

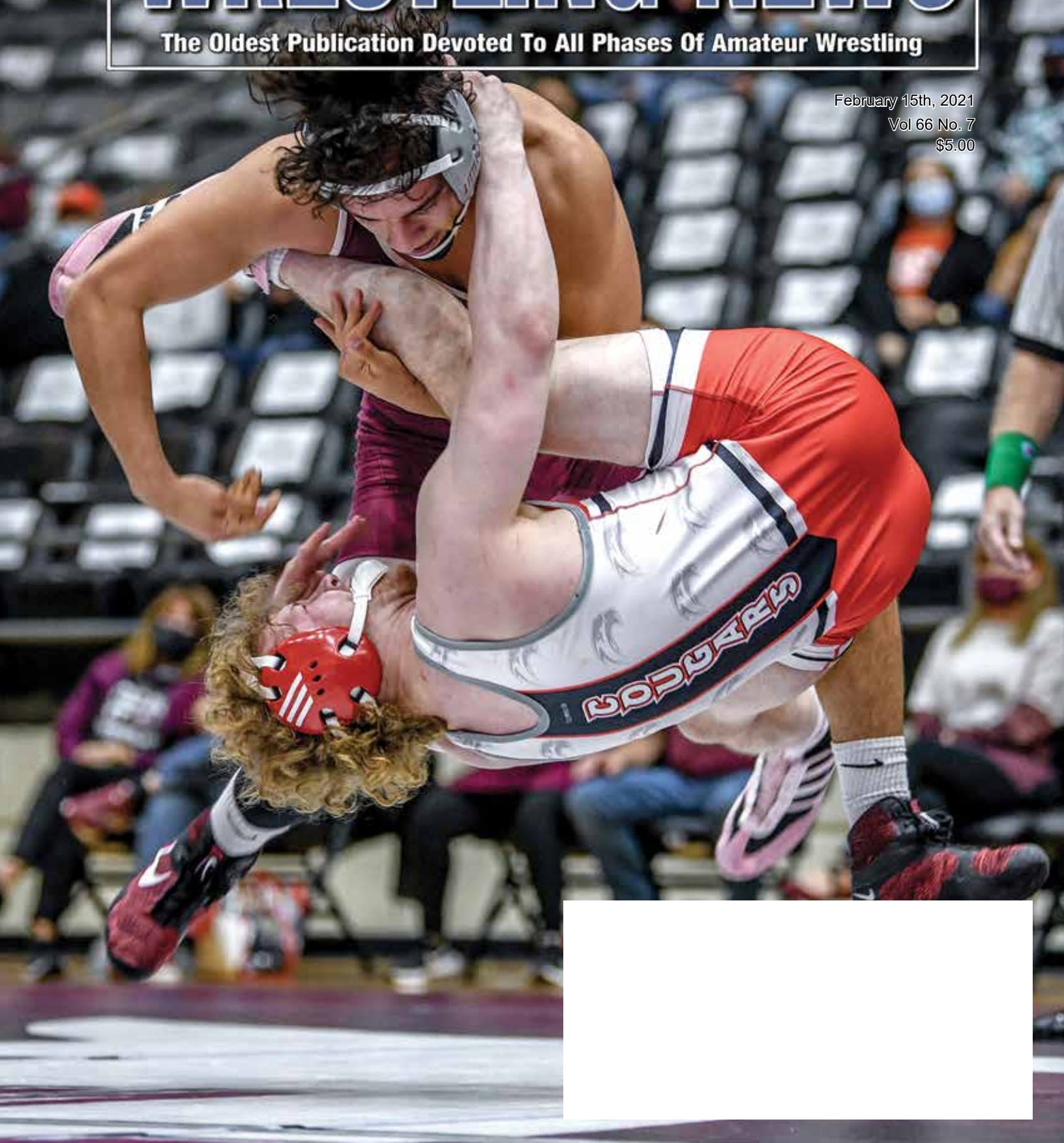
Amateur WRESTLING NEWS

The Oldest Publication Devoted To All Phases Of Amateur Wrestling

February 15th, 2021

Vol 66 No. 7

\$5.00



Amateur WRESTLING NEWS

The Oldest Publication Devoted To All Phases Of Amateur Wrestling

Dear Wrestling Enthusiast,

When Jess Hoke started *Amateur Wrestling News* 64 years ago, he wanted to create a publication dedicated to, as he put it, “the wrestlers, coaches, parents and fans of real amateur wrestling.” In short, he wanted to create a magazine about one of the things we care about most.

Today, *Amateur Wrestling News* is still about the very same things. The main difference is that, years ago, we weren’t sure there were a lot of other people who shared our interest in amateur wrestling. Now we know there were, and are. And we truly hope that you’re among them.

Every month we set out to inform, entertain, and enlighten you by bringing you the most complete in-depth wrestling coverage we can. Every issue is packed with results, tips & technique, team and individual rankings at all levels, wrestling history, photos, features and the inside scoop on what’s happening in wrestling.

Take advantage of our special offer for new subscribers -- 12 full issues of complete wrestling excitement for only \$25.00 – a savings of 58% over the cover price.

Send in your subscription TODAY or give us a call at 405-206-0680.

**New Subscriber
Special -- Only \$25.00
Print and Digital Edition**



New Subscriber Special

Call 1-405-206-0680 to order by phone; online at www.amateurwrestlingnews.com, use code RENOWW; or mail to:

Amateur WRESTLING NEWS

P.O. Box 40266

Nashville, TN 37204-0266

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Email _____

Please enter my subscription for:	
One year print & digital edition	\$25
****The digital edition is now FREE with a	
print subscription****	
One year digital only edition*	\$15
Check enclosed _____	
Charge my ___ Visa ___ MasterCard ___ AMX ___ Disc.	
Card # _____	
Expiration ____ / ____	
Signature _____	
*email required for digital edition	

AMATEUR WRESTLING NEWS
Jess Hoke 1899-1981

Publisher	John Hoke
Assoc. Publisher	Glenna Hoke
Editor	Ron Good
Assistant Editor	Jim Kalin
Assistant Editor	Ray Maloney
Circulation/Advertising	John Hoke
Small College Editor	John Johnson
High School Editor	Bob Preusse
Columnist	J. Carl Guymon
Columnist	Mike Gerald
Columnist	Denny Diehl
Columnist	Pat Milkovich
Photo Editor	Tony Rotundo
Photographer	John Johnson

Amateur Wrestling News (ISSN 056-1796) is published monthly by Amateur Wrestling News, Inc. 902 Halcyon Ave, Nashville TN 37204. Periodicals Postage Paid at Nashville TN and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Amateur Wrestling News, PO Box 40266, Nashville TN 37204-0266.

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 40266, Nashville, TN 37204-0266. PHONE: Office 405-206-0680. All contributions of manuscripts and photos welcome but we do not accept responsibility for unsolicited materials.

E-MAIL ADDRESS and phone numbers:

John Hoke:
johnghoke@gmail.com
405-206-0680

Ron Good:
rolan500@aol.com
405-842-1894

Digital Edition: www.awndigital.com or
www.amateurwrestlingnews.com

RENEWAL CODE from your mailing label will get you access to the digital edition - log in as print subscriber.

SUBSCRIPTION: One year \$35.00. Two years - \$66.00, Three years - \$99.00. Digital edition is free with a print subscription. Digital only edition \$19.00 per year. Single copies \$5.00.

COPYRIGHT 20121 Amateur Wrestling News, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Forwarding postage must be paid by subscriber and lost copies may be replaced for \$2.00. To ensure uninterrupted delivery send both old and new addresses and Zip codes at least 6 weeks before moving. The post office will not forward second class magazines unless so instructed.

CONTENTS

- 4 The Folkstyle Dilemma**
By Jim Kalin
- 6 Pound for Pound**
By Jim Kalin
- 7 NCAA Division I Individual Ranking**
- 8 When's the Hammer Going to Drop?**
By Jim Kaline
- 10 High School Insider**
With Bob Preusse
- 14 It Was a Very Good Year**
By Ron Good
- 16 Top Ten Wrestling Stories of 2020t**
By Gary Abbott, USA Wrestling
- 20 NCAA Division II, III and NAIA Reviewt**
By Johnnie Johnson
- 26 Mat News**
- 31 Book Review: The "Be the Best" series**
By Mark Palmer, Intermat Senior Writer

On the Cover....

Little Rock vs SIUE 165lbs: Alex Hernandez dec Chase Diehl (SIUE), 10-3
Photo by: Ed Sanchez



An Eye on the Olympics

The Folkstyle Dilemma

By Jim Kalin

Here come the Olympic Games, or so we hope.

I'm an American folkstyle proponent and have voiced that in *Amateur Wrestling News* often. I generally agree with columnist Pat Milkovich, who also favors our brand of the Greatest Sport over international styles. But the Olympics and World Championships showcase freestyle and Greco, styles that are global, and as we know, everything in commerce and sports has been trending that direction. Those in favor of replacing folkstyle with freestyle in this country have gotten louder.

Here's the dilemma: Folkstyle is a cultural variant of wrestling specific to the United States and is our dominant market when it comes to alumni, spectators, and media. The Division I NCAA Tournament television viewership dwarfs the numbers Olympic wrestling coverage attracts. Look at what our collegiate folkstyle has achieved with ESPN and the Big Ten Network. But it's not even necessary to compare collegiate to

international wrestling. Most American high school state wrestling tournaments receive larger live audiences than Olympic wrestling venues.

The movement to morph folkstyle towards, or into, freestyle at the high school and collegiate levels has been ongoing. The challenge for those in favor of change is two-fold.

The most obvious hurdle is folkstyle's marketability in the United States. Advertising dollars. American wrestling magazines and websites mostly target folkstyle for content, and the advertisements reflect that. Look at the print covers. 80% of the issues feature photos of American wrestlers engaged in folkstyle bouts. Add ESPN and Big Ten Network television coverage, and it seems a huge gamble – at least from a business perspective -- to advance an Olympic style over folkstyle at the high school and collegiate levels.

The second challenge facing a change is...Change. People are inherently adverse to budge from familiarity and their comfort zones. The majority who have and do wrestle

in the U.S. learned through folkstyle. Most bouts, from the PeeWee divisions, through junior and senior high school and into college, are under folkstyle rules. It's been this way for over 100 years, and it's these people who are wrestling fans. Folkstyle is what they were raised on, and it's the product they continue to understand and consume. Tough roots to sever.

So, why should folkstyle change, or be abandoned? Is it failing? If it is, that must mean there is an endgame and agenda within American wrestling, an overall goal that counts high school state titles and NCAA championships as just stepping stones. Is success on the international stage the checkered flag for the majority of those who step onto a wrestling mat? If the U.S. freestyle team fails to dominate the World Championships and the Olympics, then folkstyle must be the problem.

Maybe the disagreement is more about ultimate goals rather than which style suits best our national appetite.

Surprisingly, the brightest hope for those in favor of freestyle may be with women's wrestling. The WCWA (Women's College Wrestling Association) follows freestyle rules, which was an interesting decision, and experiment. Presently, there are 87 college programs in the WCWA, which is not far below the amount of men's teams. But women's wrestling is growing, exploding at the high school and college levels, and the WCWA might end up being the best gauge as to how advantageous a switch to freestyle could be.

The WCWA is not vastly different from men's collegiate wrestling. Sure, the rules are freestyle, but the WCWA does not adhere to the standard six international weight classes. For the women at their NCAA Tournament, there are ten weight divisions.

Is this adherence to freestyle at the college level translating into international medals for our women wrestlers? Well, maybe, though it's still an ongoing experiment, and the sport is relatively new.

The 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece was the first time women wrestlers received medals. There were just four weight classes, and two American women (Sara McMann/silver and Patricia Miranda/bronze) won medals. Twelve years later, at the 2016 Rio Olympics, two American wrestlers won gold medals: Kyle Snyder and Helen Maroulis. Snyder trained while competing in college,



Kyle Snyder sandwiched an Olympic gold medal between two NCAA titles at Ohio State without taking an Olympic redshirt. Photo by Tony Rotundo

sandwiching his gold medal between two NCAA titles, without taking an Olympic redshirt. However, he did forgo his senior year of high school to train in Colorado at the Olympic Training Center. Mouralis wrestled in high school, then became a four-time national champion while competing for Simon Frazer University. The only other American medalist at those Olympics was J'den Cox, and he won a bronze.

Women's wrestling has come a long way, and continues to expand. In Tokyo this summer, men will compete in two styles of wrestling with six weight classes each. The women will wrestle only freestyle, and have six weights classes. But there is now an effort to decide before the 2024 Olympics on a second style for women, with another six weight classes, so that an equal number of medals will be presented to both men and women wrestlers.

If this sounds overzealous with too much emphasis on equalizing a sport that's traditionally been male-dominated, consider this: At the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, the single-most difficult ticket to obtain is for the women's wrestling. In Japan, judo and women's wrestling are their most popular sports. And during competition in Tokyo, there will be three mats. The women will appear on the center mat exclusively.

The IOC (International Olympic Committee) doesn't want to drop wrestling. That close call before the Rio Olympics has retreated. But the IOC does want equality and diversity, and wrestling has an opportunity by adding another style for women to maintain its inclusion in future Olympic Games. In Tokyo, the percentage breakdown of all medals awarded will be 52% to men, and 48% to women. In 2024, that will be evenly split 50/50, and that's how it will remain.

Hopefully there will be a Tokyo Olympics. A momentum is happening in women's international wrestling. Only five Olympic Games have ever been canceled, and all during wartime (1916/summer, 1940/both and 1944/both.) But these were before television, which translates into big money. Billions have been spent on Tokyo's Olympics. The IOC receives about 75% of its income from selling the television rights, and remember, this opportunity occurs only twice every four years. No wonder Japan and the IOC are pushing against postponing the Games a second year in a row

We are discovering in this pandemic era that the freestyle match-up cards FloWrestling produces are popular with the American wrestling community. It signifies several things. Wrestling fans are hungry for live bouts, especially with Covid decimating the college season. They are also knowledgeable



*At the 2016 Rio Games, Helen Muralis defeated three-time gold medalist Saori Yoshida from Japan to become America's first women's wrestling Olympic champion.
Photo by Tony Rotundo*

about American freestyle and Greco teams. But this interest exists not because of television coverage for wrestling at the Olympics or world events (there is very little, or none) but because those U.S. Team members were once college stars, celebrities created by ESPN and Big Ten Network coverage.

Folkstyle.

So, is it the folkstyle dilemma, or the freestyle dilemma? A slow and long-range transition is underway, and women's collegiate freestyle rules are the obvious proof. It seemed that maybe freestyle was taking steps toward folkstyle when the international takedown was changed from a one-point move to two-points. American folkstyle fans believed this opened the possibility of adding a one-point escape to freestyle, but the intention was instead to prevent wrestlers from fixating on the push out by making it worth only half as much as a takedown.

The founders of American folkstyle created a version of the Greatest Sport so they could insulate our high school and college wrestling from international rules. But does this folkstyle represent a conflict

in developing American youth toward the Olympics? International rivals possess an edge because they've only known freestyle. How amazing then that U.S. wrestling teams still place in the top three or four at world events.

Change is never easy. I always say that sometimes one has to give up things that make he or she happy for things that will instead make them happier. Sometimes.

Something to contemplate for those debating whether or not to transform folkstyle into freestyle is how many wrestlers presently competing in high school and college will ever represent the United States in an international event. This might appear too simplistic a solution, but it is democratic, about majority, and with recent events in this country, it seems to be a sensible approach to this dilemma.

Thank you Lee Roy Smith and Stan Dziedzic for answering questions and clarifying misconceptions I had. The editorial's opinions are mine alone, and criticism or suggestions can be emailed to jkalin.awn@gmail.com

AWN Pound for Pound Top 10 College Wrestlers

The best, regardless of weight class or college division.

By Jim Kalin

Assistant Editor

1. Spencer Lee – Iowa 125 Pounds

Spencer Lee has been on the mat for a total 3:16. That's two bouts. But that Lee pinned both of his opponents isn't the impressive part. These were wrestlers ranked in the top ten. His first fall was against Nebraska's Liam Cronin. Against Minnesota, he flattened Patrick McKee. Lee will be in West Lafayette, Indiana on February 7 to take on the No. 8 ranked wrestler in the country, Devin Schroeder.

2. Mekhi Lewis – Virginia Tech 165 Pounds

In the first two weeks of the 2021 wrestling season, Mekhi Lewis outscored his four opponents 59-10. The season-opening dual meet with Campbell, he wrestled twice. The next weekend in Blacksburg, West Virginia, Lewis was murder on Buckeye State colleges, crushing his counterparts from Kent State and Ohio University. The defending NCAA champ won't face anyone higher than No. 9 Jake Wentzel/Pittsburgh before the national tournament.

3. Gable Steveson – Minnesota 285 Pounds

Minnesota lost its season opener to Nebraska 22-14. There were some bright spots, however, though none more blinding than Gable Steveson. He crushed No. 14 Christian Lance TF 23-8. Against Maryland, he pinned Bryan Bowes in 13 seconds, and in the Iowa dual, Steveson was the only Minnesota wrestler to win, defeating No. 3 Tony Cassioppi 15-6. He runs into surprise giant-slayer Luke Luffman/Illinois on February 5. This should be a match of the undefeateds.

4. Alex Marinelli – Iowa 165 Pounds

This most likely will be the first time in three years Alex Marinelli will enter the NCAA Tournament NOT as the top seed (see No. 2.) In 2019, as a freshman, he was the No. 5 seed, but then received top-billing his sophomore and junior seasons. Presently, Marinelli sits at No. 2, behind defending NCAA champ Mekhi Lewis. The Hawkeyes do face Illinois, Ohio State, and Penn State, all programs with top-ten wrestlers at this weight. In the Big Ten Conference, eight 165 pounders are ranked in the top 20.

5. Sebastian Rivera – Rutgers 141 Pounds

Sebastian Rivera has tallied a pair of major decisions so far this season. He defeated Dylan D'Emilio/Ohio State 11-2, and Drew Mattin/Michigan 8-0. The only ranked wrestler Rivera will meet before the Big Tens will be on February 6 when Rutgers travels to Bloomington, Indiana for a tri-meet with the Hoosiers and Cornhuskers. Nebraska has Chad Red at 141 pounds, presently ranked No. 9.

6. Michael Kemerer – Iowa 174 Pounds

The biggest challenge in March will be how to seed the NCAA Tournament. With no cross-pollination, meaning wrestlers from one conference competing against those in other conferences, it will be difficult to determine, and justify, seeds in March. At 174, the top four ranked wrestlers are all from the Big Ten. Duke's Matt Finesilver is No. 5. Does he merit the No. 2 seed if he navigates his conference undefeated? At least three of the wrestlers ahead of him will have at least one loss by March, if not more. Seeding will be a mess.

7. Jaydin Eierman – Iowa 141 Pounds

All hands on deck! Jaydin Eierman destroyed Minnesota freshman Marcos Polanco MD 22-9 during the Hawkeyes' lopsided victory in Minneapolis over the Golden Gophers. Minnesota won just a single bout (see No. 3.) But the evening's Showboat Award would have to go to Eierman, who taunted the Minnesota bench and seemed unnecessarily contemptuous toward his rookie opponent. Good thing Covid-19 protocol prohibited Minnesota fans from attending. Would have been a Boo-Fest in Williams Arena during this bout.

8. Ryan Deakin – Northwestern 157 Pounds

Ryan Deakin, like so many others, has yet to wrestle this season. The Wildcats have participated in three duals, and are 1-2, with that lone victory a 21-12 win over Maryland. Deakin's replacement has been Maxx Mayfield, a freshman from Lincoln, Nebraska.

The rookie is 1-2, and both losses were by 1 point. Against Purdue's Kendall Coleman, he lost 4-3. The Boilermaker is ranked No. 5 nationally. Tough rookie for Northwestern!

9. Daton Fix – Oklahoma State 133 Pounds

What a long strange trip the 2021 season has already been. Nick Suriano is gone from DI wrestling this year, which leaves Daton Fix alone in the henhouse. But the Cowboy has yet to wrestle a bout (see No. 8.) Instead, Oklahoma State has presented a revolving door of 133 pounders. Replacements have included Andrew Nieman and Reece Wittercraft. The two combined have gone 1-3, with that lone victory a win by forfeit. The Cowboys need Fix.

10. Logan Massa – Michigan 174 Pounds

The Big Dual of the year, No. 1 ranked Iowa vs. No. 2 Michigan, was postponed due to Covid-19, which would have pitted Logan Massa against Michael Kemerer. The University of Michigan suspended ALL athletics for at least two weeks, which also caused the postponement of Wolverine duals against Illinois, Penn State, and Wisconsin. Massa's teammates Stevan Micic and Myles Amine have yet to compete in a bout this season.

On The Cusp

Hayden Hilday/157/NC State
Noah Adams/197/West Virginia
Myles Amine/184/Michigan
Austin O'Connor/149/North Carolina
Sammy Sasso/149/Ohio State



2019m NCAA Consolation semi-finals 285lbs Gable Steveson (Minnesota) decided Youssif Hemida (Maryland), 6-2. Photo by Tony Rotundo

Division I Individual Rankings February 2, 202

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>125</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spencer Lee, Sr, Iowa 2. Drew Hildebrandt, Sr, Central Michigan 3. Michael DeAugustino, So, Northwestern 4. Brandon Courtney, Jr, Arizona State 5. Jakob Camacho, So, NC State 6. Taylor LaMont, Jr, Utah Valley 7. Malik Heinselman, Jr, Ohio State 8. Liam Cronin, Sr, Nebraska 9. Patrick McKee, Jr, Minnesota 10. Dylan Ragusin, Fr, Michigan 11. Sam Latona, Fr, Virginia Tech 12. Devin Schroder, Sr, Purdue 13. Rayvon Foley, Jr, Michigan State 14. Brody Teske, So, Northern Iowa 15. Alex Mackall, Sr, Iowa State 16. Gage Curry, Sr, American 17. Trevor Mastrogiovanni, Fr, Oklahoma State 18. Justin Cardani, So, Illinois 19. Connor Brown, Jr, Missouri 20. Brock Hudkins, Sr, Indiana <p>133</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daton Fix, So, Oklahoma State 2. Stevan Micic, Sr, Michigan 3. Roman Bravo-Young, Jr, Penn State 4. Austin DeSanto, Sr, Iowa 5. Micky Phillippi, Jr, Pittsburgh 6. Mosha Schwartz, So, Northern Colorado 7. Sammy Alvarez, So, Rutgers 8. Michael McGee, Jr, Arizona State 9. Brandon Paetzell, Sr, Lehigh 10. Korbin Myers, Sr, Virginia Tech 11. Matt Schmitt, Sr, Missouri 12. Job Greenwood, So, Wyoming 13. Jared Van Fleet, Jr, Air Force 14. Zach Price, So, South Dakota State 15. Darren Miller, So, Bucknell 16. Louie Hayes, Sr, Virginia 17. Jarrett Trombley, So, NC State 18. Kyle Biscaglia, So, Northern Iowa 19. Lucas Byrd, Fr, Illinois 20. Zach Redding, Fr, Iowa State <p>141</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jaydin Eierman, Sr, Iowa 2. Sebastian Rivera, Sr, Rutgers 3. Nick Lee, Jr, Penn State 4. Real Woods, So, Stanford 5. Kaid Brock, Sr, Oklahoma State 6. Allan Hart, Jr, Missouri 7. Ian Parker, Sr, Iowa State 8. Dom Demas, Jr, Oklahoma 9. Chad Red, Sr, Nebraska 10. Tariq Wilson, Sr, NC State 11. Zach Sherman, Jr, North Carolina 12. DJ Lloren, Sr, Fresno State 13. Dresden Simon, Sr, Central Michigan 14. Brian Courtney, Jr, Virginia 15. Cody Trybus, Sr, Navy 16. Cole Mathews, So, Pittsburgh 17. Malyke Hines, Fr, Lehigh 18. Anthony Echemendia, Fr, Ohio State 19. Grant Willits, Jr, Oregon State 20. Dylan Duncan, Sr, Illinois <p>149</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Austin O'Connor, Jr, North Carolina 2. Sammy Sasso, So, Ohio State 3. Brock Mauller, Jr, Missouri 4. Boo Lewallen, Sr, Oklahoma State 5. Jarrett Degen, Sr, Iowa State 6. Max Murin, Jr, Iowa 7. Kanen Storr, Jr, Michigan 8. Andrew Alirez, So, Northern Colorado 9. Kizhan Clarke, Sr, American 10. Michael Carr, Sr, Illinois 11. Legend Lamer, Fr, Cal Poly 12. Jaden Abas, Fr, Stanford 13. Mitch Moore, Jr, Oklahoma 14. Griffin Parriott, Sr, Purdue 15. Yahya Thomas, Jr, Northwestern 16. Jonathan Milner, Jr, Appalachian State 17. Bryce Andonian, So, Virginia Tech 18. Josh Heil, Sr, Campbell 19. Casey Cobb, Sr, Navy 20. Graham Rooks, So, Indiana | <p>157</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ryan Deakin, Sr, Northwestern 2. Hayden Hilday, Sr, NC State 3. David Carr, So, Iowa State 4. Jesse Dellavecchia, Sr, Rider 5. Kaleb Young, Sr, Iowa 6. Brayton Lee, So, Minnesota 7. Kendall Coleman, So, Purdue 8. Will Lewan, So, Michigan 9. Requir van der Merwe, Sr, Stanford 10. Brady Berge, Jr, Penn State 11. Justin Thomas, Sr, Oklahoma 12. Wyatt Sheets, Jr, Oklahoma State 13. Jacori Teemer, So, Arizona State 14. Jared Franek, So, North Dakota State 15. Jarrett Jacques, Jr, Missouri 16. Markum Hartman, Jr, Army West Point 17. Jacob Wright, Jr, Wyoming 18. Justin McCoy, So, Virginia 19. Hunter Willits, Jr, Oregon State 20. Andrew Cerniglia, Fr, Navy <p>165</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mekhi Lewis, So, Virginia Tech 2. Alex Marinelli, Jr, Iowa 3. Travis Wittlake, So, Oklahoma State 4. Anthony Valencia, Sr, Arizona State 5. Danny Braunagel, So, Illinois 6. Kennedy Monday, Sr, North Carolina 7. Ethan Smith, So, Ohio State 8. Jake Wentzel, Sr, Pittsburgh 9. Tanner Skidgel, Sr, Navy 10. Joe Lee, Fr, Penn State 11. Zach Hartman, Jr, Bucknell 12. Andrew Sparks, Fr, Minnesota 13. Keegan O'Toole, Jr, Missouri 14. Peyton Robb, So, Nebraska 15. Jake Keating, Jr, Virginia 16. William Formato, So, Appalachian State 17. Thomas Bullard, Sr, NC State 18. Cameron Amine, Fr, Michigan 19. Izzak Olejnik, So, Northern Illinois 20. Cole Moody, So, Wyoming <p>174</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Michael Kemerer, Sr, Iowa 2. Mikey Labriola, Jr, Nebraska 3. Logan Massa, Sr, Michigan 4. Kaleb Romero, Jr, Ohio State 5. Shane Griffith, So, Stanford 6. Demetrius Romero, Sr, Utah Valley 7. Dustin Plott, Fr, Oklahoma State 8. Trey Munoz, Fr, Arizona State 9. Andrew McNally, Sr, Kent State 10. Peyton Mocco, So, Missouri 11. Jacob Oliver, Jr, Edinboro 12. Austin Murphy, Jr, Campbell 13. Thomas Fitz, Sr, Appalachian 14. Daniel Bullard, Sr, NC State 15. Hayden Hastings, Jr, Wyoming 16. Donnell Washington, So, Indiana 17. Carter Starocci, Fr, Penn State 18. Lance Runyon, Fr, Northern Iowa 19. Jackson Hemauer, Jr, Northern Colorado 20. Julien Broderson, Fr, Iowa State <p>184</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Myles Amine, Sr, Michigan 2. Aaron Brooks, So, Penn State 3. Hunter Bolen, Jr, Virginia Tech 4. Trent Hilday, So, NC State 5. Lou DePrez, Jr, Binghamton 6. Chris Weiler, Sr, Wisconsin 7. Zach Braunagel, So, Illinois 8. Nelson Brands, So, Iowa 9. Taylor Venz, Sr, Nebraska 10. Parker Keckeisen, Fr, Northern Iowa 11. Dakota Geer, Sr, Oklahoma State 12. Layne Malczewski, So, Michigan State 13. Michael Batista, Jr, Virginia 14. Greg Harvey, Sr, Pittsburgh 15. Brit Wilson, Jr, Northern Illinois 16. Owen Webster, Sr, Minnesota 17. John Poznanski, Fr, Rutgers 18. Alan Clothier, Sr, Northern Colorado 19. David Key, Fr, Navy 20. Max Lyon, Sr, Purdue | <p>197</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noah Adams, So, West Virginia 2. Eric Schultz, Sr, Nebraska 3. Jacob Warner, Jr, Iowa 4. Cameron Caffey, Jr, Michigan State 5. Kordell Norfleet, Jr, Arizona State 6. Greg Bulsak, Sr, Clarion 7. Tanner Sloan, So, South Dakota State 8. Nathan Traxler, Sr, Stanford 9. Lucas Davison, So, Northwestern 10. Isaac Trumble, Fr, NC State 11. Nino Bonaccorsi, Jr, Pittsburgh 12. Jay Aiello, Sr, Virginia 13. Jake Woodley, Jr, Oklahoma 14. AJ Ferrari, Fr, Oklahoma State 15. Michael Beard, Fr, Penn State 16. Stephen Buchanan, So, Wyoming 17. JT Brown, Jr, Army West Point 18. Jacob Koser, So, Navy 19. Rocky Elam, Fr, Missouri 20. Yonger Bastida, Fr, Iowa State <p>285</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gable Steveson, Jr, Minnesota 2. Mason Parris, Jr, Michigan 3. Anthony Cassioppi, So, Iowa 4. Matt Stencel, Sr, Central Michigan 5. Luke Luffman, So, Illinois 6. Jordan Wood, Sr, Lehigh 7. Gannon Gremmel, Sr, Iowa State 8. Christian Lance, Sr, Nebraska 9. Trent Hillger, Jr, Wisconsin 10. Tate Orndorff, Jr, Ohio State 11. Cohnton Schultz, Fr, Arizona State 12. Carter Isley, Sr, Northern Iowa 13. Zach Elam, So, Missouri 14. Brian Andrews, Sr, Wyoming 15. Seth Nevills, So, Penn State 16. John Borst, Jr, Virginia Tech 17. Deonte Wilson, Jr, NC State 18. Ethan Laird, Sr, Rider 19. Austin Harris, Jr, Oklahoma State 20. Quinn Miller, So, Virginia |
|--|---|--|

NWCA Division I Coaches Poll 2-2-21

1. Iowa)
2. Michigan
3. NC State
4. Penn State
5. Oklahoma State
6. Missouri
7. Nebraska
8. Virginia Tech
9. Illinois
10. Arizona State
11. Ohio State
12. Iowa State
13. Minnesota
14. North Carolina
15. Pittsburgh
16. Northern Iowa
17. Wisconsin
18. Purdue
19. Oklahoma
20. Virginia
21. Navy
22. Stanford
23. Michigan State
24. Rutgers
25. Lehigh

When's the Hammer Going to Drop?

By Jim Kalin
Assistan Editor

Amateur Wrestling News' Sixth Annual Hammer Award recipient will be announced immediately following the NCAA Tournament. The award goes to the wrestler who wins what *AWN* believes is the most competitive weight this season. Our previous winners are Logan Stieber/Ohio State, Alex Dieringer/Oklahoma State, Bo Nickal/Penn State, Zahid Valencia/Arizona State, and Spencer Lee/Iowa.

Of course last season's NCAA Tournament was canceled just a few days prior to the start of Round 1, so we did not name a recipient. But the weight classes in contention then were 141, 165, and 174. It won't be the same this time. 133 and 285 will be considered, though still 141 remains a brutal blender.

So, here's a quick tutorial regarding the criteria our writers use when determining the winner.

1. Number of returning All Americans at the weight. This one's obvious, and probably the most important thing we look at. The AA count will be down in most weight classes from previous years because of last year's cancellation of the NCAA Tournament. We're also not considering the National Wrestling Coaches Association 2020 honorary All Americans. 141 leads with a whopping seven returning All Americans. The other two weights have four returning All Americans each.

2. Returning and defending NCAA champions at a weight. This is an extremely light year regarding this criteria. There are just two returning champs – Spencer Lee/125 and Mekhi Lewis/165 -- and those weights aren't as

loaded as the three highlighted in this feature. 133 does have a pair of returning runners-up in Daton Fix/Oklahoma State and Stevan Micic/Michigan.

3. Performance this season. Fortunately, wrestling is a sport where previous laurels have little meaning. Last season's record or resume does not necessarily determine this year's seed at the NCAAs. What does that mean? That wrestlers like West Virginia's Noah Adams can roar onto the scene after a mediocre season the previous year. Adams was the No. 20 seed in Pittsburgh two years ago, and went 1-2 at the NCAA tournament. Last year he finished undefeated and earned the No. 2 seed at the cancelled NCAAs. Freshmen also figure into this category, obviously because they have no previous DI history, or very little, depending on if they are a true freshman or have used their redshirt.

4. Performance of overall weight class at NCAA Tournament. Sometimes the pool of competition just shines at the Big Show. Competitors are healthy, confidence is high, and performance accelerates. Upsets help here, too. A great example is Virginia Tech's Mekhi Lewis. As a freshman two seasons ago, he won the 165 pound title, upsetting No. 1 seed Alex Marinelli in the quarterfinals. Lewis made that weight memorable, especially when he put defending champ Vincenzo Joseph on his back for four-points.

5. Presence of upperclassmen. This is probably the least important, though it does carry some clout. Age usually equals experience, and 141 has plenty.

With these criteria in mind, here are the top

three divisions in the *AWN* Hammer Award watch (in order of weight class).

133 Pounds

This weight has four returning All Americans, but is just extremely dense at the top. Previous NCAA place-winners here are Daton Fix, Stevan Micic, Roman Bravo-Young/Penn State, and Austin DeSanto/Iowa. Micic and Fix have been runners-up. Fix lost to Rutgers' Nick Suriano in overtime, and Micic fell to Seth Gross. Micic is a three-time AA, finishing 2,3,4. Both Fix and Micic took Olympic redshirts last season. Roman Bravo-Young was eighth as a freshman, and earned the No. 5 seed at last season's NCAA Tournament. Austin DeSanto transferred to Iowa from Drexel and was an AA in 2019. He lost to Bravo-Young in the Big Ten semis last year. Non-returning AAs to watch here are Micky Phillippi/Pittsburgh, Mosha Schwartz/Northern Colorado, and Sammy Alvarez/Rutgers. Phillippi started his career at Virginia before transferring to Pitt. He was the NCAA No. 4 seed last season at 133 with a 25-1 record. Mosha Schwartz earned the No. 15 seed with a 23-10 record. Sammy Alvarez was a 2020 *Amateur Wrestling News* All-Rookie selection. This is not a kind weight for freshmen.

141 Pounds

Seven All Americans occupy this weight: Nick Lee/Penn State, Jaydin Eierman/Iowa, Dom Demas/Oklahoma, Chad Red/Nebraska, Tariq Wilson/NC State, Sebastian Rivera/Rutgers, and Kaid Brock/Oklahoma State. Brock is a two-time AA, finishing fifth both times. The top-ranked wrestler here, Jaydin



Stevan Micic, Michigan



Daton Fix, Oklahoma State



Nick Lee, Penn State



Jaydin Eierman, Iowa

Eierman, transferred to the Hawkeyes from Missouri, and took an Olympic redshirt last season. He's responsible for Yianni Diakomihalis' only career loss. Penn State's Nick Lee is a two-time AA and ended fifth at this weight in 2019. Sebastian Rivera is a two-time AA and has won the Big Tens twice. Another two-time All American is Chad Red. He's never won the Cliff Keen or the Big Tens, yet he seems to surge in March. Dom Demas was Big 12 champ as a freshman, pinning Kaid Brock in the finals. Tariq Wilson was an All American as a freshman, but injured his foot the next season and failed to place. Three wrestlers ranked in the top ten here – Allan Hart/Missouri, Real Woods/Stanford, and Ian Parker/Iowa State -- are not returning All Americans. Parker was the 2020 Big 12 champ. As a freshman last year, Real Woods ended with just one loss. He was the Southern Scuffle champ, and earned the

No. 3 seed at the NCAAs. Allan Hart was the No. 19 seed at 133 with a 20-9 record. Also not a friendly division for rookies.

285 Pounds

Like 133 pounds, there are four returning All Americans here, and it's just going to be a war with these top big men. Returning All Americans are Gable Steveson/Minnesota, Matt Stencel/Central Michigan, Jordan Wood/Lehigh, and Trent Hillger/Wisconsin. Steveson was third two years ago, and last season's No. 1 seed with a 15-0 record. His low bout count was due to him not wrestling until the New Year. Matt Stencel was the No. 5 seed with a 30-4 record. He has won the MAC three times. Jordan Wood missed the first month of this season. He has won three EIWA titles and was fourth at the 2019 NCAAs. Trent Hillger was eighth at the 2019 NCAAs. He's been fourth

twice at the Big Tens. Tough tournament. Two wrestlers at this weight who should already have AA honors are Mason Parris/Michigan and Tony Cassioppi/Iowa. Cassioppi was the No. 3 seed last year with a 20-3 record, and Parris the No. 2 seed, finishing 28-1. There are two freshmen standouts at heavyweight. Cohlton Schultz/Arizona State, was highly recruited and is currently ranked No. 11. He was the 2019 Dave Schultz High School Excellence Award recipient, and was the 130kg Greco champ at the Senior Nationals. Penn State has two great heavyweights, and it's still a mystery as to which one will compete in the Big Tens. Seth Nevills was a four-time California state champion. He was injured at the Big Tens last year and forfeited out. His teammate, rookie Glen Kerkvliet, was a four-time Minnesota state champ and the 2017 Cadet World Champion.



Gable Steveson, Minnesota



Mason Parris, Michigan

High School Insider

"A good coach can change a game. A great coach can change a life." - John Wooden, former UCLA basketball coach. The GOAT. Won 10 NCAA titles in his last 12 seasons before he retired in 1975.

MALVERN Pa. – Home to Malvern Prep established 1842 initially as a preparatory school for Villanova University, now home to a renowned Catholic All-boys school started and operated by the Order of St. Augustine.

Known for its curriculum aiming to produce well-rounded students on 103 acres on Philadelphia's Main Line. Malvern Prep is a member of the Inter-Academic League which also includes Episcopal Academy, Germantown Academy, Penn Charter, The Haverford School, and Springside Chestnut Hill Academy.

And home to the Malvern Prep Friars the No. 6 ranked wrestling team in the USA last season; third at Beast of the East and Ironman and second at the Powerade. The team is again very strong featuring two preseason national No. 1's: junior 182 Jack Wehmeyer (committed to Cornell), junior 220 Nicholas

Feldman (committed to Ohio State), and No. 3 heavyweight senior Cole Deery.

Coached by Nathan Lautar who himself graduated from Malvern and, as he tells me, has returned "home" to Malvern to give back to the school that shaped him. As I speak with Nathan, I observe that he oozes commitment, drive and thirst for teaching. Nathan works in the family business while his twin brother, a 2002 Annapolis graduate, is a Navy Commander. Nathan is married to Cailey, they have two children Raymond 6 and Penelope 8.

AWN: Nathan, tell readers about your upbringing, what led you to a career as a coach?

LAUTAR: I attended Malvern Prep for high school. I grew up playing three sports and loved all three. I graduated from Franklin and Marshall and moved home and started working for the family business. I got into coaching at 22 and fell in love with helping others. I enjoy coaching because it is so crucial. I want to be a strong role model for kids and create a family atmosphere.

AWN: Tell us about the Malvern school

and community?

LAUTAR

Malvern is a Home not a school. It's a culture a Brotherhood. The families all get along and cheer for each other and pick

each other up when things are down. Malvern has taught me so much over the years. It's a small Catholic school with so much to offer outside of wrestling. It's an all boy's private school that thrives in all sports and academics. Malvern teaches boys to become men. Gives them a sense of responsibility and know they can get outside of their circle and try different things like arts, music, clubs and many other things, not just focus on one sport. Athletes are encouraged to play other sports. The community is families that genuinely care for each other.

AWN: What makes an outstanding wrestler in terms of personality, habits and mental traits?

LAUTAR: Hard work and being coachable.



With Bob Preusse



Coach Nathan Lautar with his Malvern Prep team (photo by coach Lautar)

I think it takes goal setting and consistency. There needs to be a love of the sport and be a student of the sport and always growing. It is very important to be a good all-around athlete, even playing other sports. Malvern pushes being a two sport athlete.

AWN: How would you describe the Malvern style of wrestling, what do you emphasize on the mat?

LAUTAR: I am lucky to have a great group of coaches that believe we should make each wrestler better at what they are good at, not try and change each kid to a certain style. All my coaches have strengths and we all help each kid. I do a lot of offense on our feet and shooting everything to opposite side and my strength is top wrestling. I love tilts and cradles.

I think what can make a wrestler different is the ability to score from top position. It shows in college now where you can gain a riding time point and even four backs. In freestyle not so much but you still need to excel in par terre.

AWN: Who specifically has influenced you and in what way?

LAUTAR: I have had a lot of influences in my life. My grandfather was a huge influence for me until he passed away a few years ago. My twin brother Jason is also a huge influence for me. I have always looked up to him even though we are twins. He is the Commanding Officer of the destroyer USS Michael Murphy.

My wife and family have also helped influence me and make me a better person and coach. I have also had some really great people around me from a coaching standpoint, my best friends are my assistant coaches and the dads of my wrestlers. The most important ones are the kids I coach. They influence me and help me adapt to changing times.

Coaches that have influenced me: Pete Shaiffer- Penn Charter, Chris Mckeon- Malvern, he brought me back to Malvern as an assistant. Mike Rogers- Franklin and Marshall, Bill Leopold helped get me into coaching. Ed Spiller helped me as a young coach

AWN: Since Blair and Wyoming Seminary – and now Lake Highland Prep too - have made National Preps fiercely competitive, who at Malvern decided to challenge them? How did that come about?

LAUTAR: I knew when I started at Malvern we needed to change something. We only had 8 kids on the team. I started a youth club, Malvern Wrestling Club, with a friend of mine Bill Leopold, and we turned it into the powerhouse it is now with the help of so many people. It is hard always competing against No.1 and No.2. And recognizing it's hard to beat them but we have stayed consistent and stayed on course with what we have, a family and culture, a brotherhood.

We are one... and we will continue to get better and keep working towards the goal. Yes it would be nice to beat Sem and Blair but my goal isn't to create an army of wrestler but well-rounded great kids that will one day be positive role models themselves that go on and compete



Coach Lautar, Nicholas Feldman, Jack Wehmeyer (photo by coach Lautar)

at colleges and beyond and come back and give back the same way I have and others.

AWN: Does Malvern have a season right now, a schedule, in the midst of COVID?

LAUTAR: Yes we are competing right now. We have had two tournaments. We are scheduling everything outside of our league, the InterAC, because they chose to stay in league only. I knew I couldn't be selfish and stay in league for us to have a league championship, it's much bigger then me and the league.

My kids work so hard and deserve a chance to show it. We have to travel a lot to Ohio and Pittsburgh. We have the Powerade coming up this weekend. We will continue through spring with folk and freestyle. Most stuff will be club after Powerade until National Preps tournament in May.

AWN: The National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) added an upper weight and eliminated a weight between 125 and 145 in 2011, was this good for high school wrestling?

LAUTAR: Yes any time we can add

opportunities I am good with. I in fact am disappointed PIAA (Pennsylvania Athletic Assn.) dropped a weight this past year. We are a strong team, especially upper weights, and at all PIAA tournaments we lose a weight. I think more tournaments should allow multiple entry, like college tournaments, it will only help grow sport.

Kids, I feel, quit these days when they know they can't win starting spot or don't succeed right away. If we can compete more we would gain more kids. I think PIAA and even NHSCA should be looking for ways to add weights even a lower weight like 100. That is just my opinion.

AWN: Are 14 weight classes right for high school wrestling?

LAUTAR: Yes I think the 14 NFHS is correct keeping the weights the way they are. I think we see a lot of forfeits in duals because of the progression program not because of lack of

continued on page 12

High School Insider

continued from page 11

bodies. I also think kids value big tournaments more unfortunately instead of dual meets so you see forfeits because they do not want to mess up their progression for a big tournament and hold weights.

I think all schools should have same weights across board and not one state should be changing it and making even more difficult and take even more opportunities away from student athletes. I will always look to take two teams to tournaments every weekend or enter two teams in same because it creates better environment and helps all kids grow, not just starters.

AWN: If you had a magic wand what changes would you make to high school wrestling, the rules and management of the sport?

LAUTAR: Like I said above I would allow

multiple entries into all tournaments and state championships. I would change and have a push out rule. I would also stand kids back up on feet if they stayed too long on bottom. I also think overtime period should be 2 minutes, not one minute, before you do the top and bottom ride out. If I really had magic wand I would have college add 230 weight class. There are too many great kids at that weight in high school and we have an Olympic weight at 215ish.

AWN: Nathan, when you leave coaching how would you like to be remembered?

LAUTAR: I just want to be remembered as a great role model for kids. Someone that helped influence their lives in a positive way. I want people to know that coaching isn't about money but about changing lives. Being there when kids need you at tough times in their lives. Being a friend/brother to them when they needed it and a strict coach when they needed it. Well rounded.

I want people to know I did this for the

right reasons and would do it all over again giving back to sport and school that gave me so much. It's all about culture and the brotherhood. I want people to know I loved all the kids I coach not just the super high ranked ones. I get a ton out of developing the kids and watching them flourish over time. We are one, and I want people to remember we created this brotherhood and family they are all part of.

Columnist note: Greg Urbas of St. Edward Ohio once told me "If coaches don't do it who will?"

Lou Giani Hall of Famer Dies

STILLWATER, Okla. – The National Wrestling Hall of Fame announced that Louis "Lou" Giani, a Distinguished Member inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in 2003, passed away on January 19, at the age of 86. A funeral service was held on January 25, at 9:30 a.m. at St. Hughes of Lincoln in Huntington Station, New York.

Lee Roy Smith, Executive Director of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame said. "On behalf of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame Board of Governors and staff, I want to express our sincere sympathies to the family, friends and countless wrestlers coached by Lou Giani, A great competitor, he became one of the most extraordinary coaches our sport has ever had, particularly at the youth and high school levels."

"A virtually self-taught wrestler, Giani's competitive career did not begin until his junior year of high school. Defying the odds, he won an impressive 10 New York Athletic Club titles and more than 20 tournament titles in the United States. He won a gold medal at the Pan American Games in 1959 and was a member of the United States Olympic (freestyle 136.5) team in 1960."

Giani Known For Leadership

His Huntington high school team captured nine New York state team titles, six tournament and three first-place state poll rankings. The fact that there was at the time only one state tournament, with 600 programs participating, accentuates the magnitude of these accomplishments.

He had a career coaching record of 436-36-1, including 28 undefeated seasons, in 38 seasons. Giani was recognized by his peers three times as the New York Wrestling Coach of the Year and three times was chosen as the National High School Wrestling Coach of the Year, including 2002 by the National Wrestling Coaches Association. (per the Hall of Fame)

Giani's Life Journey

Born in Manhattan to strict immigrant parents, Giani attended Catholic school where sports and physical education did not exist. Even moving to Huntington as a ninth grader did nothing immediately to advance his future



Hvt Colton Deery of Malvern Prep (photo by Rob Preston)



Lou Giani

career. His new school had a full phys ed and sports program and he quickly learned that athletics were fun. But, his parents saw no value in sports because of their life experience. There were no athletes in the family tree and the threat of injury terrified them.

After two years of begging and cajoling, Giani finally convinced his parents that athletics were an intricate part of education. After they signed the consent forms he played football, wrestled and ran track in his junior year. Giani's senior year he won the Suffolk section 141 pound title. He ultimately became a self-made world class athlete while postponing college. (per Long Island Wrestling Assn.)

Following graduation in 1953, Giani went to work for the Grumman Aircraft Company

and competed for the New York Athletic Club, developing into a world class athlete. He placed in the top four at the 1956 US Olympic qualifying tournament. A Pan Am Games gold medal followed along with national YMCA championships.

Giani represented the United States on the 1960 Olympic team in freestyle wrestling and was 2-1 before a serious mastoid infection ended his dreams for a medal. He continued wrestling for several more years before turning his attention to coaching, first at Eastern Military Academy and then at Huntington high school.

The Transition To Huntington

Giani's teaching career at Huntington followed nineteen years of employment with Grumman, where he rose to group leader and worked on the lunar escape module program that allowed man to travel from the Apollo spaceship to the moon and back to the capsule for the journey back to Earth.

Once he decided to transition to a career as a teacher and coach, he obtained a bachelor's degree at C.W. Post College and a master's degree at Adelphi University. His son Joe was a Division III NCAA champ, three-time AA and team captain at Brockport.

Giani said he rode to success on the back of a simple philosophy. "It wasn't long before I figured out that if I worked harder than everyone else, I could gain the edge. That concept has been my driving force throughout my athletic

and professional career."

Only Eight

By my count Giani is one of only eight (8) high school coaches inducted as Distinguished Members in the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in Stillwater Oklahoma. At the time he was only the fifth inducted. Too few, imo. I've discussed in depth who else would make legitimate candidates in the AWN July 2018 issue.

Who Are the Best Coaches?

As esteemed college coach Tom Borrelli of Central Michigan told me once, "The best coaches are the high school coaches". It's a tough road to get into the Hall of Fame as a high school coach, more of them should be inducted in my opinion. Of the eight Distinguished Members, Weick and Art Griffith of Oklahoma had other credentials but were great high school coaches too; Griffith at Tulsa Central before going to Oklahoma State University. Per AWN October 2017 issue, the eight honorees are:

Billy Martin of Granby Va.

Bob Siddens of Waterloo Iowa

Mike Milkovich of Maple Heights Ohio

Frank "Sprig" Gardner of Mephram N.Y.

Henry Boresch of Newton N.J.

Art Griffith of Tulsa Oklahoma

Bill Weick, Chicago Ill.

Lou Giani of Huntington N.Y.

(Contact Bob at ohiobobp@aol.com)

Off The Mat

It Was a Very Good Year

I was hired by Jess and John Hoke in the summer of 1977. Wasn't much going on wrestling wise in those early August days, so my first assignment was to spend my afternoons reading previous volumes of *Amateur Wrestling News*. I started with the first edition, January 2, 1956 and studied 20 years of history – and by the way, got paid for it!

As for the office, it was nothing like one would expect. It was a small four-room frame house converted into an office. Nobody worked from home in those days.

Back then, the wrestling season was pretty much December to March. Although we published 16 issues a year in those days, our schedule was September to May with no issues in June, July or August.

My first order of official business in November of '77 was to attend the National Wrestling Hall of Fame ceremonies in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Ten new members were inducted with the highlight being John's father,

21 when Harold Nichols' boys were derailed by Oklahoma State, 20-18, in Ames. An upset victory by Eric Wais over NCAA champ Santana paved the way for the Cowboys in a battle for the top spot in national collegiate rankings. Wais' 6-5 win at 190 came when it appeared that the Cyclones had sewed up the victory with Heller unexpected draw with undefeated Paul Martin at 167. Oklahoma State took over the top spot in late January only to stumble at home on Feb. 9. The Iowa Hawkeyes invaded Stillwater and thumped the Cowboys 23-15. Iowa won four bouts to OSU's three with three draws, but they scored extra points with a fall at 126 and a superior at 150. Feature bout was at 167 where Cowboy Martin defeating DeAnna 5-3.

My first out of state road trip was in mid-February, 1978. John and I jetted off to Bethlehem, Pa. for the East-West All-Star dual. We stayed with historian Don Sayenga and were all set to drive the 70-mile sprint to Lancaster the next day. Only problem was we awoke to a little snow. Let me check that. It was later referred to as the worst Blizzard to hit the East in 20 years! We were unable to make the trip. Only 800 of 3,600 expected hardy souls braved the weather to attend. In fact, the storm prevented Lehigh star Mark Lieberman from making the trip. In a featured match at 158, Iowa State's Kelly Ward used a takedown at the final buzzer to tie Wisconsin's undefeated Lee Kemp, 5-5.

We didn't begin the popular Individual Rankings until the following year, but did publish what we called a Mid-Season All-American team. Those top ranked men were John Azevedo, 118, Bakerfield; Mike Land, 126, Iowa State; Franc Affentranger, 134, Bakersfield; Dan Hicks, 142, Oregon State; Mark Churella, 150, Michigan; Lee Kemp,

158, Wisconsin; Paul Martin, 167, Oklahoma State; Mark Lieberman, 177, Lehigh; Frank Santana, 190, Iowa State; Jimmy Jackson, Hwt. Oklahoma State.

As the tournament loomed, Iowa was now the team to beat. They won the Big Ten in Ann Arbor while Oklahoma State topped Iowa State in the Big 8 by five points in Stillwater. Here's a look back at our tournament preview from March 1978 at



Jess Hoke, as a distinguished member in this class of 1977.

The pre-season favorite for the 1977-78 season was the Iowa State Cyclones followed closely by Oklahoma State and Iowa. Big names for ISU that year were Mike Land, 126, Joe Zuspann, 150, Kelly Ward, 158, Charlie Gadson, 177, Charlie Heller, 167, Frank Santana, 190 and Jim Gibbons, 118.

In an early dual, Iowa State nipped Iowa 18-16 in Ames in front of 14,000 fans. The difference was freshman 167-pounder Charlie Heller who tied heavily favored Mike DeAnna 8-8. Iowa State won five bouts including a superior 12-4 decision by All-American Mike Land at 126 over Iowa freshman Randy Lewis.

Their No. 1 ranking held up until January



the University of Maryland:

A three-team race is forecast with the University of Wisconsin having a solid grip on the fourth spot and from there on down its anybody's ball game.

Iowa brings one of the best balanced teams in years into the tournament with a good possibility of placing eight men. The Hawkeyes balance will be attacked by the better individual strengths of Iowa State and Oklahoma State who will hope to send three or four men each into the finals.

So on Wednesday, March 15, John and I boarded a plane and took off for College Park, Maryland. Truth was, I was flying much higher than the airplane with anticipation. Was I really going?

A young boy always remembers his first major league baseball game. My first was when dad took brother and I to Municipal Stadium in Kansas City to see the Yankees vs. the Athletics. With my eyes wide open, I got to see my then heroes – Mickey Mantle and Yogi Berra play. Mantle even hit a homer.

I wasn't that young when I arrived in Maryland, yet the adrenaline rush seemed as strong as that Kansas City trip when I entered

that old Cole Field House.

The tournament was incredible. The top five teams at the end were Iowa 94 ½, Iowa State 94, Oklahoma State 86 ¼, Wisconsin 77 ¼, Oklahoma 52 ¼.

The *AWN* headline read: IOWA'S DEPTH



WINS IT.

The game story opened with: Iowa's depth, which had been pointed to all season as a key factor in the Hawkeyes high rating, paid off with the biggest dividend of all in collegiate wrestling.

Although not claiming a single gold medal, coach Dan Gable's Iowa City power held off Iowa State's front-line strength and won its third NCAA mat title in the past four years by a slim margin.

Iowa All-Americans were Dan Glenn, third, 118; Randy Lewis, second, 126; Scott Trizzino, third, 142, Bruce Kinseth, second, 150; Mike DeAnna, sixth, 167, John Bowsby, fifth, Hwt.

The Cyclones, hoping to post their second in a row, saw their last opportunity fall when



1977 190-pound champion Santana collapsed on the mat with 2:01 to go in the second period against Wisconsin's Ron Jeidy. Plagued by knee problems throughout his brilliant career, Santana tore cartilage while trying to work free of an attempted throw by Jeidy. The senior from Cuba tried to continue – but it was obvious to the overflow throng of 12,500 that Santana was in too much pain to contest the Big Ten champ.

Best match for this writer was the semifinals at 150 pounds. The late, great Dave Schultz wrestling Michigan all-time great Mark Churella. The wild match ended 13-10 Churella.

The surprise of the 1978 tournament was unseeded 118-pounder Andy Daniels, Ohio University. He won six matches zipping to the title while scoring shocking wins over No. 2 seed Gene Mills, Syracuse and top seeded John Azevedo, Cal-Bakersfield. Daniels out slugged Mills 15-7 in the semifinals before a stunning fall over the previously unbeaten Roadrunner. Daniels came out firing scoring a fast double leg takedown into a cradle resulting in a 30-second finals fall.

A month later, two great ones were finalists for *AWN* Rookie of the Year. The



office kicked it around for several days before choosing Oklahoma State's Dave Schultz by a hair over Iowa's Randy Lewis for the top frosh award.

Schultz, out of Palo Alto, California, finished with a record of 30-5-1 and a third-place finish in the NCAA at 150 pounds. All of his losses were to NCAA champions or finalists: Mark Churella (2), Lee Kemp, Kelly Ward and Joe Zuspahn.

Lewis, out of Rapid City, South Dakota, finished with a 30-6 record and reached the NCAA finals at 126 pounds. Four of his losses were to Mike Land, Iowa State's unbeaten NCAA champion.

As spring turned to summer, I covered my first Junior National Championships in Iowa City. Will never forget visiting the Amana

Colonies and the great food and pies. Ended up going back many times.

The Junior Nationals, largest tournament in the nation, was held inside Iowa's hot field house with no air conditioning. The future stars were there, competing on over 20 mats.



Remembering a title bout in freestyle at 143 pounds featuring high school standout Andre Metzger, Michigan and New Jersey star Darryl Burley, both eventual NCAA champs. Other winners were Adam Cuesta, 105.5, California; Jerry Kelly, 132, Illinois; Perry Hummel, 178, Iowa; Bruce Baumgartner, Hwt, Indiana. The 154 pound class was loaded with stars. Grant Smith, Wisconsin, took the gold over place winners Jim Farina, Illinois, Roger Frizzell, Oklahoma and Nate Carr, Pennsylvania.

The recruiting wars heated up in August as coaches were busy signing blue chippers. It was a fabulous year for the University of Oklahoma as they harvested the best crop of recruits in decades, including five first-team High School All-Americans. Iowa State, Oklahoma State and Iowa also came through with quality signees in just the right weights.

But the Sooners really shocked wrestlingdom with the haul which included the nation's No. 1 prospect, Cedar Springs, Michigan star Andre Metzger; Oklahoma's top two prospects, Roger Frizzell and Cecil Beisel; the nation's best prep heavyweight, Steve Williams, Colorado; and one of the top lightweights, Moshannon Valley, Pa., standout Mark Dugan. All were first-team choices nationally. The class also included Colorado's Jim Hall and Tulsa's Edcar Thomas, who both became All-Americans at OU.

Later in my career my brother penned these words: "You found the perfect thing. Rare for most people. Very little pressure. No corporate rules, cut throat employees, and awful bosses. No commutes in traffic. Charmed."

It was a very good year.

Top Ten Wrestling Stories of 2020

By Gary Abbott, USA Wrestling

I have enjoyed writing an annual Top 10 wrestling stories of the year column for a very long time, but I can absolutely confirm that there has never been a year like 2020. I started competing in the sport in 1972, and have worked in wrestling communications since 1983. This is totally different than any other wrestling year, hands-down.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only had a major impact on wrestling, but has affected every aspect of life on earth. I don't know anybody who went through the Spanish Flu pandemic over 100 years ago, so none of us have any experience in this kind of thing. The big wrestling stories mostly came off the mat, not on it, and in most cases, they were very challenging or difficult.

So, in a year in which "everything is fluid," and when everybody has "to pivot" in order to move forward, here are my Top 10 stories for 2020.

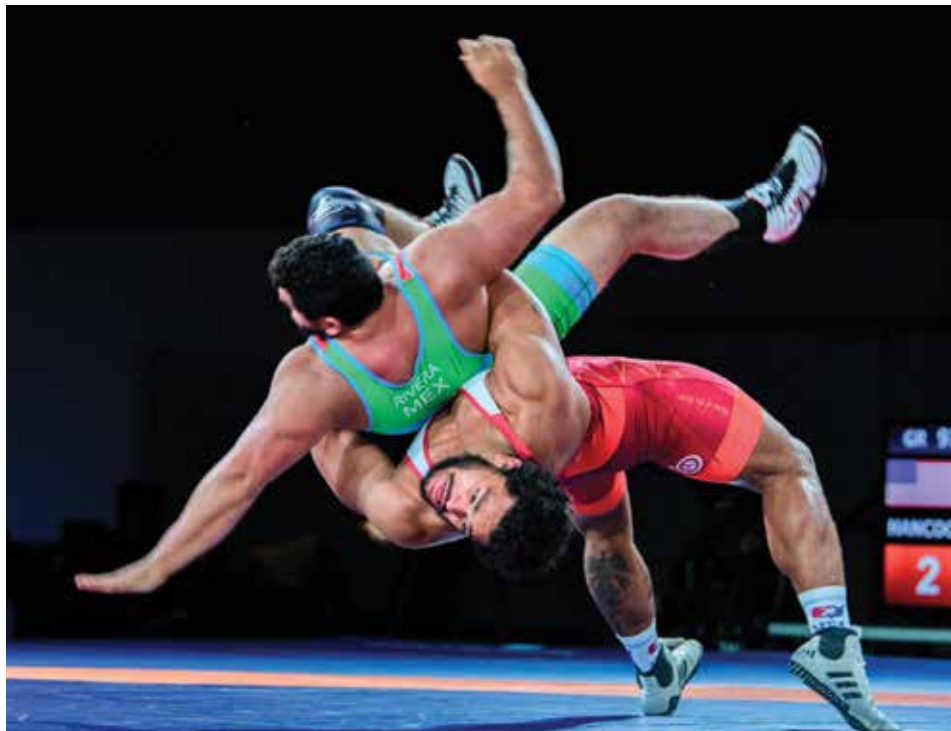
1. NAAs, Olympic Games, Olympic Trials, Fargo and so much more cancelled by pandemic – It would be easy to include COVID-19 in some way in all of our top stories for the year, but we are not going to do that. We are lumping all of the major wrestling competitions which were cancelled or postponed into just one posting, which is clearly the biggest story of the year.

The first event that I missed attending due to pandemic cancellations was the NAIA Women's National Invitational in Jamestown, N.D., which was cancelled in early March. Shortly after that, the NCAA announced the cancellation of all of its wrestling nationals, including what was going to be a record-setting Div. I Championships at U.S. Bank Stadium, a football stadium in Minneapolis. I had been to every NCAA D-I meet since 1983, and the pandemic ended that streak for me.

When the IOC postponed the Olympics for a year, USA Wrestling postponed the sold-out Olympic Trials in State College, Pa. for a year. After holding out as long as possible, USA Wrestling ultimately ended up cancelling the biggest wrestling tournament on the planet, the combined USMC Junior/Cadet Nationals in Fargo, N.D., which was set to celebrate the 50th year of Junior Nationals.

The pandemic shut down the sport of wrestling for months, before it was possible to start back up with some youth competitions this summer. I certainly hope that there is never another year where the biggest story is about what didn't happen in our sport.

2. USA has great Pan American Olympic Qualifier, and has 15 qualified weights for Olympic Games – At the 2019 World



PAN AMERICAN OLYMPIC QUALIFIER saw the U.S. qualify an addition 11 weights. Shown here, Greco Roman 97 kg Tracy Gangelo Hancock (UNITED STATES) won by tech fall over Luis Gerardo Rivera Alvarado (MEXICO) TF 10-0 and qualified. Photo by Tony Rotundo

Championships, the USA had an excellent performance overall, but qualified just four weight classes for the Olympic Games (two in men's freestyle, two in women's freestyle). The next opportunity came at the 2020 Pan American Olympic Qualifier in Ottawa, Canada in early March. The first major obstacle was actually having the event held at all, because it was scheduled right at the time when the world was shutting down due to COVID-19. UWW and the hosts in Canada made adjustments and the event went forward. Team USA had a great performance in Ottawa, qualifying at 11 more weight classes to give the USA 15 out of the 18 weights locked in. You needed to place in the top two to qualify in Ottawa. The four U.S. women all reached the finals, with Sarah Hildebrandt, Jacarra Winchester, Helen Maroulis and Kayla Miracle getting the job done. Men's freestyle got three more weights qualified, thanks to Thomas Gilman, David Taylor and Nick Gwiazdowski making it happen. In Greco-Roman, four weights were qualified, thanks to Ildar Hafizov, Alejandro Sancho, Joe Rau and G'Angelo Hancock making the grade. At 15 qualifiers, the USA currently has the most Olympic weights in Tokyo of any nation, and has one more than the 14 we had at the 2016 Rio Games. There are only three spots left to qualify (two in Greco-Roman and one in men's freestyle), and we get our final chance at the World Olympic Qualifier

in Bulgaria this coming spring.

3. RTC all-star cards and special broadcast events kept the sport alive – When wrestling shut down due to the pandemic, there became a great hunger for wrestling in our nation. Not only did the nation's top wrestlers want to compete, but wrestling fans were craving to see some great action. Instead of waiting until the world opened up completely, the wrestling community got very creative. The result has been a series of all-star wrestling cards and special broadcast events, held without fans and streamed live for fans to purchase and enjoy. The first card was the Illinois RTC Rumble on the Rooftop in June on top of an undisclosed building in Chicago and aired on Fight.TV. Many more followed. FloWrestling has been very creative in this space, holding events in their home city of Austin, Texas. It started with a FloWrestling Dake vs. Chamizo card in July. Flo partnered to broadcast the postponed Beat the Streets Gala fundraiser card in Hoboken, N.J. FloWrestling also created a pair of 8-Man brackets, first at 195 pounds then at 150 pounds, and also partnered with the Titan Mercury WC on a brand-new event, the RTC Cup. The Nittany Lion WC became a big player, with four cards held and broadcast on its Rokfin channel. The Wisconsin RTC had two events and the Hawkeye WC, Tar Heel WC and Pittsburgh WC also hosted events. Even former

wrestler and MMA star Chael Sonnen got into the fray, holding an Underground Wrestling card in a cage which was aired on UFC Fight Pass. Senior athletes got paid to wrestle, college athletes got some quality competition and fans supported the events financially. There are a few more expected in early 2021. The question is whether this model is sustainable when wrestling comes back in full after the pandemic ends. Will we see this kind of event activity in the fall of 2021? Here's one wrestling guy who hopes this becomes a tradition in wrestling every year.

4. University of Iowa has dominant wrestling season cut short after winning Big Ten title – Head Coach Tom Brands and the Iowa Hawkeyes were the dominant team in a very competitive 2019-20 Div. I college season. The Hawks went undefeated in dual meets, won the Midlands over the holidays, and had an excellent performance in winning the team title at the Big Ten Championships. They were the overwhelming favorite for the NCAA team title in Minneapolis, until the NCAA cancelled all of its winter championships on March 12. Their biggest dual meet win came on January 31, a 19-17 decision over returning NCAA champion Penn State in front of a sold-out home crowd at Carver-Hawkeye Arena. The Big Ten title, its first since 2015, featured three individual champions in Spencer Lee (125), Pat Lugo (149) and Alex Marinelli (165). There was debate about whether to award an unofficial team title within the sport, which did not happen, like so many other things during this screwy year. Lee won the Dan Hodge Trophy, and Brands was named NWCA Div. I Coach of the Year. Iowa comes back in 2021 with the No. 1 ranked team heading into the season.

5. Olympic weight decisions: Cox (97 kg), Hildebrandt (50 kg), Winchester (53 kg), Nickal (86 kg) – Early 2020 was a time for many athletes to make their decisions regarding what Olympic weight class they planned to wrestle at. Since there are 10 World Championship weights and only six Olympic weights, a bunch of athletes needed to make a move prior to the April 2020 Olympic Trials. Some of the big decisions included two-time World champion J'den Cox deciding to move up from 92 kg to 97 kg, to challenge 2016 Olympic champion Kyle Snyder and others. Two top women made a decision to drop in weight, World silver medalist Sarah Hildebrandt to 50 kg and World champion Jacarra Winchester to 53 kg, and both qualified their weights for the Tokyo Olympics. Bo Nickal, a 92 kg U23 World champion, announced the move down to 86 kg, where he will face 2018 World champion and fellow Penn State legend David Taylor and others. Unfortunately, the Olympic Trials were pushed back a full year. It will be interesting to see if all of these adjustments remain the same when April 2021 comes around and the Olympic Trials are finally held.

6. Women's wrestling gets NCAA Emerging Sports Status in all three divisions –



With only six weight contested in the Olympics, two-time World Champion J'den Cox has decided to move up from 92kg to 97kg for the Olympic trials. Photo by Tony Rotundo

It was in 2020 when women's wrestling closed the deal in regards to receiving official Emerging Sport Status within the NCAA. Planning meetings about this project began in 2016, and a coalition of wrestling organizations made its first application for Emerging Sport Status in August 2017. A second application was filed in August 2018, with required revisions and updates. In June 2019, the NCAA Committee on Women's Athletics (CWA) recommended that all three NCAA divisions approve women's wrestling as an Emerging Sport. The first official approval came on January 31, 2020, when NCAA Div. II and NCAA Div. III approved women's wrestling in their meetings. On June 17, 2020, right in the middle of the pandemic, the NCAA Div. I leadership approved women's wrestling as an Emerging Sport at the Div. I level. With women's wrestling now considered an NCAA sport, the next obstacle is reaching the required 40 programs for an official NCAA Women's Wrestling Championships. There is an awful lot of hard work ahead for the wrestling community in developing the sport at the NCAA level. Women wrestlers will have additional opportunities to compete and receive a college education which was not available for generations in the past. A big win for the sport.

7. Guess What? Wrestling can be held safely during a pandemic – While it seems like the only news in wrestling during the first half of 2020 was that all the major wrestling events of the year were being cancelled, there was a ton of work going on behind the scenes about how to bring the sport back. USA Wrestling created a number of COVID-19 Special Committees of experts to help the organization as it moved forward during challenging times. The COVID-19 Advisory Committee of health,

medical and government experts played a huge role throughout the pandemic. A COVID-19 Events Committee, which focused on how to safely conduct the sport, created two outstanding documents, a Return to the Mat Guidelines for practices, and a Return to Events Guidelines for competitions. These events guidelines were tested in a pair of USA Wrestling competitions in Utah in July, both which were deemed successes. Since then, USA Wrestling has been able to host three major national events, the Senior Nationals in Coralville, Iowa, the Preseason Nationals in Des Moines, Iowa, and the U23/UWW Junior Nationals in Omaha, Neb., plus a series of Folkstyle Tour of America events for youth and high school athletes. USA Wrestling state associations, where it is possible, have also been hosting competitions using these health protocols. The main focus in wrestling's return has been on following local and state health and government regulations. Wrestling is not entirely opened back up, as shown by the reduced, rescheduled or cancelled wrestling seasons at the high school level. However, while wrestling has been labelled as a "high risk" sport by certain organizations, the wrestling community has found a way to return to the mat. Here's to a full recovery in 2021 as the vaccine becomes available and the pandemic gets under control.

8. College wrestling holds the fort during pandemic, but Div. I ODU, Stanford and Fresno State dropped – The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a major financial crisis at the university level, especially within the college sports scene. With the cancellation of the 2020 NCAA Men's Basketball tournament,

Top Ten Wrestling Stories of 2020

continued from page 17

and the 2020 college football season held mostly without fans, college sports programs are in peril. There have been literally hundreds of programs dropped in recent months, with sports such as tennis, cross country, track and field and others taking big hits. It is interesting that during the pandemic, a number of colleges announced additions of women's and men's wrestling programs, mostly at smaller institutions. Our sport did not emerge unscathed, with three valuable Div. I programs getting the axe. Old Dominion dropped the sport on April 2, and did not have wrestling for the 2020-21 year. Stanford cut 11 sports on June 8, including wrestling. Fresno State, which reinstated wrestling a few years ago, dropped wrestling, lacrosse, plus men's and women's tennis on October 20. In all three cases, the program's coaches and alumni were not given any notice or opportunity for a solution before the cuts were announced. Keep Stanford Wrestling has raised a record \$12 million to endow the program, but has still not gotten the administration to work with them. A big push to Keep Fresno State wrestling was launched recently. The goal is to get these colleges to change their minds in 2021, so these two West Coast programs can continue. Wrestling still needs to work hard to support all of its existing programs, because the



World and Olympic champion Kyle Snyder made a huge move, leaving the Ohio RTC to train with the Nittany Lion WC for the Olympic push. Photo by Tony Rotundo

economic fallout from the pandemic is expected to continue to wreak havoc on college athletics.

9. Young stars take center stage at Senior Nationals in October - USA Wrestling was excited to work with Think Iowa City, its local organizing committee in the Iowa City community, to host the postponed Senior Nationals in a brand new arena in Coralville in early October. Senior athletes who had not been able to wrestle for months had a chance to get on the mat, as start of their preparation for the 2021 Olympic Trials. While a number of big-name athletes competed in the event, the major news came from the young stars who took huge steps forward in their careers. Andrew Alirez, a sophomore at Northern Colorado, was named OW in men's freestyle after a monster performance on the way to the 65 kg title. He beat Josh Heil, Mitch McKee, Joey McKenna and Evan Henderson on the way to the crown. The OW in Greco-Roman was another young star, Benji Peak from Northern Michigan, who won the 67 kg title with dominance and big throws. The men's freestyle finals at 57 kg featured two young talents, champion Vitali Arujau (Cornell) and runner-up Dylan Ragusin (Michigan). College wrestlers Mason Parris (Michigan), Alex Thomsen (Nebraska), Nick Boykin (Ohio State) and Cohlton Schultz (Arizona State) were also champions. Among the Senior National women's runners-up who made big strides were Xochitl Mota Pettis, Ronna Heaton, Macey Kilty and Skylar Grote. Mota-Pettis scored a pin over two-time World silver medalist Alli Ragan during the event.

10. Top Senior wrestlers move to new locations for their Olympic year push - In late 2019, Olympic champion Kyle Snyder made a huge move, leaving the Ohio RTC to train with the Nittany Lion WC for the Olympic push. A big move of talent continued in 2020, as other stars found new training locations. World silver medalist Thomas Gilman made one of the biggest moves this year, going from his Hawkeye WC home to join the Nittany Lion WC. Others to find new training locations were James Green and Nahshon Garrett going to the Southeast RTC, Mark Hall going to the Pennsylvania RTC, Joe Colon to the Cyclone RTC, among others. Numerous women wrestlers also moved. When Mark Perry left the Hawkeye WC to coach at Arizona State, top women Kayla Miracle, Forrest Molinari and Alli Ragan followed him to the Sunkist Kids in Tempe. Other women with new RTCs were Macey Kilty to Tar Heel RTC, Jen Page to Nittany Lion WC and Erin Golston to Wisconsin RTC. The biggest move announced won't happen until after the 2021 Olympics, when Olympic and four-time World champion Jordan Burroughs will leave Nebraska to join the Pennsylvania RTC near

his hometown in New Jersey. Burroughs will continue to compete through the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Other major stories that missed the Top 10, but are worth noting:

- Too many wrestling legends and friends passed away in 2020 - It just seems like the sport of wrestling lost so many legends and leaders to death this year. The most difficult for me personally was the dual loss of Donna Strobel in January and Greg Strobel in October, both dear friends and huge leaders in wrestling. USA Wrestling also lost one of our national staff members and another great friend, Safe Sport Director Dan Prochnow. Long-time USA Wrestling volunteer leaders who passed away this year included coaches Joe DeMeo, Chris Feder and Vern Zellner, Georgia state chair Robert Horton and referees Mike Matlock and Al Williams. One of my professional mentors, retired USOPC spokesman Mike Moran, passed as well. Award winning wrestling journalists Dan McCool and Pat Galbincea died in 2020. Hall of Fame wrestling giants who we lost included Carlton Haselrig, Ken Kraft, Dan Hodge and Jim Keen. Others such as Bob Zadick and Lars Jensen were among those who we lost and will be missed. It has truly been a tough year for our community.

- Wrestling actively participates in national conversations on social justice and equality - The 2020 year included national conversations on a variety of important issues. After the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, our nation turned its focus on the issues of social justice, police brutality and systemic racism. The wrestling community immediately engaged in this conversation in numerous ways. USA Wrestling issued a social justice statement on May 1. The Black Wrestling Association was formed by leaders among wrestling athletes. Numerous forums and discussions about the topic were held within the sport. In addition, focus on equality and inclusion were also prominent within our sport. Women wrestlers began the #HowSheWrestles campaign to spotlight the personal stories of women and girls in the sport. USA Wrestling President Bruce Baumgartner revived its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, appointing many impressive members to serve on September 2. The committee, chaired by Olympic athlete and coach Kerry McCoy, has begun its work. There is a lot more conversation and effort needed, but the sport is serious about working to create positive change.

- Two of three college women's nationals were held, with McKendree and Campbellsville winning titles - While the pandemic caused the cancellation of many of the men's college national tournaments, two of the three women's

college national events were held before the shutdown. It started as the traditional college national event, the WCWA Nationals, was held in Marietta, Ga. in February. Campbellsville won the team title with three individual champions. The WCWAs was an Olympic Trials qualifier, and featured some great performances. The historic first National Collegiate Women's Wrestling Championships, featuring only NCAA teams, was held in Adrian, Mich. in early March. McKendree won the team title, led by five champions. McKendree has been a top power for a long time, but this was their first national team title. The event that was cancelled was the NAIA National Invitational in Jamestown, N.D., closed down as teams were heading there to compete. That means a number of women wrestlers and teams did not get to have a national tournament this year. Later, Campbellsville star Abby Nette won the Patricia Miranda Medal, the Heisman Trophy of women's college wrestling.

- Grand View wins ninth straight NAIA team title, then breaks dual meet win streak with its 93rd in a row – When we speak of college sports dynasties, we must mention NAIA national wrestling power Grand View. In March 2020, Grand View won its ninth straight NAIA national team title, led by two champions, finishing 72.5 points ahead of runner-up Menlo College. Evan Hansen won his fourth NAIA individual title for the Vikings. This fall, during the start of the 2020-21 year, Grand View set another record with its 93rd straight dual meet victory, breaking SUNY-Delhi's 92 match streak. The Vikings beat Marian University, 36-6, as part of the Missouri Valley Winter Clash Duals on December 16, then added two more wins to their record, which continues to grow. Their last loss was in November 2013 to Div. I Iowa State. Grand View can set another college record in 2021, if it is able to win a 10th straight NAIA national wrestling title.

- Shilson and Kilty win U23 and UWW Junior National titles the same weekend – USA Wrestling was pleased to schedule two major national tournaments which had been postponed

during the spring, when the U23 Nationals and UWW Junior Nationals were hosted in Omaha, Neb. in November. There is some overlap in these divisions, and two talented women athletes competed in both tournaments and won both gold medals. Emily Shilson, college star for Augsburg and past Youth Olympic Games champion, won both age divisions at 50 kg, while five-time age-group World medalist Macey Kilty also scored a double title at 62 kg.

- High school wrestler Canaan Bower foils kidnapping in gas station in New Mexico – One of the biggest stories about wrestling this year came in late March when a high school wrestler performed a Good Samaritan deed that captivated the nation. Wrestler Canaan Bower of Mayfield High School took down and held a suspected kidnapper in Chucky's gas station in Las Cruces, N.M., pinning the suspect until police came to make the arrest. The video of this incident, as well as articles about his selfless action, showed the general public one of the great things about wrestling and wrestlers. When it was time to step up, Bower had the courage and ability to make a difference. USA Wrestling did a Moments Off the Mat interview with Bower afterwards, and his actions made the wrestling community proud.

- Princeton wins Ivy League title, snapping Cornell's lengthy dominance – When Princeton defeated Cornell 19-13 in their dual meet on Feb. 9, the Tigers snapped the Big Red's long streak within the league. Cornell had won every Ivy League title outright since 2003, and had an impressive 92-match dual meet win streak against their Ivy opponents. Winning six of the 10 bouts in the dual, Princeton won its first Ivy League title since 1986.

- Ivy League cancels 2020 winter sports, including wrestling – One of the most disappointing decisions off the mat this year came in November, when the Ivy League announced that it would cancel all of its winter sports seasons, including the 2020-21 season for the six Ivy League colleges with wrestling. The Ivy League has a number of teams and individuals that compete at a high-level in Div.

I wrestling. Although the college wrestling season is kicking off after the New Year, the teams at Cornell, Princeton, Penn, Columbia, Harvard and Brown will sit it out, leaving a lot of great talent on the sidelines.

- U.S. Marines win Armed Forces Greco title after a USADA sanction deletes an Army athlete's results – In February, the U.S. Army won the Armed Forces Championships in both Greco-Roman and freestyle for the 19th straight time. The Greco-Roman finals match between the Army and Marines was very close and highly competitive. That Greco-Roman win streak came to an end in June, however, when one of the U.S. Army athletes, Vlad Dombrovskiy, was given a sanction by USADA for violating its rules. Dombrovskiy's wins were ruled by Armed Forces Sports as forfeit losses, which changed the Greco-Roman finals to a 24-18 U.S. Marines victory. This sanction also affected the U.S. Olympic Trials, giving U.S. Air Force wrestler Brandon Mueller the 77 kg Greco-Roman spot in the Trials instead of Dombrovskiy. The Army still won the freestyle title after the scores were changed. One of the sport's longest winning streaks has ended.

Here are a few other items of special note:

- Spencer Lee became only the fifth wrestler to win the coveted AAU Sullivan Award, given annually to the nation's top amateur athlete. Lee joined John Smith, Bruce Baumgartner, Rulon Gardner and Kyle Snyder as winners of this major honor.

- High School girls wrestling opportunities continued to grow, as there are now 29 high school state associations that will sponsor girls state wrestling championship events. This is a huge increase from just a few years ago, when there were only six states with official girls state events.

- Dan Gable became the first wrestler to win the Presidential Medal of Freedom, when he received this major national award from President Trump in Washington, D.C.

- The PIAA in Pennsylvania voted to reduce the number of high school weight classes in wrestling-rich Pennsylvania from 14 to 13 weights in the future.

- Junior World Greco-Roman champion Kamal Bey will not be able to compete in the 2021 U.S. Olympic Trials, due to a USADA one-year sanction in October, based upon three failures to comply with USADA Whereabout requests.

- USA Wrestling's Executive Committee unanimously voted on October 20 not to send a U.S. team to the 2020 Senior Worlds in Belgrade, Serbia due to the pandemic. Because a number of other major wrestling nations also announced decisions not to attend, United World Wrestling later cancelled the World Championships and held an Individual World Cup instead.

Like many people I know, I am very much looking forward to the end of 2020, and the start of 2021. In so many ways, we will never forget 2020. I am hopeful that 2021 will be a memorable year as well, for all the right reasons.



NCAA Division II, III, NAIA, Review

St. Cloud Huskies lead D-2 race!

Defending National Champion St. Cloud State, lead by coach Steve Costanzo, remains atop the National Wrestling Coaches Association Division II Coaches Rankings. In the first regular season poll of the year, released by the association, the Huskies amassed 108 points to stay in the number one



spot with Nebraska-Kearney (90 points) and Central Oklahoma (80 points) rounding out the Nation's top three teams. Lindenwood remains in the four spot with 72 points, with Gannon breaking into the top five in this edition of the poll. McKendree dropped to the sixth spot while Indianapolis broke into the top ten joining West Liberty in a tie for the seven spot with 41 points. Division II's #9 & #10 ranked teams stayed the same with Ashland and Adams State closing out the top ten.

The top ranked wrestlers in each of the ten weight classes remain unchanged from December's preseason poll, including 4 #1's for SCSU. No. 3 Central Oklahoma leads with nine ranked individuals, with a Bronco ranked in every weight class aside from 285. Head Coach Steve Costanzo's Huskies have eight wrestlers ranked individually, with top-ranked SCSU joined by #5 Gannon in putting eight wrestlers in the individual rankings. Nebraska-Kearney feature the third-highest total of individually-ranked wrestlers with seven.

SCSU won its ninth consecutive NSIC championship in 2019-20 with a 16-0, 8-0 NSIC record. The Huskies have won NCAA Division II team titles in 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2019 under the leadership of head coach Steve Costanzo. SCSU ended the 2019-20 season as the nation's top ranked NCAA DII team before the COVID pandemic halted competition at the 2020 NCAA championships last year. SCSU has also captured first place honors at both the NWCA DII National Duals and the NCAA DII Super Region tournaments for the

last four consecutive seasons.

Individually, SCSU's Garrett Vos (133-pounds), Jake Barzowski (157-pounds) and Kameron Teacher (285-pounds) all earned number one rankings for the Huskies. At 141-pounds, SCSU's Joey Bianchini was ranked third and Garrett Aldrich was ranked #5 at 149-pounds for the Huskies. At 165-pounds, Devin FitzPatrick ranked second at 165-pounds and Noah Ryan was ranked #4 at 197-pounds. The Huskies will return five All-Americans to its roster this season including Vos, Barzowski, Bianchini, FitzPatrick and Ryan. A transfer from Notre Dame (Ohio), Teacher also gained All-America honors at Notre Dame prior to his transfer to SCSU. Vos, Barzowski and FitzPatrick are all two-time All-Americans for the Huskies. Some jey transfer for SCSU include Tommy Russell (Triton CC), Jared Head (ODU) and Holton Truax (NIACC).

The University of Nebraska at Kearney (2nd with 90 points) are lead by a duo of top ranked Iowa Seniors in Josh Portillo (1st/125 lbs.) and Iowa senior Matt Malcom (1st/165 lbs.). Other ranked Lopers are Lincoln senior Wesley Dawkins (2nd/133 lbs.), Kansas junior Terrell Garraway (4th/174 lbs.), and Seward redshirt freshman Joseph Reimers (10th/197 lbs.). Dawkins competed at 141 pounds but will drop down a class second semester. Also ranked in their weight class are Lincoln senior Jonathan Killingsworth (6th/141 lbs.), Colorado senior Sam Turner (5th/149 lbs.), and Pennsylvania senior Jacob Wasser (9th/157 lbs.).

The University of Central Oklahoma retained its No. 3 ranking in the latest NCAA Division II National Wrestling Coaches Association poll. The Bronchos of fifth-year head coach Todd Steidley retained the 3rd spot in the NWCA coaches poll. UCO has a national best nine individuals ranked in the top 12, with Heath Gray staying No. 1 at 184 to lead the way. Ty Lucas remained second at 157 and Dalton Abney held down the No. 3 spot at 197. Tanner Cole (125) and Brik Filippo (149) are both seventh, while 141 Nate Keim is eighth, 174 Wyatt Jordan ninth and 133 Paxton Rosen and 165 Dayton Garrett 12th.

Lindenwood wrestling team coming in at the third spot in the poll. Lindenwood amassed a 9-4 record during the regular season, including a 6-1 record inside the GLVC in 2019-20. The Lions finished third in the NCAA Regional, and arrived at the NCAA Championships as the No. 7 team in the country. The championship tournament was cut short in mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Colby Smith returns for Lindenwood after posting a perfect 13-0 record on the mat in 2019-20. Due to his dominance last year, Smith has earned the top

ranking in the 141-pound weight class. Gavin Londoff sits atop the 149-pound weight class as he enters his senior season. In 2019-20, Londoff swept the Missouri Open going a perfect 5-0, including a win by pin and major decision. He also went unbeaten at the Maryville Open going 2-0 while taking second place. Londoff was an All-American in 2018-19, taking home third place at the 2019 NCAA Division II National Championships. Abner Romero is currently ranked No. 2 in the 174-pound weight class and will look to build off a strong showing in 2019-20 where he compiled a record of 10-1. Tanner Hitchcock is looking to post his third-straight 20-win campaign. Hitchcock led the team with 25 wins in 2019-20, garnering All-American honors for the first time in his career. Hitchcock sits at No. 6 in the 133-pound weight class, and looks to claim his third regional title in as many years.

The 2020-21 roster will feature 11 newcomers and returns four all-GLVC performers from a year ago. The No. 4 Lindenwood wrestling program has announced the addition of three wrestlers to the team. Head coach Jimmy Rollins brought in Joey Daniel, Joel Romero, and Cevion Severado who all have shown success at a high level of competition. Daniel is a junior from Santa Ana, Calif. where he was a California State Champion. The Santa Ana High School product was also an NHSCA National runner-up, before he moved on to Clackamas Community College. In the 197-pound weight class, Daniel was named an NJCAA National runner-up. A teammate of Daniel at Clackamas Community College, Romero was a two-time NJCAA National runner-up. A product of Buchanan High School Romero finished second twice, and registered a third-place finish in the California State Championships. Romero is also the younger brother of currently the No. 1 wrestler at 174 pounds, Abner Romero. Severado comes to Lindenwood after competing at the University of Missouri. A product of Christian Brothers, Severado earned a state title in 2018, which helped the Cadets to its first team championship. Severado earned silver at the Junior World finals in 2017. The St. Peters, Mo. native was the first American to reach the Greco-Roman Junior World finals since 2000.

The Gannon men's wrestling team matched its highest national ranking in the program's history, moving from 7th up to fifth in the country in the latest poll from coaches poll. The Golden Knights have eight individuals in the NWCA ranking, the second highest total in the country, and all eight either moved up or held steady at their weight. Alex Farenchak (Painesville, Ohio/Riverside) held steady at fourth at 165 pounds,

while Dom Means (Pittsburgh, Pa./Central Catholic) at 149 slid up a spot to fifth and Luigi Yates (Erie, Pa./Cathedral Prep) at 174 and Joel Leise (Transfer, Pa./Reynolds) at 197 each moved up to sixth in the nation. Freddie Nixon (Buffalo, N.Y./St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute) held at 7th at 285, and was joined by Charlie Lenox (Erie, Pa./Fort LeBoeuf) in eighth at 125, Jacob Dunlop (Belle Vernon, Pa./Belle Vernon) in 10th at 133, and Evan Fisler (Sewell, N.J./Washington Township) making his debut this season at 11th at 157.

McKindree and coach James Kisgen's team rounds out the top-6 teams collecting 55 total points, and four individually ranked Bearcats. Led by Junior Joshua Jones (Chicago Heights, IL/Marian Catholic) sits at the No.2 spot in the 174-lb class. Graduate Student Nate Smalling (Belleville, IL/Belleville West) makes a No.6 ranking in the 157-lb class. Redshirt-Senior Daniel Filipek (Warrenton, MO/Warrenton) rounds out the Bearcats in the No.5 spot in the 185-lb class.

West Liberty, previously ranked 6th, drop one spot to 7th and into a tie with U-Indy. Laya, already a two-time All-American at 125 pounds, heads into his third collegiate season as the nation's No. 5-ranked 125-pounder. Warner is already a three-time All-American and was the NCAA Division II national champion at 133 in 2019. The coaches have him ranked No. 4 at 133 in this year's preseason poll. Fellow senior Connor Craig is a two-time All-American who won the 174-pound title at the 2019 Division II Nationals. He's ranked No. 2 in the preseason behind Central Oklahoma powerhouse Heath Gray, who hasn't lost to a Division II wrestler in two years and rides a 28-match winning streak into this season. Kemp, another senior, is back for his final college season after taking a medical redshirt last year. A two-time national qualifier at 197, Kemp had risen to No. 3 in the nation a year ago before going down with a season-ending injury. He returns to the mat ranked No. 6 at 197.

The University of Indianapolis moved up from its #11 preseason ranking, and is tied with Super Region 3 foe West Liberty for the 7-spot with 41 total points behind five ranked individuals. The #7 ranking is the highest for the Greyhounds since March 4, 2014, when the Regional Champion Hounds went into the NCAA Division II Wrestling Championships as the #4 team. Dawson Combest held onto his #4 ranking at 157 to highlight the Greyhound individuals. Both Breyden Bailey (141) and Jack Eiteljorge (165) come in at #6 for UIndy in their respective weight classes, while Andrew Sams made the largest move for the Hounds, jumping from #10 to #7 at 174. Gleason Mappes comes in at #9 at 184 to close out the ranked UIndy wrestlers..

Tiffin and new associate member Ashland are both in the top 10 of the NWCA rankings, slotted in at No. 8 and No. 9, respectively. Findlay is also in the mix assigned at No. 17. Lake Erie received 10 votes to be on the radar.

Tiffin, coached by Joey Simcoe, is paced by 2019 national champ Nick Mason placing second at 197 pounds. Chris Donathan is No. 3 at 149 and Bryan LaVearn is No. 6 at 165. Ashland University's sees six Eagles nationally-ranked. Ashland boasts a pair of grapplers who are No. 3 in the country in their respective weight classes – seniors Carson Speelman (149 pounds, 26-6 record in 2019-20) and Aidan Pasiuk (184, 19-5). Another senior, Tristen Weirich (20-9), is ranked fifth at 285 pounds. At 157 pounds, sophomore Drew Wiechers is No. 9 in the nation; sophomore Daniel Beemer is No. 15 at 174, and sophomore Luke Wymer is No. 16 at 141. Also on Friday, the National Wrestling Coaches Association (NWCA) ranked the Eagles at No. 9 in the country, and placed five AU wrestlers near the top of their respective classes nationally - Pasiuk third at 184, Speelman fourth at 149, Weirich sixth at 285, junior Peter Abraham (14-7) at 197, and Wiechers 12th at 157.

In at 10th is Adams State. The Grizzlies return three All-Americans to their roster, two of which qualified for nationals last season. ASU wrestler to watch include Khalil Gipson [R-Jr., 197 lbs, El Paso, Texas/Palo Duro HS] – Gipson is a 2019 All-American after placing 8th in the NCAA National Championship tournament back in 2019 at the 197lb bracket. Noah Hermosillo [R-Jr., 149 lbs, Gypsum, Colo./Eagle Valley HS] – Hermosillo earned All-American honors back in April of 2020 due to his efforts from last season where he went 20-5 overall and got second at the Super Regionals. He finished as the eighth-ranked 141-pounder in the nation. Jonathan Andreatta [R-Jr., 133 lbs,

Walsenburg, Colo./John Mall HS] – The other all-American from the Grizzlies roster and the other regional runner up from 2019. Before falling in the regional championship mat, he had a perfect 17-0 record and ended the year ranked fifth nationally in the 133-pound weight class.

In at number 11, is Minnesota State University at Mankatois. The MSU-M Mavericks, who return 20 letterwinners return from last season's team, have three individuals who qualified for the NCAA Championships last season. Veteran head coach Jim Makovsky, who enters his 32nd season of college coaching with an overall record of 312-139-4, guided the Mavericks to a 10-3 overall record, including a 6-2 NSIC record last season. Rated #2 in the preseason rankings, senior Kyle Rathman (149 lbs.) finished his junior campaign with a 16-4 overall record, including an 11-2 dual record as he went on to claim NWCA All-American honors. Rathman finished second at last year's NCAA regional tournament. Junior Trevor Turriff (184 lbs.) posted an 18-6 dual overall record last season and advanced to the NCAA Championships after a second-place finish at regionals and enters the season rated third. Senior Trenton McManus (125 lbs.) notched a 16-10 overall record last season and turned in a third-place finish at regionals to advance to the NCAA Championships. He's rated tenth in the preseason individual rankings.

Along with Rathman, Turriff and McManus, senior Matthew Blome (197 lbs.) is another Maverick with national tournament experience having earned an eighth-place finish

continued on page 22

By Johnnyie Johnson, AWN Small College Editor

NCAA Division II, III, NAIA, Review

continued from page 21

and All-American honors as a freshman. Last season, Blome finished with a 15-7 overall record having just missed an invite to the NCAA Championships with a fifth-place finish at regionals.

The NCAA Division II Championships are slated to be held March 12-13, 2021, at the Americas Center, St. Louis, Missouri! Stay a week and attend the NCAA D-I's!

Little Giants look to dethrone the Knights in D-3

With the status of the NCAA Division III Championships still up in the air, teams have begun their return to competition, and with that comes the first edition of the D3 Coaches Rankings, including the individual top-10 ranking and the team tournament top-15 poll. Wabash College starts the year as the nation's top-ranked team with 41 points, while there is a logjam for second place with Wartburg, John Carroll, and the Coast Guard Academy all with 39 points. Wisconsin La Crosse rounds out the top-five with 35 points. The top ranked individual wrestlers include Robbie Precin – North Central College (so 125), Matt Berlin – UW Stevens Point (sr 133), Jordin James – University of Mount Union (sr 141) 1. Ryan Anderson – Centenary University (so 149), Ryan Whitten – Otterbein College (so 157) 1. Kyle Hatch – Wabash College (sr 165), Cornell Beachem – Mount Saint Joseph College (jr 174) 1. Paul Detwiler – US Coast Guard Academy



(jr 184), Isaac Lahr – UW La Crosse (sr 197), and Max Bishop Wabash College (sr 285)

The top-ranked Little Giants of Wabash College (IN) currently have four athletes ranked in their respective weight classes and are led by senior standouts Kyle Hatch (165) and Max Bishop (285). Hatch and Bishop each enter the season ranked #1 in polls. They are joined in the top ten by teammates #9 Carlos Champagne (125) and #5 Alex Barr (165).

The Little Giants have been poised to win a national title in the past few years, and 2021

NCAA Division III Wrestling Tournament Cancelled

As this issue of *Amateur Wrestling News* was going to press the NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships were cancelled. The Division III Administrative Committee, acting on behalf of the Division III Management and Presidents Council, approved the recommendation from the Division III Championships Committee to cancel all winter championships for the 2020-21 season, citing low participation. This includes the 2021 NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships, which were scheduled to take place March 12-13 in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

could be the year for WABASH to take over the title from the "Burgs!!! Wartburg has won 7 titles in the past eight seasons, with top ranked Augsburg winning a title in 2015. Over the past 25 years, either Augsburg or Wartburg have won the NCAA D-3 title giving the tournament and dual match-ups a nick name of the "Battle of the Burgs!" In the 25 years, Augsburg has won 11 titles and Wartburg has won 14. The Auggies have won 13 NCAA Division III titles in the last 25 seasons. With 14 titles, Wartburg is one of only four NCAA schools to have won 10 or more college wrestling national titles (Oklahoma State has won 34 Division I team titles, while Iowa has won 23 Division-I team titles and Augsburg has won 12 Division III team titles). Besides the national titles, one of the 'Burgs has finished second a total of 15 times. And, The LAST TIME A TEAM OTHER THAN Wartburg or Augsburg claimed a D-3 national title was back in 1994, and that team was Ithaca, the same team that is poised to make a solid run at the title in 2019. Which brings is to the third ranked team in D-3, the Ithaca Bombers. Augsburg was in position to make it 14 last seasons!

Not ranked in the top 10, but who can never be discounted for a national title run is Augsburg University. Of the eight all-Americans last season for the Auggies, six were seniors, and another, 197-pounder Lance Benick is not wrestling this season. So, the AU will be anchored by their lone returning AA in Solomon Nielson, who was named a first-team All-American last season at 197. The Auggies have finished among the top 3 nationally 29 times, 13 national titles, 12 runner-up finishes, and four 3rd place finishes in 37 seasons!!!

Other than Augsburg, the next BURG in the story is Wartburg (IA). Wartburg is the preseason favorite to win the league's championship and regain their place atop the

American Rivers Conference as well as picked 2nd in the nation. The Knights earned 63 points in the poll, recording seven of nine first-place votes. Coming off their dethroning of the Knights and the program's first conference title, Loras is picked to finish second. The Duhawks picked up 56 points and one first-place vote. Coe claimed the final first-place vote and earned 52 points in the poll to finish third. Additionally, six Knights were ranked individually among the top 10 in their respective weight classes, which leads the nation in D-3. Helping Wartburg to a number 2 ranking include 125 - Brady Kyner, 10th, 141 - Kris Rumph, 2nd, 149 - Brady Fritz, 10th, 174 - Kyle Briggs, 2nd, 197 - Kobe Woods, 10th, and HWT - Jordon Brandon, 2nd. NCAA Lower Midwest Regional Championships many call the BIF 10 of D3, will be held the weekend of February 27 at the Five Flags Center in Dubuque, Iowa. The Lower Midwest Regional is hosted by Loras College.

The Regional will see A-R-C wrestlers vie for a spot in the 2021 NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships. In a typical year, where varying aspects of competition do not need to be altered to account for the novel coronavirus, the top three wrestlers from each weight class earn the privilege to compete at the NCAA Championships. However, the virus has continued to put the NCAA in a challenging position. Late into the fall of 2020 the NCAA governance structure made the hard decision to reduce field sizes for individual and team sports to 75% of their typical size. For wrestling, that means the field has been reduced from 180 qualifiers to 135. The NCAA Championship Committee is now working to establish criteria to determine national qualifiers. The American Rivers Conference will serve as host of the 2022 and 2026 NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships, to be held at the Alliant Energy PowerHouse in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

The Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) wrestling team has earned the highest national ranking in program history as the Bears are tied for second. The Bears have four wrestlers ranked in the Top 10 as Paul Detwiler is #1 at 184 pounds, Jon Wagner is second at 197, Phil Rogers is fifth at 165 and Noah Caskey is seventh at 141 pounds. Coast Guard sent six wrestlers to the NCAA Championship led by a trio of Bears won captured regional titles leading the team to a second-place finish for the second straight season at the NCAA Division III Northeast Wrestling Regional last season. Rogers (165), Detwiler (184) and Wagner (197) all won regional championships. AJ Aeberli (174) and Patrick Irwin (HWT) placed second while Caskey (141) won three matches on the final day to place third and earn an NCAA bid. It was the second straight regional championship for Wagner.

The John Carroll University Wrestling team closed the 2019-20 season as arguably their best in the previous decade. The Blue and Gold sent four wrestlers to the NCAA Tournament (the most since 2004), had seven place winners at the regional tournament, and was consistently ranked inside the top 25 in the nation. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the national tournament was canceled back in March and the four national qualifiers didn't get a chance to compete on the biggest stage.

Still, the future is looking bright for the JCU Blue and Gold as all four national tournament qualifiers are back for head coach Mark Hawald '05. Since returning to his alma mater, Hawald has been able to reestablish John Carroll as one of the premier wrestling programs in D3. Helping the JCU to a top 2 ranking come from a trio of 3rd ranked wrestlers in Andrew Perelka – (jr) 133), Jarrod Brezovec – (sr) 141), Sam Gross – (sr 157), and in at 4th is 165-pounder Luke Reicosky. Andrew Perelka was one of the four wrestlers this past season to make it to the national tournament. Perelka punched his ticket to the finals after winning his 125-pound weight bracket at the regional tournament last season, looks to be a contender at 133.

Dave Malecek is in his 14th season as UWL's head coach, leading the Eagles to top-four finishes at the NCAA III Championships in seven of his first 13 years come in at number 5 in D-3. UWL placed second in 2008 and 2010, third in 2007, 2009 and 2011 and fourth in 2012 and 2013. The Eagles look for another title hunt lead by number one ranked heavy Isaac Lahr – UW La Crosse (sr). Finished 18-1 at 197-pounds with six wins by fall ... Named to National Wrestling Coaches Association (NWCA) All-America First Team at 197... Won National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division III Upper Midwest Regional title with 4-0 record ... Captured Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) title with 4-0 record ... Named WIAC Newcomer of the Year ... Finished 4-0 at Cliff Keen-Mike Duroe Invitational at Cornell College (Iowa) ... Went 2-0 at U.S. Marine Corps/NWCA Multi-

Divisional National Duals. In 2019, the Eagles Konrad Ernst placed seventh at 285-pounds and ranked 8th, and Zamin eighth at 157-pounds last year to earn All-America honors and is ranked 3rd at 165. Zamin, 8th in 2019, #1 last year at NCAA, going 165# this year, 7th at U23 Nationals this fall. Ernst was a 2018,2019 All American.

Coach Dave Malecek said, "I don't know how my recruits or transfers are yet as we haven't competed, I think the freshman are OK, but 2 transfers could be good. I think for the team race, Wartburg and Loras will be good along with North Central and Wabash. It all depends on the regionals and how many guys you can get to the NCAA. WE are excited to host and love competing at HOME!!! Our team and coaches are grateful for every day we get to practice and workout and look forward to competing."

After claiming its second NCAAA Division III Central Regional championship in three years the Baldwin Wallace University comes in as the #6th team in D3. Head Coach Jamie Gibbs, who is in his 11th season, returns 12 letter winners, five NCAA Division III National Championship qualifiers, four All-Ohio Athletic Conference performers and four Academic All-OAC selections from last year's squad that went 13-3 overall, 6-1 in the OAC and won the NCAA Division III Central Regional Championship for the second time in three years.

In search of its fifth OAC title in the last six seasons, BW will be led by national qualifiers in seniors Stanley Bleich (North Ridgeville/ Elyria Catholic), Dante Ginetti (Poland/ Seminary), Dalton Leightner (Ravenna/ Rootstown) and sophomores Doug Byrne (Wickliffe) and Jack Stanley (Brecksville/ Brecksville-Broadview Heights). Bleich led the team with career-highs in victories with 38 and a takedown with 148. He is a three-time All-OAC selection, two-time Academic All-OAC performer, a National Wrestling Coaches Association All-American. Off the mat, Bleich is a three-time National Wrestling Coaches Association (NWCA) Scholar All-American team selection, a College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) Academic All-American, Dean's List student, a Jacket scholar and a member of the Chi Alpha Sigma Honor Society. He enters his final season ranked 10th on the all-time wins list with 99. Ginetti, who did not compete in 2019-20, is a two-time national qualifier that a posted a 25-8 record with 57 escapes 41 takedowns, 20 near falls, 14 pins, nine reversals, four technical falls and two major decisions in 2018-19. He is the 2019 NCAA Central Region Most Valuable wrestler and a two-time All-OAC selection.

North Central College men's wrestling team has earned the No. 7 spot in the NWCA poll, while three Cardinals earned spots in the top-10 rankings of their respective weight class. In the first individual rankings of the year, NCC is led by sophomore Robert Precin, who is ranked first at 125-pounds. Senior Rafael

Roman is currently ranked seventh at 157-lbs. Lastly junior Cody Baldrige—a two-time NCAA Division III National Championship Qualifier—begins the year second at the 187-lbs. The Cardinal's anchor, Precin, finished last the season with a 32-1 combined record, 10 major decisions and seven pins. He placed first at the Lower Midwest Regional Championships at 125-lbs, qualified for the 2020 NCAA Tournament, Named First Team All-American NWCA Academic All-American, and was selected to d3wrestle.com All-Freshman Team.

8th ranked Millikin University(III) is led by legendary coach Ryan Birt, and several assistant coaches including Jason Eckenron, who is the son of legendary Benton Community Coach (Iowa) coach and Hall of Famer, Jerry Eckenrod. Son Grant Echenrod is also a future HOF coach from Williamsburg Iowa. The Big Blue feature three returning CCIW individual champions from last year's teams that scored Millikin its first ever CCIW team title. Leading the way is three-time CCIW Champ and three time All-American junior Bradan Birt. Senior Tristan Birt returns after winning two straight conference championships and Logan Hagerbaumer returns at 197 pounds to defend his title. Hagerbaumer earned All-American status last season after qualify for the NCAA Tournament that was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Bradan Birt was 36-1 in 2019-20 setting a new mark for the best season for a Millikin wrestler. Bradan Birt is 103-13 in his career. Tristan Birt has a 47-23 career mark and Hagerbaumer was 22-6 last season for Millikin. Leading the way for the Big Blue and the coaches' son is second ranked Bradan Birt(165) who is a 3x All-American, Lower Midwest Regional OW 2020 , 109 career wins, 3x CCIW Champ. Ranked #4 is 197-pounder Logan Hagerbaumer- who is a 2x All-American. (Juco and D3). Ranked #8 is the second of two sons of coach Birt, 157-pounder Tristan Birt, who is a 2x CCIW Champ. Also ranked 8th is 125 Zac Blasioli, who is a returning AA. Ranked #9 at is 174 Taylor McGiffen, who is also a returning AA. Wrestlers to watch for the Milikin Big Blue are 133-pound Transfer DJ Millett- Juco AA, who just lost a tight 2-1 match to the top ranked 141 Jordan Carson- hurt last year, just beat Wheaton returning AA 11-4 and 5-1 on season, an should see a ranking soon for the Blue.

One of the odds-on favorites to win the NCAA-D-3 title in 2020 was Loras College under the direction of TJ Miller, but due to a large loss of season veterans, the DuHawks come into this season ranked 9th. Loras earned 27 points to tie with the University of Mount Union in ninth. In the individual rankings, the Duhawks' four returning All-Americans earned top-ten honors, with junior Daniel Ruiz ranked seventh at 149 lbs. and senior Jacob Krakow ranked fifth at 174 lbs. Sophomore Shane Liegel ranks fourth at 184 lbs. and sophomore Wyatt Wriedt ranks

continued on page 24

By Johnnie Johnson, AWN Small College Editor

NCAA Division II, III, NAIA, Preview

continued from page 23

fifth at heavyweight. Coach TJ Miller stated, “We have four returning All-Americans from last year but we have a talented group of first-years, some great newcomers and a bunch of motivated returners so it will be exciting to see what happens with our lineup. When reflecting on the 2020 NCAA’s Miller said “It was a kick in the stomach. We were ready to make history and to have the rug pulled out from us was heartbreaking to say the least but it allows us to be grateful for every opportunity we get. We preach to our guys to have a one-day mentality and to be grateful for all the moments that come with being a member of the Loras College wrestling team.”

The University of Mount Union started the pre-season in the 4th spot in D-3, but have dropped in the polls and are tied with Loras College in 9th. The Purple Raiders have four wrestlers nationally ranked are Jordin James (Bedford) No. 1 at 141 pounds, David Massey (Cuyahoga Falls / Woodridge) No. 4 at 133 pounds, Luke Hernandez (Nashport / Tri-Valley) at 149 pounds and George Lassnick (Painesville / Lake Catholic) at 184 pounds. James, the Ohio Athletic Conference Wrestler of the Year and an All-American in 2020, won the 141-pound regional title with a 26-2 overall record to qualify for the national tournament for a second straight year. In 2019, James won the 133-pound national title as the third Raider to win a national title. Massey was an All-American and All-OAC second teamer at 133 pounds with a team-best 36 wins and was third at the NCAA regional meet. Hernandez was an All-American in 2019 and in 2020 was an All-OAC first teamer who won 22 matches and finished sixth at the NCAA regional. Lassnick finished fifth at the NCAA regional and won 16 matches a year ago.

The 2021 NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships will be held March 12-13 at the La Crosse Center in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

NAIA's Grand View College on the verge of wrestling history!

Setting the mark in College Park was the season theme for the University of Iowa Hawkeyes for their 1986-87 season, after winning 9 straight NCAA titles. However, a young coach at Iowa State named Jim Gibbins and the Iowa State Cyclones would stop the Hawkeyes in their quest for 10 NCAA titles, held only by UCLA basketball, who had 10 under coach John Wooden. Now, enter Coach Nick Mitchell (and Coach Ready



), from NAIA's Grand View College in Des Moines, Iowa. The Vikings of Grand View are poised to set history in Park City, Kansas, when they take the championship finals mat to defend their 9 title win streak. Nothing looks like it will derail the Viking train as Grand View and Coach Mitchell look like a runaway train on their way to HISTORY! X!

Not only has the GV team been dominant in the national tournament, they have dominated duals, and basically every dual meet they have wrestled in. This is meant literally, because no college wrestling program has ever done what the Vikings officially accomplished in December 2020. Grand View defeated Marian University (Ind.), Cumberland (Tenn.) and Texas Wesleyan at the Missouri Valley Winter Clash Duals. The Vikings won by scores of 36-6, 31-15 and 49-0, respectively, to improve to 7-0 this season. In doing so, the Vikings extended their dual winning streak to 95, which is a new all-time record for most consecutive dual victories by any college wrestling program at any level. Grand View is now at 103 consecutive dual wins! Grand View surpassed State University of New York Delhi's record of 92 consecutive dual wins, set from 1979-83. SUNY Delhi no longer sponsors a wrestling program. The Vikings began theirs in 2008, and have grown into arguably the most dominant program in college wrestling, regardless of level. Under head coach Nick Mitchell, Grand View has won nine consecutive NAIA national team championships and has also won nine straight NAIA national duals crowns. Since 2012, 17 different wrestlers have combined to win 30 individual national titles.

Now, the Vikings can add the all-time consecutive dual victories record to their insane run of success. The streak began in 2013, after a 22-18 loss to Iowa State. The Vikings won the first 92 by an average of 37.9 points per dual

(the average score has been 42.6-4.7). They've scored 40-plus team points 53 times and broke 50 team points 29 times. They've only allowed an opponent to score double figures just 10 times, and the most points they've allowed in a single dual is 16, in a 31-16 win over Baker on Jan. 27, 2018. Back on Nov. 7, 2013, the Vikings dropped a 22-18 barnburner to then-16th-ranked Iowa State at Hilton Coliseum. The Cyclones took six of 10 matches that day, but Mitchell doesn't need a reminder. He can recite the whole thing from memory. Seriously. "I remember all of it," Mitchell said. "We lost. I remember everything about that dual."

The Vikings have had some dominant NAIA championship teams, and in 2018-19, Grand View qualified all 12 of their wrestlers to the NAIA Nationals and all 12 earned All-American honors. Vikings threatened their own scoring mark, but fell just short as Grand View would put six wrestlers in the finals and go 2-4. GV's total marks just the third time ever that a team broke 200 points at the NAIA's, all done by the Vikes! It's also the second-highest team score ever (the highest: 234.5, by Grand View in 2017).

The Vikings have posted 32 shutouts during the streak and have won by an average of 37.9 points per dual (the average dual score has been 42.6-4.7). They've scored 40-plus team points 53 times and broke 50 team points 29 times. They've only allowed an opponent to score double figures just 10 times, and the most points they've allowed in a single dual is 16, in a 31-16 win over Baker on Jan. 27, 2018.

The coolest part about the streak, Mitchell added, is the number of guys who have contributed to it over the years. Since Grand View's first NAIA national title, in 2012, 17 different Viking wrestlers have combined to win 30 individual national titles. Mitchell's philosophy — he calls it the "Championship Lifestyle" — has been the driving force behind Grand View's dominance. They've won the NAIA national tournament by 100-plus points four times, and four more times by at least 30. The current group of Viking wrestlers embraces that philosophy. There is no pressure when it comes to maintaining these dominant streaks, they say. Only the opportunity to write their own chapters.

Besides the dual streak and national title run, the Vikings are the first team in NAIA Wrestling history to win ten-consecutive national titles. Also, the Vikings are only the second program in collegiate wrestling history (NAIA, NJCAA, NCAA) to garner nine straight titles. The other program to do so are NCAA Division I Iowa (six-straight (1995-2000) and nine-straight (1978-1986). Grand View "overtook" NCAA Division I Oklahoma State (seven-

straight (1937-1949)) and NCAA Division II Cal Poly (seven-straight (1968-1974)) with their eight titled last March (2019), and has the second most consecutive title for any program regardless of division. In March 2021, Grand View wrestling WILL become the MOST dominant wrestling program in the nation regardless of their classification!

Individually ranked in the NAIA are- 125 – Nick Kunz, Montana State-Northern, 133 – Austin Wallace-Lister, Warner Pacific (Fla.), 141 – Baterdene Boldmaa, Doane (Neb.), 149 – Marty Margolis, Grand View (Iowa), 157 – Nolan Saxton, Reinhardt (Ga.), 165 – Elias Vaoifi, Missouri Valley, 174 – Brennan Swafford, Graceland (Iowa), 184 – Riley Jaramillo, Saint Mary (Kan.), 197 – Issac Bartel, Montana State-Northern, and 285 – Brandon Reed, Lindsey Wilson (Ky.)

Now, for the rest of the story as Paul Harvey would say!! In at number 2 is The Running Eagles had 11 individual wrestlers mentioned in each class. Fellow Mid-South Conference members Lindsey Wilson (4th), Southeastern (5th), Campbellsville (8th), Cumberland (10th) and University of the Cumberlands (20th) were mentioned. In the receiving votes category, Midway and Thomas More also made an appearance in the poll.

The 11 ranked individuals from Life University are 125 lbs. - Randy McCray Jr. (2nd), Brandon Orum (16th), 133 lbs. - Gavin Christ (9th), 141 lbs. - Tyree Johnson (7th), Jacob Ruiz (9th), 149 lbs. - Denver Stonecheck (1st), Julian Hernandez (12th), 165 lbs. - Sid Ohl (4th), Mason McDaniel (10th), and 197 lbs. - Diallo Matimella (3rd), and Baker Hadwan (5th).

In at 3rd is Lindsey Wilson of Kentucky. The Blue Raiders steamrolled through the early portion of the schedule to a 9-0 (2-0 Mid-South Conference) record. Lindsey Wilson managed 164 total points in the poll as 11 grapplers are individually ranked in their respective weight classes. The MSC is well represented in the poll. Joining the Blue Raiders in the top-5 is No. 2 Life (Ga.). Cumberland (Tenn.) and Southeastern (Fla.) sit just outside the top-5 at No. 6 and No. 9 as Cumberlands (Ky.) is No. 11 and Campbellsville (Ky.) is No. 14. Midway (Ky.), Thomas More (Ky.) and Brewton-Parker (Ga.) are all featured in the receiving votes section. Brandon Reed once again headlines the heavyweight class with the No. 1 overall ranking. Cagen Wallace is No. 4 at 125-pounds, Sam Bacon is No. 7 at 133, Trent Johnson is No. 2 at 149, Derrick Smallwood is No. 2 at 157, Joe Koontz is No. 9 at 165, Matt Hebel is No. 18 at 174, Tyler Hall is No. 4 at 184, Trajan Hurd is No. 9 at 184, Trevor Lawson is No. 2 at 197 and Carlos Figueroa is No. 9 at heavyweight.

Indiana Tech takes fifth in the poll with a total of 106 points to earn the program's 64th straight national ranking. Grand View took the top spot with 207 points followed by Life (170 pts), Lindsey Wilson (167 pts) and Reinhardt

(120 pts). The Warriors had 11 individuals rank in the top 20 of their respective weight classes, adding two more athletes from the last national ranking. Nathan Orum jumped two spots to 14th at 125-pounds while Matthew Gimson claimed third at 113-pounds. Conner Gimson remained at the sixth spot at 141-pounds and Kyle Kantola improved to ninth from 17th at 141-pounds. Nate Wheeler advanced one spot to 16th at 149-pounds while Nick Gates also moved up to 15th at 157-pounds. Hunter Gasper earned the 19th spot at 165-pounds while Kolby Ferris appeared in the rankings at tenth at 174-pounds. Eric Vermillion remained at second and Josue Hill took 15th again both at 184-pounds while Vernon Willis made an appearance on the poll at 17th for 285-pounds.

Phoenix wrestling has stayed put at No. 7. Cumberland moved to 8-4 after falling to the new No. 11, the University of the Cumberlands on Wednesday, 19-15. Carter Cox has moved down five spots to No. 13 in the 125-weight class after improving to 7-1 after a Major Decision win over Gage Huson of the Cumberlands on Wednesday. Keshawn Laws moved up one spot to No. 17 at 141. Laws is currently 10-2 on the season after falling to 16th ranked Bryce Nickel of the University of the Cumberlands. Anthony Maia maintained his rank of No. 3 in the 149-weight class, holding on to a 9-1 record currently. He posted a 12-8 decision win over Victor Zamora on Wednesday. Cole Smith has is once again ranked No. 5 in the 165-weight class. Smith has had an incredible beginning to his Phoenix career starting 12-0 and winning over six ranked opponents including a win over 15th ranked Cumberlands wrestler Jacob McNutt. John Olivieri dropped to No. 12 in

the 184-weight class. Olivieri is now 6-3 on the season, but his third loss came to Gabe Jacobs of the Cumberlands yesterday evening. Heavyweight Patrick DePiazza remains the third-ranked wrestler in the 285 class. Depiazza is currently 9-2 with his only losses coming to No. 2 Greg Hagan and No. 4 Aaron Johnson.

83

Also, in at 7th is OCU. Six Stars appeared in the individual rankings highlighted by Chase Vincent, who boasted of the No. 2 rating among NAIA 174-pounders. Oklahoma City made the top 25 for the 16th consecutive poll. The Stars have spent the past 11 rankings among the top 11. OCU garnered 88 points in the team poll, Four OCU wrestlers were among the top 10 at their respective weight – Connor Holman (fourth at 149 pounds), Jon McGowan (fourth at 157), Easton Rendleman (sixth, 197) and Montana Moon (10th, 133). Jaxen Gilmore sat at No. 12 in the 141-pound rankings. 7 Southeastern (Fla.) 83

Mat News

NCWA Will Not Sponsor Season Of Competition In 2020-21

On Sunday, December 27, the National Collegiate Wrestling Association Board of Directors met for the third time to determine the outlook for the delayed 2021 winter season.

After a brief discussion with each conference chairman concerning their respective conference teams ability to participate, it was determined that no conference had even 20% participation. Four of the eight conferences had no teams that would be permitted by their universities to travel or have other teams on campus. Therefore, no allowable competition this semester.

Based upon these difficult numbers, the board concluded that the NCWA will be unable to sponsor a season of competition in 2020-21.

NCWA member teams who's universities are allowing competition are encouraged to compete under the guidelines provided by their respective institutions. No Athlete will be in any way penalized for competition during the 2020-21 season and no eligibility is forfeited by the athletes choosing to participate in any event this season.

The board has had discussions concerning a collegiate invitational tournament that could give participating athletes a season ending event. If such an event holds interest to NCWA and or NCAA Schools please contact jim@ncwa.net to discuss details. Any events available to NCWA athletes can be posted here on the NCWA website.

The Board has already begun to plan for the



USA SUPER CLASH--David Taylor decisioned Jordon Burroughs, 4-4 on criteria.

Photo by Mark Lundy

Publisher's Notes

In my 50 years with *Amateur Wrestling News* I've never seen delivery as bad as it has been over the past few months. It hasn't been uncommon in the past for December mail to be extremely slow but this year has really topped them all. We had at least 50 complaints of non-delivery and we didn't get our own copies (the issues are mailed from our press in Tucson, Ariz.) until the end of the first week in January. As I write this in February the January issue has still not arrived in our mailbox.

I went to our Post Office box at the end of October and was surprised to see the November issue in the box - wait, we hadn't put out the November issue yet. On a closer look it turned out to be the November 15, 2017 issue in absolutely perfect condition as if it had just be mailed a few days before. Explain that one.

Anyway, this is just the long way around asking for understanding as we hope the U.S. Postal Service gets its act back together.

2021-22 season and encourages teams to recruit athletes to their programs with the knowledge that there will be a strong 2021-22 wrestling season for NCWA Programs.

Karwath Named Men's, Women's Wrestling Coach At Avila University

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- The Avila University Department of Athletics is thrilled to introduce Graham Karwath as the first head coach of the department's newly-unveiled men's and women's wrestling teams, which will begin competition in the 2021-22 school year.

"I am really excited to welcome Graham to the Avila Athletics family," said Avila University Director of Athletics Shawn Summe. "Graham had reached out to me prior to us even

announcing that we were starting wrestling with the thought that Avila would be a great place to start a wrestling program, and he exudes eagerness and a passion for the sport of wrestling."

Avila unveiled its plans to add both men's and women's wrestling, along with both men's and women's bowling, to its roster of varsity sports last month, which will raise the school's total up to 16 varsity sports.

"I am thrilled to be headed to Avila University to build Kansas City's only collegiate wrestling program," Karwath said. "I'm very honored and grateful to Shawn Summe and the hiring committee for giving me this opportunity to lead the first men's and women's wrestling programs at Avila."

A passionate, experienced wrestling coach who rapidly rose up the ranks from high school assistant coach to collegiate head coach in less than a decade, the St. Louis-based Karwath will come to Kansas City after most recently serving as the head men's and women's wrestling coach at MacMurray College in Illinois, where he helped to produce the first three NCWCC All-Americans in the program's history.

After MacMurray announced its decision to suspend university operations after the spring 2020 semester, Karwath has spent much of the last year as a recruiting specialist with Blue Chip Wrestling Camps, helping to develop a database of high school wrestlers looking to be scouted by college coaches. That helped him learn about the Kansas City high school and club wrestling scenes, and, he says, helped him see the other side of the puzzle after he had learned to approach recruiting from the perspective of a college coach.

Karwath got his start in the wrestling coaching ranks at East Ascension High School in Louisiana, where he served as an assistant coach from 2012-2014. From there, he moved on to become a student assistant coach at his soon-to-

Conrad Calendar Passes

By Jim Kalin

Conrad Calendar didn't have an easy draw in the 134 pound bracket the only time he was ever an All American. As a junior at Michigan State, he entered the 1973 NCAA's unseeded, but ended sixth. In round 2, he met eventual champion Don Rohn from Clarion, and lost 5-2. Calendar's quest to salvage his NCAA Tournament began in the consolations' basement, and on the way to the medal rounds, he defeated the top seed, Larry Morgan from Cal Poly SLO. Calendar would enter the 1974 NCAA's as a returning All American and the sixth seed, but lose in the quarters to eventual champ Tom Sculley from Lehigh 7-6, then fail to place.

In high school, Calendar wrestled for legendary Maple Heights and NWHOF coach Mike Milkovich. He was a member of the Mustangs' 1969 state championship team and was one of four Maple Heights wrestlers competing in consecutive weights for an individual state title. Those teammates were Dale Brooks, Lon Hicks, and the great Tom Milkovich.

Conrad Calendar had big distractions the night he wrestled for the state championship. His bout against Madison's Bill Misch took place immediately after Tom Milkovich's match, though if Tom won, there was a good chance that the next weight class would be delayed for the crowd to settle down. Tom was attempting to win his third state title, and over half of St. John Arena's seats were filled with Maple Heights fans.

Conrad's match would be a supreme test. Misch had crushed him the week before at the Mayfield district 8-0, and like Tom, he was competing with a serious injury. Conrad had torn ligaments in his ankle three weeks before and had been unable to practice. It was amazing that he was even in the finals.

Of course it was impossible for Conrad Calendar not to watch Tom Milkovich wrestle for his third state title. St. John Arena had never been as loud and charged with excitement. Even if Conrad had pulled up his hood and refused to watch his friend's match, he would have heard the crowd's roar as it responded to the biggest challenge Tom Milkovich ever faced. How could he not watch? Tom and Conrad were best friends. They met in kindergarten and had progressed together through elementary school, then junior high. When Conrad was in seventh grade, he was on the East Junior High basketball team. He had been playing for several years, and he liked it. One afternoon, he was with Dan and Tom Milkovich at their home.

"I spent half my life at their house," Calendar said in an interview. The brothers told him that if he went out for basketball instead of wrestling, he couldn't come over anymore. Conrad didn't hesitate in his decision.



1972 Big 10 Champions-- Grady Peninger, Tom Milkovich(142), Conrad Calendar (134), Pat Milkovich(126), and Greg Zindel (177).

"Okay, I'll wrestle."

The brothers took Conrad into the basement where the wrestling mat was.

"They kicked the shit out of me," laughed Calendar. "That's when it all started. Thank God for that. It was the best thing I ever did."

Only Dale Brooks failed to win that night. But that 1969 group was probably the greatest public high school wrestling team in Ohio sports history. There was just one division then, not the present three.

"All I do know is that he was one of the keys to Tom and my success at Michigan State," said Pat Milkovich. "Conrad forced us to wrestle our best every day or he'd remind you later, when you least appreciated it, that 'I kicked your ass today, didn't I? How'd that feel, huh?'"

Conrad Calendar placed three times at the Midlands, and won the tournament in 1971, defeating Andre Allen/Northwestern and Bernie Gonzales/Oklahoma State in the process.

Calendar was born in Wheeling, West Virginia. He taught at Garfield High School in the Cleveland area, and was head wrestling coach there. Calendar was also assistant wrestling coach to Tom Milkovich at Auburn University. He passed away on New Year's Eve in Hellerton, Pennsylvania from Covid-19. He was 69.

be alma mater Williams Baptist University in Arkansas, where he was part of a coaching staff that mentored ten NAIA All-Americans and two NAIA National Champions. At WBU, Karwath also managed the team's social media accounts, helping to increase the exposure of the Eagle wrestling program, and helped to coordinate fundraising and recruiting efforts.

After four years at Williams Baptist, Karwath moved on to become the assistant men's and women's wrestling coach at Lindenwood University-Belleville in Illinois in July 2018, where he coached the Lynx's first-ever NAIA All-American. Less than a year later, he was promoted to head coach of the program, his first collegiate head coaching position.

"Starting a program is a unique challenge, but an incredible privilege," Karwath said. "I am

excited to get to work to build a program that the Kansas City area and the wrestling community can be proud of. Go Eagles!"

Tickets for Big 12 Championships on Sale

Ticket sales began in January for the 2021 Big 12 Wrestling Championship. The event is scheduled for March 6 & 7 at the BOK Center in Tulsa, Okla.. The Big 12 Conference and the Tulsa Sports Commission previously announced a partnership to host the Big 12 Wrestling Championship at BOK Center through 2024.

The championship marks the sixth neutral-site conference championship for the sport and the fifth in Tulsa. Last year, the Oklahoma State Cowboys won their eighth consecutive team title and their 18th Big 12 title overall. The wrestlers

participating in the Big 12 Championship will be competing for berths into the NCAA Wrestling Championship.

All-session tickets go on sale Friday, January 22, at 10 a.m. and will be available online at www.bokcenter.com. General admission reserved tickets start as low as \$49, while reserved seating is \$69 and premium seats are available for \$89 and \$109. All fans will be in POD seating, which increases distancing and minimizes fan crossover when entering and exiting their seats. Fans must purchase all tickets in a selected POD group, available in select section groupings of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 seats.

A limited number of suites are available for

continued on page 28

Mat News

purchase for this event. Price varies by location and includes all-session tickets. For inquiries, contact Leah Taber at ltaber@asmtulsa.com.

David Taylor Edges Jordan Burroughs in USA Super Clash

By Rory Jiwani

The hyped clash between American wrestling stars David Taylor and Jordan Burroughs lived up to expectations January 3th. Postponed earlier after a COVID scare in the Taylor camp, the two faced off in Lincoln, Nebraska with 2018 world 86kg champion Taylor boasting a significant weight advantage over London 2012 gold medallist Burroughs.

Taylor had lost all four of their previous bouts, the last in 2014 before he moved up in weight, and started more aggressively.

He went into a 1-0 lead after Burroughs failed to score when put on the 30-second clock for passivity.

At the start of the second period, Taylor pushed the four-time world champion out of bounds to go 2-0 in front before a go-behind takedown put him into a commanding 4-0 lead.

Burroughs roared back inside the final minute with his opponent unable to resist his all-out attack, sending him out of bounds four times to level the scores. But Taylor's takedown - as a two-point score - meant he still had the advantage, and he held on in the dying seconds to take the win.

In Our Mailbag

Hi Pat,

I enjoy reading your articles in *AWN*, especially the Push Out drama and Gable receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

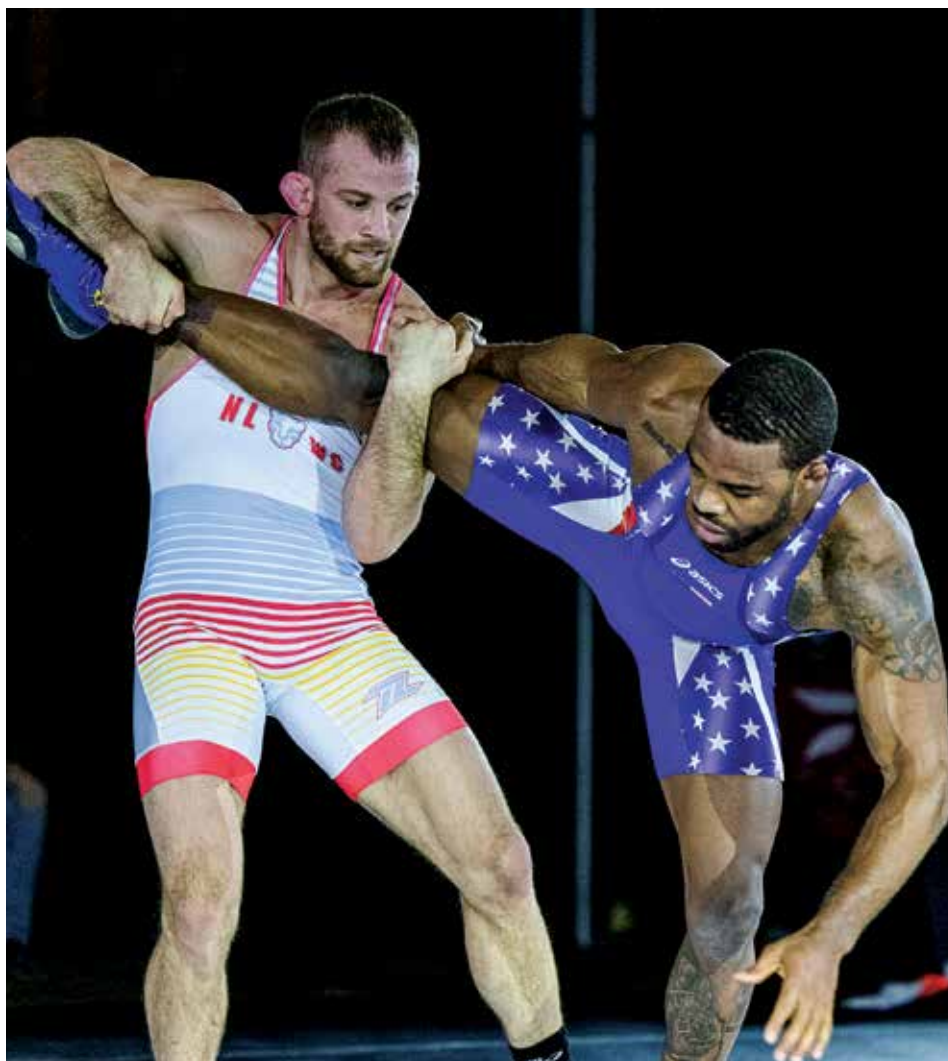
I am the Founder/Owner of the *Pennsylvania Wrestling Newsmagazine*. We are in our 26th year in publication and have subscribers in 22 states. I wrestled at Lock Haven, an '82 grad, and was an assistant at Slippery Rock, Army, Old Dominion University and Virginia. I started the program at St. Andrews University (NC) in 2006 and coached there for 13 years.

Anyway, I was disappointed that WIN and AWN did not have Gable on the cover of their magazines for receiving such a Great Honor! That is wonderful for our sport and gives our sport credibility.
Respectfully, Keep Wrestling,
Joe Baranik

Dear Mike,

I just was sent and read your article this morning about the Washington vs Iowa State wrestling match which was held on January 22, 1972 and wanted to thank you so much for writing it.

It was a day that I definitely remember and



USA SUPER CLASH--David Taylor decisioned Jordan Burroughs, 4-4 on criteria. Photo by Mark Lundy

your attention to detail really brought it back to life for me and I am sure for my team mates that I know will read it.

My name is Scott Cahoon and I was the 126 pounder that you so graciously wrote about in your article.

Thank you very much!

Scott Cahoon

Hey Pat,

Hope all is well for you and your family in these crazy times.

I just wanted to comment on your last article in *AWN* re: the pushout. Great funny article and I couldn't agree with you more. Might as well just go to Summo. I didn't know they were thinking about it (I live under a rock here in Happy Valley PA). Nothing worse than watching a pushing match. We're spoiled here as Cael wants the guys to go out and score points rather than just win and usually the wrestling is

exciting.

When I first got out of coaching and was watching as a fan I started to think of how we could make all matches more exciting and I think there should be 2 and 3 point takedowns. A 3 pt TD happens when it's clear the scoring wrestler initiated the takedown and a 2 pt TD is a counter. It's not hard to tell usually and I say put the extra official, who usually only agrees with the head official, at the table to decide if 2 or 3 pt. and it would just like the TD tournaments we used to hold at camps etc. Anyway, I have more complicated thoughts on it and I brought it up to Bryan Van Cley a few years back and he asked me to get him something in writing but it never happened as I was probably too busy XC skiing.

Well...I could go on with more detail but gotta go for now...actually xc skiing.

Have a good one!

John Bernard

John,

I read with interest the article by Denny Diehl in the January 15th issue. When I finished reading the article it dawned on me that Denny had missed one wrestler whose only NCAA medal was gold, but it was his only appearance in the tournament. In fact, if I am correct, he never made the starting line-up until his senior year. University of Iowa Jesse Whitmer participated in his only NCAA tournament and won at 118lbs.

Joe LaRocca

(Editor's note: Denny's article was based on guys that won the Outstanding Wrestler trophy with their only NCAA title. He mentioned two single champions that didn't win OW although in his opinion could have. Denny recalls Gable on the mat right after the Whitmer's upset, hollering into the camera: "STRONGEST MAN IN THE WORLD!!")

Cliff Keen National Collegiate Women's Wrestling Championships set for March 6

The Women's Collegiate Wrestling Coalition has announced the 2021 postseason schedule for the NCAA women's wrestling programs, including the site and dates for the annual national championships, as well as four regional qualifiers which determine the national field.

The Cliff Keen National Collegiate Women's Wrestling Championships (NCWWC) will be hosted by Tiffin University in Tiffin, Ohio on Saturday, March 6.. This will be the second annual national championships event for NCAA programs.

Each of the 10 women's college weight classes will have 16 participants, with four wrestlers advancing to the national tournament from each of four regional qualifiers. This will be the first year in which there will be a regional qualification system for the competition.

All-American awards will be given to the top eight placemen in each weight class. Team Awards will be given to the top four teams.

Champions from the 2021 NCWWC will qualify to compete in the 2021 U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Wrestling, which will be held in April.

Women's wrestling is an NCAA Emerging Sport at all three divisions. The National Collegiate Women's Wrestling Championships will serve as the national championships for NCAA women's wrestling programs until the sport qualifies for an official NCAA Championships.

McKendree Univ. (Ill.) is the defending NCWWC team champions. The first NCWWC nationals was hosted at Adrian University in Adrian, Mich. in 2020.

There will be four Regional Qualifiers hosted during the weekend of February 20-21, held in strategic locations across the nation. The

The Others

By Bill Welker, EdD

Amateur wrestling (youth to international competition) has made great strides since the beginning of the 21st Century for both our male and female participants.

Clinics, videos, instructional books, expert training techniques and coaching strategies have never been better. In fact, we are developing some of the greatest mat sport performers who have ever stepped on our glistening mats.

However, there is a reality regarding success in wrestling, as with all sports. Only a very minute group of wrestlers reach all-state status and even fewer are crowned state champions. This statistic dwindles even further in reference to college all-Americans and national champions. And finally, the very elite of the best grapplers reach the pinnacle of international dominance on the Freestyle and Greco-Roman mats.

That leaves us with the "Others."

We must never forget the contributions of the "Others" in the mat sport because they are the largest percentage of wrestlers in the practice room. They are the ones who assist in preparing the varsity wrestlers to succeed during dual meet and tournament action.

Ironically, the "Others" sometimes gain more from their experiences on the mats than their superior counterparts, such as self-reliance, team-work, personal responsibility, composure under pressure, perseverance, individual integrity, and commitment to completing goals.

As a Pennsylvania all-state wrestler in the 1960s, I was surrounded by many outstanding wrestlers on our highly-successful squad. Still, the teammate I remember the most during my scholastic years was Jan Price, one of the "Others."

It wasn't until later in my life that I truly understood what an inspiration Jan Price was to his fellow teammates regarding individual persistence.

During his four years as a high school wrestler, Jan never missed a practice, never placed in a tournament, rarely won a bout, and never wrestled a single varsity match. But most admirably, Jan Price never quit the wrestling team. Jan's athletic determination has inspired me throughout my entire life.

As a coach, I have had many "Jan Prices" on

my wrestling rosters. I was always impressed with their tenacity. The "Others" worked with intensity at practice, pushing the first-team members to their limit. And their only reward was watching their varsity performers succeed in competition.

These "Others" have made such an impression on me that I wrote the following poem dedicated to such inspirational athletes.

The Champion's Champion

*He's the one loved by his peers
Though on the bench -- he always cheers,
He keeps the first man on his toes,
And never quits - why, no one knows.
He puts the champion where he's at,
By making him work to earn his plaque,
His name's not found in big headlines,
But he's always there come practice time.*

*I often wonder--were the champion second team,
Would he keep on trying or lose his gleam,
Would he give his all if there was no fame,
And not give up for the good of the game.*

*There are no questions in this man's mind,
The Champion's Champion -- in life -- will do just fine.*

Yes, it is the "Others" who later succeed in their chosen professions because they have learned to stay the course without any athletic glory during their school days.

Without question, the "Others" are the unnoticed heroes on all athletic teams who win as adults.

Afterword: The National Wrestling Hall of Fame has always admired the attributes of the "Other" men and women of the mats. Each year, the Hall honors an "Outstanding American" who has used the positive values learned from the mat sport to launch notable careers in other walks of life, such as science and technology, business and industry, government and the military, and the arts and humanities.

Editor's Note: A writer and authority on Folkstyle wrestling, Dr. Bill Welker has published several books and is a former Pennsylvania State Champion. Welker is a member of five wrestling halls of fame, including the Pennsylvania Wrestling Hall of Fame and the National Wrestling Hall of Fame (West Virginia Chapter). He has been named twice as the National Wrestling Sportswriter of the Year by Wrestling USA Magazine.

2021 Regional Qualifiers are:

- Northeast Qualifier at Gannon University (Pa.), Saturday Feb. 20
- Southeast Qualifier at Emmanuel College (Ga.), Sunday, Feb. 21
- Southwest Qualifier at McKendree University (Ill.), Sunday, Feb. 21

- Northwest Qualifier at UW-Stevens Point (Wis.), Sunday, Feb. 21

For the NCAA women's postseason, each team will be composed of up to 15 wrestlers. There will be no more than two wrestlers

continued on page 30

Mat News

continued from page 29

allowed in each weight class. Team scoring will be based upon one per weight (named in advance).

The competitions will follow specific COVID-19 protocols, following the NCAA COVID guidelines, which includes a testing regime and other safety procedures.

"We are extremely excited for the NCAA women's wrestling post-season. We thank Tiffin University for hosting the NCWWC national tournament this year, and welcome back Cliff Keen Athletic as the presenting sponsor. We applaud the four regional qualifier host universities for their leadership within women's college wrestling. Although it has been a challenging year for college athletics, we look forward to providing these post-season competition opportunities for the student-athletes and their teams," said Julia Salata, president of the Women's Collegiate Wrestling Coalition.

Pittsburgh Classic

PITTSBURGH, Pa. — The Pittsburgh Wrestling Classic local organizing committee is excited to announce the 47th Annual competition to be held on Friday, April 2, 2021.

The date has been changed due to the PIAA Team Championships being rescheduled to occur after the individual championships.

The Wrestling Classic — known as "The Rose Bowl of Wrestling" — is the most prestigious high school all-star wrestling meet in the United States because it attracts the very best high school seniors in the country. The preliminary meet pits the best wrestlers from Western Pennsylvania, or WPIAL, against the Maryland All-Stars. The feature match showcases the best-of-the-best high school wrestlers from across the United States challenging the reigning Pennsylvania state champs.

The committee will be finalizing other decisions in the weeks ahead based on circumstances, including the specific time of each dual meet competition and venue. Due to COVID related restrictions, the venue and overall safety precautions, tickets are not currently on sale.

The Push Out Rule in Collegiate Wrestling

By Larry Zilverberg

I read Pat Milkovich's article in the last Amateur Wrestling News about the push out rule in college wrestling. Pat and I were in college at the same time and our paths crossed on many occasions. I have great respect for Pat and the Milkovich family. To me, they always have exemplified the best in college wrestling. Their commitment to the sport as technicians was unparalleled. With that said, I completely agree with him on not incorporating the push out rule into college wrestling.

The problem with wrestling today is that the emphasis on technique has been lessened and shifted towards a sport that rewards strength over technique. Wrestling has always been a sport of strength but it is the technique that makes it unique and defines it as wrestling. Otherwise, it is just two strong guys pushing and shoving, negating the essence and artistry of wrestling itself. It isn't supposed to be sumo wrestling, but it sure seems similar sometimes.

In international wrestling you score points, not only for pushouts, but for throws that often leave the two wrestlers in a neutral position. Isn't the essence of wrestling to take the other wrestler down so you can control and dominate him on the mat? Hopefully culminating in a fall.

I have always said that a great wrestling match is exciting and a form of art. I have also said that there is nothing more boring than a "bad wrestling match" in which the wrestlers push and shove and there is no activity. The push out rule promotes that.

Often times wrestlers are not rewarded by technique but by who wins the battle of pushing and shoving. I believe that a wrestling match should be a head-to-head and toe-and-toe battle for the length of the match, and when it is all said and done, let the better man win. That was my philosophy and was the philosophy of my generation of wrestlers. The push out rule would only create less activity, less technique and compromise the uniqueness of American Folkstyle wrestling.



Oklahoma State 20. Northern Iowa 12-- 149 — Boo Lewallen, OSU, dec. Triston Lara, 14-8 UNI. Photo by Johnny Johnson

Book Review

To Be The Best Series

By Mark Palmer, InterMat Senior Writer

It's a neat feeling to have read a novel and become such a fan of the main characters, you wish there would be follow-up books so you could be a part of more of their adventures.

That's the kind of feeling many wrestlers and their families have experienced from the "To Be The Best" series of young adult novels focused on Ron Castle and his younger brother Nick -- both Midwestern high school wrestlers -- and assistant wrestling coach Sean MacCallister, written by former wrestler H.L. Hertel. The first book -- simply titled "To Be The Best" -- was followed a couple years later by the grittier "To Be The Best: Rematch." Now, five years after "Rematch" Hertel has penned "To Be The Best: Overtime" the third installment in his series of young adult novels, now available from HH Castle-Mac Publishing.

Here's how the back cover of "To Be The Best: Overtime" sets up the story: "Nick enters his senior season with everything in life being nearly perfect. He has a loving girlfriend, a following of fans, a legendary coach and, like the end of his junior season, he is ranked first in the state. Yet, the cracks surface quickly as past agitators and teammates alike seem focused on keeping him from realizing his wrestling dreams while others seem intent on damaging his relationship..."

The book that almost never happened

In his most recent interview with InterMat, Hertel disclosed that "To Be The Best: Overtime" came close to never coming to life on its own.

"Finishing the epilogue to the second book, I thought 'this is the end of the series'" said Hertel. "I was going to tell readers about what happened to Nick as a senior."

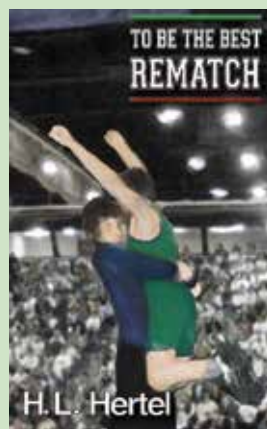
"Driving to work one day, it hit me: 'What goes through a person's mind who's concentrated on one goal and hasn't achieved it?' It then occurred to me: there could be one more story there."

"I wanted to give (Nick) benefit for all his hard work."

Later in that same interview, Hertel said, "I never wanted to need to make up an outlandish plot line just to keep things going."

"In the first two books, I had a road map as to where they would head," the author continued. "With 'Overtime', once I had the ending picked out, I had some thoughts in mind."

"It took five years from start to finish," Hertel said of his third book. "I had other tangents to deal with, such as turning the first



book into a stage play." (He's also penned a "To Be The Best" prequel for WIN (Wrestling Insider Newsmagazine).)

In the introduction to "To Be The Best: Overtime", Hertel addressed the issue further, writing, "At some point, someone is bound to ask me, 'Why did it take so long to write your third book?' so I may as well address this up front and note that this is the quickest I've ever written a book."

"The original 'To Be The Best' took 14 years from the time the original first chapter was written until the time it was published. 'Rematch' was published three years later but, in truth, was largely written in tandem with the original..."

"Since much of my writing happens in the middle of the night (after the 50+ hour work week and family activities), or on those rare weekends during which my family goes somewhere (Girl Scout camp) and leaves me home alone, it takes a while to get to a final product..."

Realism to the third power

One of the hallmarks of the "To Be The Best" series -- including the final installment, "Overtime" -- is its realism.

"I like to put in twists and turns and temporary cliffhangers so a reader keeps turning the pages," Hertel said. "I don't want them to think it was obvious from page 1 how the book would end."

Wrestlers of all ages will find Hertel's descriptions of what takes place in a wrestling room during practice -- and during actual, high-stakes matches -- to be compelling and realistic.

At times, the narrative goes beyond realism into grittiness.

"I've always tried to keep the books from getting too fluffy," Hertel disclosed. "A sad part of life is that unfortunate things happen to folks through no fault of their own."

It's an issue which came up in a 2011 InterMat interview concerning the second

book "Rematch" especially with elements of the storyline involving assistant coach Sean MacCallister, who had to deal with alcohol dependence, a recurring health issue, and job loss, among other challenges.

In the newest book, MacCallister's life seems to be headed in a better direction at first, but then challenges arise with his new job and a particular co-worker, and with a long-distance relationship.

"Even when terrible things are happening in life, if somewhere along the way you've impacted someone's life in a good way, you'll end up in a good place," Hertel told InterMat in 2016.

"Overtime" maintains the realism of the previous editions of the "To Be The Best" series, but is less gritty than the second book "Rematch." While Hertel had cautioned back in 2011 that "Rematch" might be appropriate for readers in ninth grade and beyond, he said that the new "Overtime" book is geared to seventh-grade readers and beyond.

"To Be The Best: Overtime" is a page-turner in the best sense of the word. The characters are genuine, individuals you can't help but cheer on despite life's challenges. The action is realistic and believable. Quick, concise chapters not only propel the storyline forward, but are also compelling, especially for young adult readers who face multiple demands on their time. (And, while "Overtime" is the third and final installment in a series, it stands on its own. A reader does not have to read the first two books in the series to enjoy this latest book.)

"To Be The Best" books are available for purchase individually -- or as a three-book package, with special savings. To order, visit the "To Be The Best" website; mail "To Be The Best" 2833 Joppa Ave So., St Louis Park, MN 55416 or call 612-270-8697 and leave a message.



LET'S GO!

Looking for photos like this from the 2019 NCAA D1 C'ships, FloWrestling Who's #1?, the Pan Am C'ships, CA HS States, World C'ships, and MORE!? Check out the latest photos from Tony Rotundo at: WrestlersAreWarriors.com! *(All photos are searchable by name!)*



WRESTLERS ARE WARRIORS.COM™
WRESTLING AND MMA PHOTOGRAPHY

 TONYROTUNDO.WAW
 TONY_ROTUNDO