Vadnais took over a ragtag wrestling program at Gold Oak Elementary School in Placerville, purchased uniforms and shoes out of his own pocket and turned it into a powerhouse. Working with kids as early as the first grade, he developed wrestlers into champions, including one state champion, a state runner-up and a state third-place finisher. All from a school of 200.

Always looking for opportunities to promote the sport he loves, Vadnais began wrestling programs at Pioneer Elementary (Brentwood) and Mountain Creek Middle School (Somerset) in 2007-2008, while continuing to help out at East Avenue School in Livermore. He also has run the Pinnacles Wrestling Camps each summer since 2007.

 Brad and Golvia, his wife of 25 years, live in Mt. Aukum (El Dorado County).