

The History of

Collegiate Wrestling

Special Supplement for
The 2006 through 2011 Seasons

Jairus K. Hammond

National Wrestling Hall of Fame and Museum



Preseason Outlook

Oklahoma State entered the 2006 season in the unprecedented position of having four defending NCAA champions in its lineup and thus was a clear favorite to capture its fourth straight team title. The Cowboys' formidable lineup included returning champions Zach Esposito, Johnny Hendricks, Jake Rosholt, and Steve Mocco, plus All-Americans Coleman Scott and Daniel Frishkorn. The Pokes' biggest challenge might come from in-state rival Oklahoma, led by two-time NCAA champion Teyon Ware. Sooner mentor Jack Spates felt he had perhaps his best team in his 17 years at the helm: "We're not aiming for second place. We think we can compete with anyone."

Michigan, runner-up to OSU in 2005, defending Big Ten champion Illinois, and a young, but very talented Minnesota squad were expected to challenge the Oklahoma schools for the team crown. Each of these Big Ten schools had a pair of brothers that were All-American candidates – the Churellas at Michigan, the Tirapelles at Illinois and the Schlatters at Minnesota. Lehigh was seeking its fifth straight EIWA crown and would face a stiff challenge from Cornell, which was coming off its first top five finish in the NCAA tournament in half a century. Lehigh could count on 2004 NCAA champion Troy Letters and three other All-Americans. Cornell had three-time All-American Dustin Manotti and super freshman Troy Nickerson.

Regular Season

The fortieth anniversary NWCA All-Star Classic in Stillwater highlighted November's action. While just an exhibition, the meet gave some indication that Oklahoma State's path to the team title might not be all that smooth — three of its four defending champions were upset. Minnesota wrestlers scored a pair of upsets as Matt Nagle and Cole Konrad scored overtime victories against Johnny Hendricks and Steve Mocco. For Mocco, it was his first collegiate loss, albeit unofficial, since the 2002 NCAA final. Michigan repeated as team champion of the Cliff Keen Las Vegas Invitational and finished nearly 30 points ahead of Cornell. Iowa ended Iowa State's short two-meet winning streak in their dual meet series with a 20-15 victory. The key win for the Hawkeyes came at 184 pounds, where Paul Bradley topped Kurt Backes 8-5. Oklahoma State downed Oklahoma 23-12 in the first Bedlam dual of the season to extend its unbeaten streak to 22 meets in college wrestling's greatest rivalry. The Pokes trailed 12-11 after seven bouts before Rusty Blackmon started their comeback with a 6-3 upset of Justin Dyer.

Minnesota won the Southern Scuffle by nearly 50 points against a very strong field that included runner-up Missouri, Cornell, Edinboro, and Lehigh. The Engineer's Troy Letters suffered a neck injury at the tournament that would sideline him for most of the season and limit his effectiveness when he returned. Oklahoma State struggled in Iowa City but finally prevailed against the Hawkeyes 18-14, although Ty Eustice upset Zach Esposito 4-2. However, the Cowboys had less luck on their next visit to Iowa and lost 21-14 to Minnesota in the finals of the Cliff Keen NWCA National Duals at Cedar Falls. Cole Konrad clinched the meet for the Gophers with a fall against Steve Mocco. Konrad's teammate, freshman Dustin Schlatter, capped off a brilliant weekend with an 8-7 upset of

the second-ranked Esposito. The Gopher yearling had already scored upsets against third-ranked Jon Masa of Hofstra and fourth-ranked Mark DiSalvo of Central Michigan.

One week later, Schlatter added a 4-1 win against top-ranked Ty Eustice in Minnesota's 25-9 victory over Iowa. In the span of one week, Schlatter defeated the four wrestlers previously ranked above him and became the top freshman in the country. Another outstanding true freshman, Troy Nickerson of Cornell, helped the Big Red score their first dual meet win against Lehigh in nearly a decade, 19-14 in Ithaca. Michigan handed Illinois its first loss of the season by a one point margin, thanks to a pin by heavyweight Greg Wagner in the final bout. Northwestern added to the Illini's woes two days later by scoring a 19-16 upset.

In the inaugural ESPNU Double Dual, Minnesota scored a 19-16 triumph over Oklahoma State at Oklahoma City's Ford Center, site of the 2006 NCAA tournament. Dustin Schlatter and Cole Konrad continued their mastery of NCAA champions Zach Esposito and Steve Mocco. This time Schlatter dominated Esposito with an 11-2 major decision. Oklahoma State bounced back with a 21-12 Bedlam triumph at Norman, but Minnesota suffered its first loss of the season against Michigan, 19-15 in Ann Arbor. Iowa finished up its season with a pair of wins against Northwestern and Boise State, but its dual meet record of 11-7 was its worst since 1967.

Conference Tournaments

Minnesota dethroned defending Big Ten team champion Illinois by sweeping its three head-to-head finals match-ups with the Illini. The Gophers were one point in arrears entering the final round, but won four of their six finals while their rivals went winless. Minnesota finished with 138 points, 13 ahead of Illinois, to annex its fifth team crown in the last eight years. Dustin Schlatter of Minnesota routed Troy Tirapelle of Illinois 14-0 at 149 pounds to put the Gophers in the lead for good. C.P. Schlatter topped Alex Tirapelle of Illinois 5-2 at 157 as the Schlatters swept the battle of the brothers. Gopher Roger Kish defeated Pete Friedl of Illinois 3-1 at 184 to clinch the team title for Minnesota. Ryan Churella of Michigan won his third Big Ten title and Nick Simmons of Michigan State and Cole Konrad of Minnesota claimed their second. Tom Clum of Wisconsin edged defending 133-pound champion Mack Reiter of Minnesota in overtime and was named Outstanding Wrestler. Iowa finished sixth in the team race, its worst showing in four decades.

Oklahoma State dominated the Big Twelve tournament, crowning four champions and finishing nearly 30 points ahead of runner-up Oklahoma, which edged Nebraska by half a point. Cowboy Zach Esposito won his third straight title at 149 pounds and teammates Nathan Morgan, Johnny Hendricks and Steve Mocco were repeat winners. Nate Gallick of Iowa State and B.J. Padden of Nebraska also defended their Big Eight titles at 141 and 197 pounds. Gallick was named Outstanding Wrestler by edging defending NCAA champion Teyon Ware of Oklahoma 5-3 in the second tiebreaker period. Padden won his crown by shutting out another NCAA champion, Jake Rosholt of Oklahoma State, 4-0.

Lehigh won its fifth straight EIWA team title, a feat last achieved in 1935 when the Engineers completed a string of five titles. Lehigh topped Cornell by 15 points, despite the fact that senior leaders Derek Zinck and Troy Letters finished third and fourth. A strong team performance, with nine of ten wrestlers finishing in the top four, enabled Lehigh to continue its dominance of collegiate wrestling's oldest conference. Engineer Cory Cooperman won his third title and Travis

Frick and Matt Cassidy also claimed crowns. Cornell won a single individual title as Troy Nickerson used a late takedown to edge Matt Fisk of Lehigh 2-1 at 125 pounds. Dustin Manotti of Cornell, who would become a four-time All American two weeks later in Oklahoma City, was knocked unconscious nine seconds into his 157-pound final with Andrew Flanagan of Harvard and failed to win an EIWA crown in four attempts. Muzaffar Abdurakhmanov of American won a second EIWA title at 165 pounds and was named Outstanding Wrestler.

NCAA Tournament

The tournament returned to Oklahoma City for the first time in more than a decade, with the University of Oklahoma serving as host in the brand new Ford Center. Minnesota, on the strength of its two dual meet victories over Oklahoma State, was favored by many to end the Cowboys' three-year reign as team champion. However, Oklahoma State had a veteran squad competing in its home state and four defending NCAA champions, although none of them were seeded first. Each team had six wrestlers seeded in the top six, with the Pokes having one more qualifier. Oklahoma was the only other school with five or more wrestlers seeded sixth or better.

After the first day, Oklahoma State was in the driver's seat with 36½ points and six men in the quarterfinals. Oklahoma was second, 12 points behind the Cowboys, and Edinboro and Hofstra, tied for third with 22½ points, were the surprises of the tournament. Co-favorite Minnesota had three seeded wrestlers lose in the first two rounds and was further back in the pack. C.P. Schlatter, a second seed, was the Gophers' most significant casualty on the first day as he fell to Andrew Flanagan of Harvard 5-3 in second round action. An even bigger upset came at 197 pounds, where Chris Weidman of Hofstra shocked top-seeded Wynn Michalak of Central Michigan 10-7.

The Second Day

At the end of the semifinals, Oklahoma State had clinched its fourth straight NCAA title by advancing three men to the finals and building up an insurmountable 33 point lead on Minnesota. Three of the Pokes' four defending champions reached the finals, but Zach Esposito dropped a 7-4 decision to Ty Eustice of Iowa in the semifinals. Johnny Hendricks and Steve Mocco advanced with narrow one-point victories, while Jake Rosholt scored a quick fall in 1:04. Rosholt's path to a third NCAA crown was eased when his nemesis, B.J. Padden of Nebraska, was upset by Phil Davis of Penn State, Rosholt's opponent in the finals, in the quarterfinals.

Minnesota had a pair of finalists, top seeds Dustin Schlatter and Cole Konrad. The latter narrowly avoided an upset, edging Cain Velasquez of Arizona State by time advantage in the second tiebreaker session. Troy Nickerson of Cornell upset number one seed Nick Simmons of Michigan State 2-1 at 125 pounds. Simmons had a 1-0 lead entering the third period and took the top position. Nickerson reversed late in the third period and held on for the victory. A pair of outsiders, fifth seeded Ben Cherrington of Boise State and tenth seeded Brian Stith of Arizona State, reached the finals at 157 pounds, a weight class in which seven of the top eight seeds lost prior to the semifinals.

The Finals



Defending champion Joe Dubuque of Indiana repeated at 125 pounds with an 8-3 triumph over true freshman Troy Nickerson of Cornell. Dubuque used a takedown in each period to become the Hoosiers' first two-time champion since Charles McDaniel in 1938. Sixth-seeded Matt Valenti of Pennsylvania used riding time to edge Chris Fleegeer of Purdue 3-2 and win the 133-pound title. The keys to the victory for Valenti, who defeated three higher seeded wrestlers on his way to the crown, were an incredible counter to Fleegeer's first period takedown attempt and a second period ride-out.

With a 3-2 victory at 141 pounds, Nate Gallick of Iowa State avenged a loss to Teyon Ware of Oklahoma in the 2005 final. Gallick, with a career record of 7-1 versus Ware, scored the only takedown of the match in the first period. Dustin Schlatter of Minnesota blanked Ty Eustice of Iowa 4-0 to win the 149-pound title. The Gopher true freshman surrendered a mere two points in five matches on his way to the title.

Ben Cherrington of Boise State became just the second Bronco wrestler to win an NCAA title with a 7-3 victory over Brian Stith of Arizona State at 157 pounds. Cherrington, who missed much of the season with an injury, had little trouble capturing a weight class that saw numerous upsets. Johnny Hendricks of Oklahoma State defended his 165-pound title with an exciting and controversial 9-8 win over Ryan Churella of Michigan. Hendricks overcame a 7-4 deficit entering the third period with a pair of takedowns, the last with four seconds left in the match.

Ben Askren of Missouri captured the 174-pound, after finishing runner-up the last two seasons, by dominating previously undefeated Jake Herbert of Northwestern 14-2. Askren, the Tigers' first ever NCAA champion, was named the Outstanding Wrestler of the tournament. At 184 pounds, Shane Webster won Oregon's first title in nearly four decades by edging Roger Kish of Minnesota 3-2 with a takedown in the final minute of action.

Jake Rosholt of Oklahoma State became the Cowboy's fourteenth three-time NCAA champion by downing Phil Davis of Penn State 9-3 at 197 pounds. Rosholt won his first title at 184 pounds in

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2003 and added a crown at 197 pounds last season. Cole Konrad of Minnesota continued his season long command of defending 285-pound champion Steve Mocco of Oklahoma State with a 5-2 victory in overtime. Konrad scored an escape and takedown in the second tiebreaker period to capture the Gopher's second individual title.

Oklahoma State finished nearly 40 points ahead of runner-up Minnesota and John Smith became the first Cowboy coach since the legendary Edward Gallagher to win four straight team titles. The Gophers edged out Oklahoma for second, thanks to Konrad's victory over Mocco. With two champions each, OSU and Minnesota were the only schools in the top ten to crown an individual champion. Indiana, Penn, Boise State, Missouri and Oregon, schools not accustomed to having wrestlers at the top of the podium, all had an individual title winner.

Iowa head coach Jim Zalesky was fired shortly after the end of the seasons, despite leading the Hawkeyes to a fourth place finish in the NCAA tournament. His termination and the retirement of Russ Hellickson at Ohio State initiated an extraordinary series of coaching changes. Tom Brands left Virginia Tech after just two seasons to take the helm at Iowa. His first step was to convince Dan Gable to become his assistant. Bobby Douglas stepped aside at Iowa State to make way for Cael Sanderson and Zalesky ended up at Oregon State. Tom Ryan, who had just led Hofstra to its best ever finish in the NCAA tournament, took over at Ohio State. In the East, Lehigh lost its two assistant coaches as Chris Ayres assumed the top spot at Princeton and Jason Kutz became head coach at East Stroudsburg.

Preseason Outlook

Minnesota, which had won team titles in 2001 and 2002, was the preseason pick to end Oklahoma State's string of four straight NCAA titles. The Gophers had a solid and experienced lineup that included defending NCAA champs Dustin Schlatter and Cole Konrad and runner-up Roger Kish. The Cowboys had suffered some major losses via graduation and would have newcomers in at least four weight classes. They would be relying heavily upon two-time NCAA champion Johny Hendricks and All-Americans Coleman Scott and Nathan Morgan. Missouri's performance at the NCAA tournament had been improving steadily during the last five years and the Tigers seemed to be on the verge of a breakout season that could put them in the top five. Senior Ben Askren was the top wrestler in the country and this year he would be joined in the lineup by his younger brother Max.

Both Iowa and Iowa State were beginning the season with new coaches. The Hawkeyes had fired Jim Zalesky and hired Tom Brands away from Virginia Tech, with Dan Gable agreeing to serve as his assistant. A contingent of Virginia Tech freshman had followed Brands to Iowa City, but they would not be eligible until the 2008 season. Thus, the new coaching staff, sometimes referred to as "Brable", would not have their ideal lineup, but one with All-Americans Mark Perry and Eric Luedke. On the other hand, new Iowa State mentor Cael Sanderson could count on a strong contingent of red-shirt freshmen, including his younger brother Cyler, plus fifth-year seniors Travis and Trent Paulson and Kurt Backes. In the East, Cornell, led by NCAA runner-up Troy Nickerson, expected to end Lehigh's five-year supremacy in the EIWA. Hofstra, under new coach Tom Shifflet, was seeking its first top ten finish with a veteran lineup that boasted two All-Americans.

Regular Season

Minnesota suffered a major setback before the start of the dual meet season when two-time All-American Mack Reiter torn his ACL. Reiter's absence had an immediate impact when Hofstra upset Minnesota 18-17 at the Northeast Duals in Troy, New York. The Gophers got bonus wins from Dustin Schlatter and Cole Konrad, but the Pride won six of ten bouts to score the upset. Minnesota bounced back quickly with a 21-15 home victory over Oklahoma State, which had supplanted the Gophers as the top ranked team. OSU's loss moved Missouri, winner of the Cliff Keen Las Vegas Invitational by more than 50 points, into the top spot in the team rankings. Iowa defeated Iowa State by a lopsided score of 24-6, but six of its eight wins were by two points or less.

Missouri affirmed its number one ranking at the Southern Scuffle by edging Minnesota 179½ to 176. Ben and Max Askren won individual titles and Ben won his second tournament in a row via five straight first period falls. Cornell finished third thanks to titles from Troy Nickerson and Adam Frey, who were making their first appearances of the season. Minnesota moved back to the top of the rankings by nipping Missouri 20-16 to win the Cliff Keen NWCA National Duals. The Tigers juggled their lineup in a gamble to win the dual, but failed to get bonus wins from either of the Askren brothers. Ben, who had his pin streak stopped at 17 earlier in the event, moved up to 184

and defeated NCAA runner-up Roger Kish 5-4. For the second year in a row, Cole Konrad clinched the title for the Gophers with a fall in the final bout. Iowa State topped Oklahoma State 25-9 for third place.

Lehigh upset Cornell, which was without Troy Nickerson, 21-19 in what could be regarded as a grudge match. Lehigh was shocked in late August when top high school recruit Mike Grey recanted his decision to attend Lehigh and ended up training at the Finger Lakes Wrestling Club in Ithaca. Cornell bounced back with victories over Pennsylvania and Hofstra, which had one-sided wins over Penn State and Lehigh. Edinboro finished its dual meet season with a 17-1-0 record. The Scots avenged their early season loss to Penn State with a 19-17 victory over the Nittany Lions in the finals of the Virginia Duals.

Following its victory at the National Duals, Minnesota swept through its Big Ten schedule with nine straight wins. Its season culminated with a 29-13 victory over Iowa. The Hawkeyes also dropped a pair of meetings with Oklahoma State, 22-13 at the National Duals and 21-11 at Stillwater in a match televised live on ESPNU. The Cowboys ended their season with a 29-6 over Oklahoma, marking the eleventh straight season in which the Pokes had swept the Bedlam meetings. Missouri achieved a rare Oklahoma sweep by beating both Oklahoma State and Oklahoma on the road on successive days. However, the Tigers dropped a Big Twelve showdown with Iowa State 27-12.

Conference Tournaments

Minnesota dominated the Big Ten tournament on its way to a second straight team title and sixth in the last nine seasons. The Gophers finished nearly 60 points clear of runner-up Wisconsin and crowned four individual champions. The Schlatter brothers, Dustin and C.P., and Cole Konrad were repeat winners for Minnesota and freshman Jayson Ness captured the 125-pound title. It was the third straight heavyweight title for Konrad. Northwestern finished sixth in the team race, but crowned three individual champions for the first time since 1931. The Wildcat's defending 174-pound champion Jake Herbert, the Outstanding Wrestler of the tournament, moved up a weight class and dethroned Roger Kish of Minnesota 8-1. Teammates Ryan Lange and Matt Tamillow joined Herbert at the top of the podium. Nick Simmons of Michigan State won a third Big Ten title, but his brother Andy failed to repeat at 141-pounds.

Iowa State won its first Big Twelve team crown thanks to a victory by Cyclone heavyweight Dave Zabriskie in the final bout of the tournament. Zabriskie edged Jared Rosholt of Oklahoma State 3-2 in the 285-pound final. Had Rosholt won, the Cowboys would have won their fifth straight team title. Iowa State finished five points ahead of Missouri and the Pokes were a half point further back. Iowa State's last outright conference crown came in 1982, when the league was known as the Big Eight. Trent Paulson was the Cyclone's other individual champion. Johny Hendricks of Oklahoma State won his third straight title by edging Paulson's twin brother Travis 3-2 at 165 pounds. Ben Askren of Missouri and Sam Hazewinkel of Oklahoma also won a third Big Twelve crown and the latter was named as the Outstanding Wrestler.

Cornell captured its first EIWA team title since 1993. The Big Red had two individual champions and finished nearly 20 points ahead of runner-up Navy. Lehigh lost six of seven semifinal bouts and

finished a distant fourth. Cornell's defending champion and 2006 NCAA finalist Troy Nickerson was upset 5-3 at 125 pounds by Matt Eveleth of Pennsylvania, who was selected as the tournament's Outstanding Wrestler. Matt Valenti and Matt Dragon were repeat winners for the Quakers. Jordan Leen and Steve Anceravage won individual titles for Cornell and Josh Glenn of American won his second EIWA crown. Harvard's defending champions Andrew Flanagan and Bode Ogunwole missed the tournament because of injuries.

NCAA Tournament

The state of Michigan hosted the tournament for the first time in 65 years at The Palace in Auburn Hills. With a seating capacity of over 20,000, it was the largest venue ever for the tournament. Minnesota was favored to end Oklahoma State's four-year reign as NCAA champions. The Cowboys were considered a long shot in the team race. Big Twelve rivals Iowa State and Missouri were given the best chance of upsetting the Gophers. Minnesota, led by defending champions Cole Konrad and Dustin Schlatter, had the most wrestlers seeded with seven. Iowa State, with all 10 wrestlers qualifying, had six of them seeded.

Minnesota led the team race after the first day with 34 points and seven men in the quarterfinals. Although the Gophers had just a five point lead, they seemed to be in a comfortable position since no other school had more than four quarterfinalists. Brandon Halsey of Cal State-Bakersfield upset top-seeded Max Askren of Missouri in his opening round match at 197 pounds. Askren also lost his first bout in the consolation round to dash the Tiger's hopes for a team title. Third-seeded Adam Frey of Cornell and Steve Luke of Michigan also lost in the first round. Frey was pinned in the first period by Nick Gallick of Iowa State and Luke was edged 2-1 by Brandon Mason of Oklahoma State.

The Second Day

Minnesota had a very poor day in the championship round and lost three matches in both the quarterfinals and semifinals. Cole Konrad was the Gophers only finalist and Iowa State, with three finalists, had a narrow 3½ point lead in the team race after the evening session. The biggest shock for Minnesota came at 149 pounds, where defending champion Dustin Schlatter saw his 65-match win streak come to an end in a 3-2 loss against fifth-seeded Gregor Gillespie of Edinboro. In the only head-to-head meeting between Minnesota and Iowa State in the semifinals, Jake Varner of the Cyclones upset Roger Kish at 184 pounds with a takedown in the final five seconds of the first overtime period. The Gopher's woes began in the quarterfinals when fourth-seeded Manny Rivera and C.P. Schlatter were upset. Schlatter lost on a last second takedown by Mike Poeta of Illinois, who had trailed 4-0 entering the final period.

Trent Paulson at 157 pounds and Kurt Backes at 197 pounds were Iowa State's other two finalists. Backes, who finished fourth in the Big Twelve tournament, benefited from the early upset of Max Askren in his half of the bracket. Defending champion Oklahoma State had two finalists. Coleman Scott nipped top-seeded Nick Simmons of Michigan State 4-3 at 133 pounds. Scott's opponent in the finals would be defending champion Matt Valenti of Pennsylvania, who topped Darrel Vasquez

of Cal Poly-SLO. Johny Hendricks, the Cowboys' two-time champion at 165 pounds, edged Travis Paulson of Iowa State 2-1 in the tiebreaker to reach his third final.

Derek Moore of California-Davis and Josh Glenn of American became their schools' first-ever finalist with easy semifinal wins. Ben Askren of Missouri reached his fourth NCAA final with an 8-3 win over Eric Luedke of Iowa. Sam Hazewinkel of Oklahoma, who had lost three straight years in the 125-pound semifinals, made his first final with a convincing 10-0 major decision over Jayson Ness of Minnesota. The Sooner would meet Paul Donahoe of Nebraska in the finals. Donahoe edged Troy Nickerson of Cornell, last season's runner-up, 2-1 in the second round of tiebreaker periods on a controversial stalling call.

The Finals



Minnesota had four wrestlers in the consolation finals to just one for Iowa State and the Gophers used this numerical advantage to take a 92 to 84½ lead in the team race entering the finals. Third place finishes by Dustin Schlatter and Roger Kish gave Minnesota the impetus it needed to pass the Cyclones.

Paul Donahoe of Nebraska upset Sam Hazewinkel of Oklahoma with a takedown late in the first overtime period to win the 125-pound crown by a 3-1 count. The Michigan native was spurred on by the partisan crowd and avenged a pair of major decision losses to Hazewinkel. Matt Valenti of Pennsylvania repeated at 133 pounds despite yielding a first period takedown to Oklahoma State's Coleman Scott. Valenti reversed Scott late in the initial stanza and added an escape and a point for riding time to win 4-2.

Derek Moore of California-Davis became his school's first NCAA champion with a stunning 17-2 technical fall victory at 141 pounds over top-seeded Ryan Lang of Northwestern. Moore conceded the initial takedown, but followed with 17 unanswered points. He dominated the match on the mat

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with nine back points and two reverses. He was named the Outstanding Wrestler of the tournament. Gregor Gillespie of Edinboro became the second champion to win with a takedown in overtime as he used a spectacular counter to defeat Josh Churella of Michigan 3-1. It marked the second year in a row that the Churella family suffered a disappointing loss in the finals — Josh's older brother Ryan lost on a last second takedown in the 2006 165-pound final.

Trent Paulson of Iowa State moved the Cyclones within striking distance of Minnesota by using a late third period takedown to top Craig Henning of Wisconsin 6-5 in the 157-pound final. Henning led 3-1 entering the final period, but Paulson rallied to raise the Cyclones' hopes for their first team title since 1987. Johny Hendricks of Oklahoma State seemed to be well on his way to his third straight 165-pound crown with one minute left in his match against Mark Perry of Iowa. He had a 2-0 lead and over a minute of time advantage before Perry, who was 0-6 versus Hendricks, reversed the Cowboy with 0:59 left and scored a two point tilt with just 18 seconds to go in the bout. A late escape by Hendricks cut Perry's victory margin to 4-3.

Ben Askren of Missouri defended his title at 174 pounds with an 8-2 victory over Keith Gavin of Pittsburgh. The match was much closer than the final score would indicate. Gavin scored a first period takedown and the bout was tied 2-2 in the third period, before Askren, who finished his career with 91 falls, scored five points off a scramble to lock up his eighty-fifth straight win. Jake Herbert of Northwestern captured the crown at 184 pounds with 6-1 victory over Jake Varner of Iowa State. Herbert had a pair of takedowns and Varner's only point was on a technical violation. Herbert's win meant that the champions at 165, 174, and 184 pounds had all competed at 174 pounds at the 2006 tournament.

Josh Glenn of American scored a takedown in the first 15 seconds of overtime to defeat Kurt Backes of Iowa State 6-4 at 197 pounds. His win clinched the team title for Minnesota. Glenn, American's first NCAA champion, seemed to score a takedown late in regulation, but it was waived off following a protest by the Iowa State coaches. Cole Konrad of Minnesota won his second crown at 285 pounds by pinning Aaron Anspach of Penn State in 1:53. Konrad used a powerful lateral drop to score his seventy-sixth straight victory.

In the final team standings, Minnesota outscored Iowa State 98 to 88½ and Missouri finished third with 80 points. It was a strong showing for the Cyclones, who started off their initial season under the tutelage of Cael Sanderson with a lopsided dual meet loss to Iowa. Northwestern edged out defending champion Oklahoma State for fourth place. Iowa needed Perry's upset win to finish in the top ten of the team race for the thirty-fifth straight season. Traditional powers Oklahoma and Lehigh had very disappointing tournaments, finishing in twenty-second and thirty-eighth place in the team standings. It was the worst showing for these schools since the early 90's.

While parity has not arrived in collegiate wrestling, this tournament did see a much wider distribution of the laurels. Missouri and Northwestern, schools with just one top five finish between them since 1932, set team records for points and finished third and fourth. Minnesota had the lowest point total for any team champion since 1989 and its total of five All-Americans was in sharp contrast to the ten it had when it won its first team title in 2001. Finally, ten different schools won an individual title, just the fifth time that has happened in 77 tournaments, although for the third time since 2000.

Preseason Outlook

Defending champion Minnesota topped the preseason poll and was a solid favorite to win its fourth team title. The Gophers had nine starters back, five of whom had won All-American honors. The Schlatter brothers, Dustin and C.P., Roger Kish, and Jayson Ness were expected to lead the title defense. Oklahoma State, champion from 2003 to 2006, was ranked second and had three returning All-Americans, including NCAA runner-up Coleman Scott. However, the Cowboys had a number of question marks in their lineup.

Iowa State, runner-up at the 2007 tournament, and Iowa were expected to be more serious challengers for Minnesota. Iowa State had lost three All-Americans, but still had a number of young wrestlers who had performed well in their initial season. Jake Varner reached the finals as a freshman and was the favorite to win the 184-pound title since defending NCAA champion Jake Herbert of Northwestern was taking an Olympic redshirt. Iowa was in its second season under Tom Brands and the Virginia Tech four would compete this season for the Hawkeyes. These wrestlers had followed Brands from Blacksburg, but were forced to sit out the 2007 season because they were not released by Virginia Tech. Brent Metcalf was the most touted of these wrestlers and Iowa would get senior leadership from three-time All-American and NCAA champion Mark Perry.

Michigan did not have the balanced lineup needed to be the top dual meet team, but it had four individuals capable of reaching the NCAA finals – Josh Churella, a 2007 NCAA runner-up, Eric Tannenbaum, Steve Luke, and Tyrel Todd. Cornell was the strongest team in the EIWA, but would be without Troy Nickerson. The two-time All-American and 2006 NCAA runner-up was taking a redshirt season following shoulder surgery.

Regular Season

Minnesota's tenure at the top of the dual meet poll was short lived. In early December, the Gophers dropped a dual to Iowa State 18-13. The key wins for the Cyclones were Cyler Sanderson's 3-2 upset of C.P. Schlatter and Jake Varner's 3-0 shutout of Roger Kish. One week later Iowa returned to the top of collegiate wrestling with a 20-13 victory over Iowa State in Ames. The Hawkeyes won despite the suspension of Mark Perry. All four of the Virginia Tech transfers won against the Cyclones and veterans Matt Fields and Charlie Falck also triumphed. Penn State visited Oklahoma State on the same weekend and topped the number three-ranked Cowboys 21-18.

Minnesota won the Southern Scuffle over the Christmas holidays, but injuries were taking a toll on the Gophers. Roger Kish missed the tournament with a back injury and Dustin Schlatter injured his hamstring while losing in the finals. Oklahoma State knocked Iowa out of the top spot when they surprised the Hawkeyes 19-14 in Iowa City. Jacob Dieffenbach's 5-3 upset of NCAA champion Mark Perry was the key match for the Cowboys, who registered their ninth straight dual meet victory against Iowa. Brent Metcalf was the only one of the "VT-4" to win against the Pokes, whose triumph moved Penn State to the top rung of the dual meet poll entering the National Duals.

The Cliff Keen NWCA National Duals were held at Cedar Falls for the third straight season. All of the top teams were in attendance except for Oklahoma State, which won the Virginia Duals on the same weekend. Penn State was upset 19-13 by unseeded Nebraska in the quarterfinals. The Cornhuskers also beat Minnesota 24-13 in the semifinals, but fell to Iowa 24-6 in the finals. The Hawkeyes, who were back on top for good, won despite the absence of Mark Perry, who would be out until the Big Ten tournament with a knee injury.

Iowa cemented its hold on the number one ranking with a 20-13 win at Minnesota. The Gophers were without Dustin Schlatter and the much-anticipated meeting between Schlatter and Brent Metcalf was delayed. Newcomers Joey Slaton, Dan Leclere, and Jay Borschel scored victories against fifth-year seniors. The Hawkeyes would have two close calls during the remainder of the season, against Wisconsin and Michigan. In each dual, Iowa scored more bonus points and topped the Badgers 22-20 and the Wolverines 20-16.

Nebraska held the number two spot in the rankings until the last dual of the season, when it lost to Iowa State 22-12. Central Michigan ended up second in the final dual meet poll. The Chippewas had a poor showing at the National Duals, where they suffered their only dual meet losses of the season. However, they ended the year with eight straight wins, including a 21-13 triumph over Michigan. Oklahoma upset Oklahoma State 18-15 in the last week of the dual meet season. A fall by Josh Weitzel was the margin of victory for the Sooners, who scored their first win in the Bedlam series since 1996.

Conference Tournaments

Iowa dethroned defending champion and tournament host Minnesota and won the Big Ten team title by 15 points. The Hawkeyes bounced back from a very poor semifinal round in which they won just two of eight matches. Iowa performed well in the consolation round while the season long injury jinx continued for the Gophers. Losing semifinalists C.P. Schlatter and Roger Kish injury defaulted to sixth place. Brent Metcalf of Iowa won the long awaited meeting with two-time Big Ten champion Dustin Schlatter of Minnesota in the 149-pound final. Schlatter took an early lead with a slick throw-by takedown, but Metcalf's relentless pressure wore down Schlatter and a late takedown gave the Hawkeye a 5-3 win and the Outstanding Wrestler award. Michigan finished third in the team race and crowned three champions – freshman Kellen Russell (141), Eric Tannenbaum (165), and Steve Luke (174). It was the second title for both Luke and Tannenbaum, who upset NCAA champion Mark Perry of Iowa.

Iowa State crowned four individual champions and won its second straight Big Twelve team crown. Jake Varner repeated as champion for the Cyclones at 184 pounds and Nick Fanthorpe, Nick Gallick, and Cyler Sanderson were first time winners. Nebraska finished second, 13 points behind Iowa State, and was led by defending NCAA champion Paul Donahue, who won his first Big Twelve title at 125 pounds. Tournament host Oklahoma State needed an upset win by heavyweight Jared Rosholt in the final bout of the tournament to avoid its lowest finish ever. Had Rosholt failed to win, the Cowboys would have placed fourth, behind Missouri, and been without a conference champion, something that has never happened. Oklahoma had an even worse day and finished last in the team race with just one finalist.

Cornell repeated as EIWA team champion by the narrowest of margins. The Big Red edged Pennsylvania by a half a point and nearly squandered a 10 point lead after the first day's action. The key match was a head-to-head overtime win by Mack Lewnes of Cornell over Penn's Zack Shanaman in the 165-pound final. Lewnes was Cornell's only champion – three top-seeded Cornell grapplers, Mike Grey, Jordan Leen, and Steve Anceravage, were upset. Pennsylvania and Navy each had three champions. Cesar Grajales of Penn was named the Outstanding Wrestler after upsetting J.P. O'Connor of Harvard to win the 149-pound title. Defending NCAA champion Josh Glenn of American became a three-time champion with an easy win at 197 pounds. A pair of Midshipmen, Matt Stolpinski (174) and Ed Pendergast (285), were repeat winners.

NCAA Tournament

The NCAA tournament was held in St. Louis for the fourth time in the last nine years. Its central location and abundant amenities have made it very popular with fans and participants alike. Iowa was favored to win its first team title since 2000 and was expected to be challenged by two Big Ten schools, defending champion Minnesota and Michigan, and two Big Twelve powers, Iowa State and Nebraska. Iowa had eight of nine qualifiers seeded and five were ranked fourth or better. Minnesota had seven seeded wrestlers, but just two were in the top four. The other contenders each had five seeds and Michigan was the most serious threat with all of its top wrestlers ranked fifth or better.

Just three competitors seeded in the top four lost in the first day of action. Third seeds Tyrel Todd of Michigan (184) and Mike Tamillow of Northwestern (197) lost in the second round. Brandon Becker of Indiana, a fourth seed, was also a first day casualty. Minnesota's hope of repeating was seriously damaged when C.P Schlatter and Gabriel Dretsch, both seeded, were upset. Iowa lost one of its seeded wrestlers, Dan Leclere at 141 pounds, but led the pack with 29½ points after the first day of action. Big Twelve rivals Nebraska and Iowa State were not far behind the Hawkeyes.

The Second Day

Iowa won five of seven quarterfinal matches and broke away from its pursuers by taking a 20 point lead. The biggest upset of the round came at 157 pounds, where Jordan Leen of Cornell nipped Gregor Gillespie of Edinboro, the 2007 champion at 149 pounds, 8-6. Second seeded Dustin Schlatter of Minnesota, the 2006 champion at 149, lost 4-1 to Darren Caldwell of North Carolina State. Angel Escobedo of Indiana, the top seed at 125 pounds, narrowly averted an upset and needed two rounds of overtime periods to edge Brandon Precin of Northwestern on riding time.

The Hawkeyes had effectively wrapped up the team title by the end of the evening round. They had 102 points, three finalists and four other wrestlers in the consolations. Ohio State, the only other school with three finalists, was in second place with 71 points and just one wrestler in the consolations. Top seeded 149-pounder Brent Metcalf of Iowa reached the finals, along with teammates Joey Slaton at 133 pounds and defending champion Mark Perry at 165 pounds. In his semifinal match, Slaton upset top-ranked Frank Gomez of Michigan State with a takedown in overtime.

Ohio State was having an outstanding tournament and for the first time ever advanced three men to the finals. Sixth-seeded J Jagers, who upset Charles Griffin of Hofstra 11-9 at 141 pounds, joined big men Mike Pucillo and J.D. Bergman, both second seeds. Two defending champions lost in the semifinals. Wynn Michalak of Central Michigan nipped top-seeded 197-pounder Josh Glenn of American 7-5. At 125 pounds, Jayson Ness of Minnesota edged Paul Donahoe of Nebraska 4-3. Michigan and Penn State each had a pair of finalists – Eric Tannenbaum and Steve Luke for the Wolverines and Bubba Jenkins and Phil Davis for the Nittany Lions.

The Finals



Iowa officially clinched the team championships during the consolation semifinals. Nebraska was in second place, but the Cornhuskers had no finalists. Five schools had a chance to pass Nebraska and move into second during the finals.

In the opening match of the evening, Angel Escobedo of Indiana continued his mastery of Jayson Ness of Minnesota with a 10-3 triumph. Escobedo scored all of the offensive points and thus a Hoosier won the 125-pound crown for the third time in the last four seasons. At 133 pounds, Coleman Scott of Oklahoma State converted a single leg takedown into a cradle and pinned Joey Slaton of Iowa in just 0:49. It was the third fastest fall in an NCAA final – Earl McCready of Oklahoma State holds the record at 0:19 in the very first heavyweight final in 1928.

J Jagers of Ohio State used a third period takedown and near fall to down top-seeded Chad Mendes of Cal Poly-SLO 5-2. The 141-pound final had been tied at 1-1 and headed for overtime until Jagger's four-point move. Brent Metcalf of Iowa overcame two first period takedowns by Penn State's Bubba Jenkins and won the title at 149 pounds, the tournament's toughest weight class. Metcalf hit a five-point move late in the second period to take the lead on the way to a 14-8 victory and the Outstanding Wrestler award.

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Eighth-seeded Jordan Leen of Cornell triumphed 5-4 over Mike Poeta of Illinois in the 157-pound final. Each wrestler had a takedown and the difference in the match was a fleeing the mat penalty against Poeta. Mark Perry of Iowa defended his 165-pound title and avenged a loss in the Big Ten finals with a 5-2 victory over Eric Tannenbaum of Michigan. With just 20 seconds gone in the match, Perry countered a poor takedown attempt by Tannenbaum and rode the Wolverine for the remainder of the first period. This proved to be too large a deficit for Tannenbaum to overcome.

Keith Gavin of Pittsburgh became the Panther's first NCAA champion in nearly two decades with a 4-2 win over Steve Luke of Michigan at 174 pounds. Gavin used a second period takedown and a point for riding time to finish the season with a perfect 27-0 record. At 184 pounds, Mike Pucillo became the Buckeye's second champion of the evening by handing Jake Varner of Iowa State his first loss of the season. In a defensive match that saw just escapes by each wrestler, Pucillo won on the strength six seconds of time advantage after the second round of overtime periods.

Phil Davis of Penn State won the 197-pound title with an easy 7-2 victory over Wynn Michalak of Central Michigan. Davis had a takedown in each of the first two periods and riding time. Heavyweight Dustin Fox of Northwestern frustrated Ohio State's hopes for three individual champions with a takedown in the second sudden victory period to defeat the Buckeye's J.D. Bergman 4-2. The wrestlers had split a pair of matches prior to their meeting in the 285-pound final.

In the final team standings, Iowa outdistanced runner-up Ohio State by nearly 40 points, 117½ to 79. Both the Hawkeyes and Buckeyes had two individual champions and a runner-up. However, Iowa had a seven to four edge in All-Americans. It was the best ever team finish for Ohio State, whose highest had been third in 2004. Under second-year coach Tom Ryan, the Buckeyes have made a remarkable turnaround – they managed to score a combined total of just 10 points in the 2005 and 2006 tournaments. Penn State and Nebraska rounded out the top four in the team race.

Shortly after the tournament, Greg Strobel retired as head coach at Lehigh. Former assistant Pat Santoro, who had revived the program at Maryland and moved the Terps into the top-25 for the first time in nearly two decades, succeeded him. Strobel finished his career at Lehigh with a dual meet record of 189-83-1, two NCAA champions, 30 All-Americans and six top ten finishes in the team race. Kerry McCoy, who had been an assistant with Santoro at Lehigh, moved from Stanford to the opening at Maryland. These coaching changes were overshadowed by the shocking decision of Arizona State, 1988 NCAA team champion, to drop wrestling. Fortunately, the program was quickly reinstated when boosters step forward to fund it.

Preseason Outlook

The 2009 season was the first with a new NCAA tournament qualifying system that would no longer use historical results to determine participants by conference. The current season's results would be the sole determinant and the system would include rankings, winning percentage, and strength of opponents. There would also be a number of at-large qualifiers determined following the conference tournaments.

Defending champion Iowa topped the preseason poll and was a solid favorite to win its twenty-second team title. The Hawkeyes had eight starters back, six of whom had won All-American honors. Team leader Brent Metcalf was an NCAA champion and the Outstanding Wrestler of the 2008 tournament. His relentless attacking style and indefatigability were a throwback to the Iowa teams of the Gable era. Iowa State and Cornell had balanced lineups and were expected to be the biggest challenge to the Hawkeyes' title hopes. The Cyclones had six All-Americans back from 2008, although only Jake Varner was ranked number one in his weight class. The Big Red were welcoming back Troy Nickerson, 2006 NCAA finalist, from an injury redshirt season and also had six All-Americans on their roster.

Ohio State, team runner-up in 2008, was coming off its best ever finish in the NCAA tournament and its lineup included defending NCAA champions J Jagers and Mike Pucillo. Had Nebraska not lost two starters, including 2007 NCAA champion Paul Donahoe, for an off-mat incident, it might be considered Iowa's biggest threat. The Huskers had a very strong lineup from 157 to 285 pounds, but their unexpected losses would be difficult to overcome. Donahoe had transferred to Edinboro and would be eligible to compete in the second semester. Missing in the title talk was Oklahoma State, which was rebuilding and might finish out of the top ten for the first time in its history.

Regular Season

Cornell clearly established itself as the top team in the East by dominating seventh-ranked Penn State 24-10 in dual meet action prior to Thanksgiving. The Big Red managed this despite the fact that Troy Nickerson was wrestling at 133 pounds. Meanwhile, unranked Lehigh under new coach Pat Santoro demonstrated that it had a strong dual meet lineup by knocking off two top ten teams – Michigan and Oklahoma State. The Engineers became just the third school from the East to beat the Cowboys with an 18-13 victory at the Northeast Duals in Troy, New York.

Iowa scored a 20-15 win in its December showdown in Iowa City with Iowa State. The Hawkeyes won despite the fact that 133-pound NCAA runner-up Joey Slaton lost by major decision to Nick Fanthorpe. Slaton was having great difficulty making weight and spent the rest of the season as backup at 141 pounds. Oklahoma notched its second straight Bedlam dual victory with an 18-15 conquest of Oklahoma State. The difference in the meet was an injury default by the Cowboys at 133 pounds.

Iowa continued on a roll as it edged Iowa State at the Midlands. Then the Hawkeyes, with a 20-13 triumph, scored its first dual meet victory against Oklahoma State in nine matches and first in Stillwater since 1996. The Cliff Keen NWCA National Duals were up next and Iowa persisted in its winning ways with a 23-13 victory over Cornell in the finals. The Big Red, with Nickerson back at 125 pounds, upset second-seeded Iowa State 22-15 in the semifinals. Central Michigan won the Virginia Duals by beating Oklahoma State and Lehigh. It was the Engineers' only dual meet loss of the season and they finished with a school record 23 wins.

Iowa finished its season with a 38 meet winning streak and a perfect 24-0-0 record that included lopsided victories over Illinois, Penn State, and Minnesota. No Big Twelve school was able to get the upper hand in conference dual meet action. Iowa State beat Nebraska twice, but lost to Missouri, who were edged by the Huskers. Oklahoma State's 27-6 win over Oklahoma in the second Bedlam dual was its only win in five conference duals. Virginia Tech had an outstanding season with a 20-2-0 record and a 21-15 victory against Michigan.

Conference Tournaments

Iowa easily won its second straight Big Ten team title and finished nearly 30 points ahead of runner-up Illinois. Hawkeye Brent Metcalf repeated as 149-pound champion and Outstanding Wrestler. Michigan finished third in the team race and crowned three individual champions. Kellen Russell and Steve Luke defended their titles at 141 and 174 pounds, respectively, and Tyrel Todd won the 197-pound crown. NCAA champion Angel Escobedo of Indiana was a repeat winner at 125 pounds. Frank Gomez of Michigan State and Mike Poeta of Illinois also won a second Big Ten title. At 184 pounds, Jake Herbert of Northwestern, who won Big Ten titles in 2006 and 2007 before taking an Olympic redshirt year, became the Wildcats' first three-time champion in 75 years with an easy 8-1 win over Phil Keddy of Iowa.

Tournament host Nebraska overcame a ten-point lead by Iowa State entering the final round to deadlock with the Cyclones for the Big Twelve team title. The key win for the Huskers was Craig Brester's 4-3 upset of Jake Varner of Iowa State at 197 pounds. That put Nebraska in the lead, but Dave Zabriskie's triumph at 285 pounds enabled ISU to salvage a tie in the team race. Jordan Burroughs, Brandon Browne, and Vince Jones also won titles for Nebraska. It was the second title for both Burroughs and Browne. Nick Fanthorpe of Iowa State and Nick Marable of Missouri also became two-time Big Twelve champions. Brester was named Outstanding Wrestler of the tournament. Oklahoma State and Oklahoma finished fourth and fifth in the team standings and for the first time the Cowboys failed to crown a champion.

Cornell won its third straight EIWA team title for the first time in more than 90 years. The Big Red had seven finalists and finished 35 points ahead of runner-up Lehigh. Bucknell, which was in its third season after reinstatement, tied Pennsylvania for third. Cornell crowned four individual champions and Troy Nickerson, Jordan Leen, and Mack Lewnes won their second title. Lehigh and Navy each won two individual titles – Bryce Saddoris of Navy captured the loaded (six automatic qualifiers) 149-pound weight class with a 5-4 tiebreaker win over Matt Kyler of Army and was selected Outstanding Wrestler. Ryan Flores of Columbia won the 285-pound title and became the Lions' first champion in 14 years.

NCAA Tournament

The NCAA tournament was held in St. Louis for the fifth time in the last decade. Iowa, with nine qualifiers and six seeded in the top four, was favored to repeat as team champion. The Big Twelve co-champions Iowa State and Nebraska were considered the most serious challengers to the Hawkeyes' title run. Cornell, runner-up at the National Duals, and Ohio State were also given a chance should Iowa falter.

The first round of action saw three high seeds suffer upsets. Mack Lewnes of Cornell, number one at 165 pounds, lost to Ryan Patrovich of Hofstra 5-3. Bubba Jenkins, a finalist for Penn State in 2008 and second seed at 149 pounds, was routed 12-6 by Matthew Fittery of Lock Haven. Jim Kennedy of Illinois was an upset victim in the pigtail round when he lost 7-5 in sudden victory to Dave Marble of Bucknell. Both Lewnes and Jenkins lost their first consolation match and failed to score a team point for their schools. Iowa also was not immune to first round upsets as fourth-seeded Alex Tsirtsis was nipped 5-4 by Alex Krom of Maryland.

Another number one seed, Kellen Russell of Michigan, fell in the evening round. The 141-pound Wolverine was pinned by Ryan Prater of Illinois at 4:00. Iowa also suffered a casualty in the second round – Charlie Falck lost 8-3 to Anthony Robles of Arizona State at 125 pounds. Iowa and Iowa State were tied for the lead after the first day's action with 33 points. Ohio State was in third with 30 points.

The Second Day

Iowa won just two of six quarterfinal matches and showed signs of faltering in the team race. Ryan Morningstar's narrow 4-2 win in overtime over Colt Sponseller of Ohio State at 165 pounds turned out to be the pivotal win for the Hawkeyes on their way to their twenty-second NCAA title. The triumph ensured at least a sixth place finish for Morningstar, who eventually took third, while Sponseller lost his first consolation match and failed to place.

By the end of the semifinals, Ohio State had moved ahead of Iowa and Iowa State in the team race. The Buckeyes had three finalists to just one each for the Hawkeyes and Cyclones. Reece Humphrey, J Jagers, and Mike Pucillo all advanced for OSU. Jagers, defending champion at 141-pounds, had struggled for much of the season, but he was having an excellent tournament. Brent Metcalf and Jake Varner were the finalists for Iowa and Iowa State, respectively.

Nebraska and Edinboro were the only other schools with more than one finalist. Jordan Burroughs and Craig Brester, each the top seed in their weight class, were semifinal winners for the Huskers. At 157 pounds, Burroughs scored a 12-4 major decision against Gregor Gillespie of Edinboro, the 2007 NCAA champion at 149 pounds. In the lower half of that bracket, Mike Poeta reversed the results of last season's final by defeating Jordan Leen of Cornell 6-4. Paul Donahoe, 2007 champion at 125 pounds while wrestling for Nebraska, and Jarrod King, a transfer from Oklahoma, were Edinboro's finalists.

Konrad Dudziak, who had become Duke's first All-American by beating Jared Rosholt of Oklahoma State in the quarterfinals, beat top-seeded Dave Zabriskie of Iowa State 3-2 to reach the finals at 285 pounds. Dudziak's resume included two junior national championships in his native Poland. Eighth-seeded Ryan Williams of Old Dominion became just the second finalist for the Monarchs by emerging from the upset ravaged top half of the 141-pound bracket.

The Finals



In Saturday morning's consolation round Iowa regained the team lead. The Hawkeyes had four wrestlers in the consolations to just one for Ohio State and they turned a 3½ point deficit into a 9½ point lead entering the finals. The Buckeyes, with three finalists, had a mathematical chance of overtaking Iowa, but Ohio State was favored in just one final.

In the first match of the evening, Troy Nickerson of Cornell edged Paul Donahoe of Edinboro 2-1 in the tiebreaker period on a locking hands penalty against Donahoe. There was very little action in the match and the first half-serious takedown attempt did not occur until overtime. At 133 pounds, Frank Gomez of Michigan State virtually ended Ohio State's title hopes by edging Reece Humphrey 5-4. Gomez had a pair of takedowns to lead 5-2 before Humphrey scored a reverse in the final 15 seconds of the match. J Jagers of Ohio State became the first, and only, defending champ in the tournament to repeat with a 10-4 win over Ryan Williams of Old Dominion.

The 149-pound final was one of the most entertaining and controversial in many years. Top seeded Brent Metcalf of Iowa was a heavy favorite against Darrion Caldwell of North Carolina State, who

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had lost by technical fall to Metcalf in the All-Star classic. Tonight was a different story as Caldwell was on the attack from the start and used two takedowns to lead 4-2 after the first period. He then stymied any comeback attempt by Metcalf with two more takedowns from scrambles. As the match came to an end, Caldwell began a premature celebration that included a full back flip. Metcalf pushed Caldwell mid-flip and after a review by the officials, Iowa was penalized a team point. Caldwell won the match 11-6, snapped Metcalf's 69 match winning streak, and was named the Outstanding Wrestler of the tournament.

Things quieted down in the next two weight classes. Jordan Burroughs of Nebraska completed a perfect 35-0 season with a 5-1 win over Mike Poeta of Illinois. Burroughs scored takedowns late in both the first and third period. At 165 pounds, twelfth-seeded Jarrod King of Edinboro edged true freshman Andrew Howe of Wisconsin 3-2 on a third period takedown.

Steve Luke of Michigan defeated Mike Miller of Central Michigan 8-4 to take the 174-pound title. Luke, who finished the season undefeated at 32-0, scored three takedowns and had a point for riding time. With Iowa's loss of a team point at 149, defending 184-pound champion Mike Pucillo of Ohio State could win the team title for the Buckeyes with a major decision. However, Jake Herbert of Northwestern, the 2007 champion, scored a takedown in the first 15 seconds and cruised to a 6-3 victory. Herbert lost just one match in his final three years of competition and finished with a career record of 138-4.

Jake Varner of Iowa State, a losing finalist in the last two tournaments, was successful this time with a narrow 2-1 win over Craig Brester of Nebraska. A point for riding time enabled Varner to avenge his loss to Brester in the Big Twelve final. Mark Ellis of Missouri made the hometown fans happy with a 4-2 victory over Konrad Dudziak of Duke in the tiebreaker period. The match was low scoring, but had a number of exciting scrambles and far more action than the 125-pound final.

Despite failing to crown an individual champion, Iowa won its second straight team title with 96½ points. It was the lowest total for a team champion since Oklahoma State won with 94¾ points in 1994. Ohio State could not hold its Friday night lead and was runner-up for the second straight year with 92 points. Big Twelve powers Iowa State and Nebraska rounded out the top four. Oklahoma State was seventeenth in the team standings and finished out of the top ten for the first time ever.

Anthony Robles of Arizona State, who was born with one leg, finished fourth at 125 pounds. Robles, just a sophomore, has an excellent chance of winning an individual title before he completes his eligibility. It is doubtful that any other NCAA sport has seen such a remarkable accomplishment. The tournament was also noteworthy for the number of fast falls. Reece Humphrey of Ohio State scored one in just 12 seconds and Troy Nickerson of Cornell had one in 14 seconds. They are the third and fifth fastest falls in tournament history.

In late March, Mark Johnson announced his retirement and ended a 19-year career, including the last 17 years at Illinois, as a Division I head coach. Jim Heffernan, his long time assistant, succeeded him. Much bigger news came out of Penn State following the resignation of its head coach, Troy Sunderland. Iowa State legend Cael Sanderson left Ames after just three years at the helm to become Penn State's mentor. Kevin Jackson, former Cyclone All-American, Olympic champion, and national freestyle coach succeeded Sanderson at Iowa State.

Preseason Outlook

Defending champion Iowa had a lineup loaded with seniors and was the unanimous pick in the preseason poll to win its 23rd team title and third in a row. Of the eight seniors expected to be in its lineup, seven of them had All-American honors. Two-time finalist and 2008 Outstanding Wrestler Brent Metcalf was the team leader, but he had ample support from four other seniors who had finished fourth or better in the NCAA tournament. Iowa State also had a senior dominated roster, but the Cyclones would have to challenge Iowa's dominance without Cael Sanderson. The ISU legend had stunned the collegiate wrestling world by leaving Ames and heading east to take the head coaching job at Penn State. Sanderson took just one wrestler with him, younger brother Cyler, but the Cyclones still had defending NCAA champion Jake Varner and four other All-Americans in their lineup.

Cornell had firmly established itself as the power in the East with four All-Americans in each of the last five seasons. No other school in the country could claim such an accomplishment. The Big Red were loaded with All-American talent headed by defending NCAA champion Troy Nickerson. Oklahoma State had fallen to 16th place at the 2009 tournament, but the Cowboys expected to be back in the hunt in 2010. Several newcomers hoped to erase the memory of OSU's first-ever finish out of the top ten. Red-shirt freshmen Jordan Oliver and Alex Meade, transfers Mike Benefiel and Albert White, and Russian import Alan Gelogaev were all considered All-American candidates. Ohio State had finished a surprising second at the last two NCAA tournaments and had the horses to do it again in 2010. The lineup would include 2008 NCAA champion Mike Pucillo, 2009 runner-up Reece Humphrey, and three-time All-American Lance Palmer.

Regular Season

One of the first dual meets of the season marked Cael Sanderson's debut as head coach at Penn State. The Nittany Lions visited Bethlehem, Pennsylvania to take on long time rival Lehigh. The Engineers prevailed 23-14 before a crowd of over 5,000. The pivotal bout was at 174 pounds, where red-shirt freshman Robert Hamlin of Lehigh stunned David Erwin 17-8. One week later, Maryland overcame an eight-point deficit to upset Cornell 18-17. Hudson Taylor's fall at 197 pounds sparked the Terp's comeback. The Big Red were without Troy Nickerson, but seemed to be in charge thanks in part to freshman Kyle Dake's 8-3 upset of All-American Alex Krom at 141 pounds. Maryland followed this up with a 22-12 victory over Lehigh at the Northeast Duals in Troy, New York.

Iowa edged Iowa State 18-16 at Ames in a meeting of the two top-ranked teams. The margin of victory was a fall by Brent Metcalf in 5:50 against Mitch Mueller. Nick Gallick was among the winners for the Cyclones, but a hip injury ended his season. Oklahoma and Oklahoma State battled to a 16-16 in the first Bedlam dual of the season. The teams each won five bouts and had a major decision. Heavyweight Jared Rosholt of the Cowboys knotted the dual with a tiebreaker victory over Nathan Fernandez. OSU then scored a 21-8 victory over Minnesota. Freshman Alex Meade posted a major upset at 165 pounds by edging 2006 NCAA champion Dustin Schlatter of Minnesota 3-2.

Ohio State nipped Cornell by a single point for the team title at the Cliff Keen Las Vegas Tournament. The key victory for the Buckeyes was an overtime triumph by Reece Humphrey against Kyle Dake in the 141-pound semi-final. The Big Red did win the Southern Scuffle and had Troy Nickerson in the lineup for the first time. Unfortunately, Nickerson reinjured his shoulder and defaulted in the 125-pound final against Angel Escobedo of Indiana. Dake, Mack Lewnes, and Cam Simaz won individual titles for Cornell. Iowa captured the Midlands Championship tournament and finished over 20 points ahead of rival Iowa State. Freshman Matt McDonough and veterans Brent Metcalf and Jay Borschel were individual champions for the Hawkeyes.

Oklahoma State won the Virginia Duals with a 30-6 victory over Lehigh in the finals. The Engineers prevented a “Bedlam” final by overcoming a 16-0 deficit after four bouts to nip Oklahoma 18-16 in the semi-finals thanks to Joe Kennedy’s 4-1 upset of Eric Lapotsky. Iowa won the Cliff Keen NWCA National Duals for the third straight season by defeating Iowa State 19-12. The Hawkeyes were victorious despite the absence of starters Daniel Dennis and Dan Erikson. Iowa followed up this triumph with a 19-16 conquest of Oklahoma State in Iowa City. Freshmen Jordan Oliver and Alex Meade scored upsets for the Cowboys as the teams split ten bouts. However, the Hawkeyes won the battle of bonus points with a technical fall by Brent Metcalf and major decisions from Matt McDonough and Jay Borschel.

Lehigh and Cornell battled to a 15-15 tie at Ithaca when the schools resumed their rivalry after a two-year hiatus. Nickerson returned to the lineup for the Big Red to help them jump to a 15-6 lead after seven bouts. Joe Kennedy was the hero again in another Lehigh comeback by upsetting Cam Simaz in the second tiebreaker round. Cornell also hosted Iowa State and lost 24-13 to the second-ranked Cyclones, who were fresh from a 20-18 win against Oklahoma State. Nickerson, Kyle Dake, and Mack Lewnes were the only winners for the Big Red. As part of this dual meet Cornell honored two-year starter Adam Frey, who lost a long battle against cancer in December 2009.

Iowa finished its second straight undefeated dual meet season with a 23-0 mark. The Hawkeyes managed this in spite of the absence of several starters for much of the season. Daniel Dennis, Chad Beatty, and Dan Erikson were sidelined for several meets with injuries and Joe Slaton, a 2008 NCAA runner-up, was declared ineligible for the entire season. The Hawkeyes posted eight easy wins against Big Ten rivals – the closest was a 28-9 triumph over Minnesota. Iowa’s last dual meet loss came in January of 2008 and their 61-meet winning streak was the longest since Oklahoma State reached 69 in 2000.

Conference Tournaments

Iowa won its third straight Big Ten team title with 156½ points, the most for the Hawkeyes since 1996. They managed this even though two-time champion Brent Metcalf was upset in the finals by Lance Palmer of Ohio State. Palmer turned a third period takedown attempt by Metcalf into his own five-point move for a 9-3 win and the tournament’s Outstanding Wrestler award. Iowa placed all ten wrestlers and Jay Borschel and Dan Erikson won Big 10 titles for the Hawkeyes. For Erikson it was his second straight crown at 285 pounds. Runner-up Minnesota had two individual champions — Jayson Ness, who also won a title in 2007, and Mike Thorn. Angel Escobedo of Indiana won his third title at 125 pounds and Andrew Howe of Wisconsin defended his crown at 165 pounds.

Oklahoma State edged Iowa State by 1½ points to capture the Big 12 team crown. Both schools had six finalists, but the Cowboys won three individual titles to two for the Cyclones. Losses in the finals by top-seeded ISU wrestlers Andrew Long and Jon Reader enabled OSU to win its first team championship since 2006. Jordan Oliver, Jamal Parks, and Clayton Foster were all first time champs for the Pokes. Dave Zabriskie won his third Big 12 crown for the Cyclones at 285 pounds and defending NCAA champion Jake Varner won at 197 pounds. Tournament host Oklahoma had a strong showing, finish just five points behind ISU. Kyle Terry was a repeat winner for the Sooners at 149 pounds and true freshman Jarrod Patterson and Shane Vernon also won crowns for OU. Patterson and Oliver were named the co-Outstanding Wrestler of the tournament.

Cornell had no difficulty in winning its fourth straight EIWA team title. The Big Red had five individual champions and finished nearly 50 points ahead of Pennsylvania. The Quakers failed to crown an individual champion, but a balanced team effort enabled them to finish well ahead of pre-tournament expectations. Mack Lewnes and Troy Nickerson each won a third individual title for Cornell and Cam Simaz won his second. Mike Grey and freshman sensation Kyle Dake rounded out the Big Red's list of champions. Mike Cannon of American and Matt Kyler of Army each won a second EIWA crown. J.P. O'Connor of Harvard ended years of frustration by winning a title in his fourth and final trip to the finals. Lewnes was named the Outstanding Wrestler of the tournament.

NCAA Tournament

Omaha, Nebraska, the long time host of the College Baseball World Series, was for the first time the site of the NCAA wrestling tournament. Iowa, with ten qualifiers and nine of them seeded, was a prohibitive favorite to do a three-peat as team champion. It was in a similar position last season, but barely managed to hold off an unexpected title run by Ohio State. Iowa State, Oklahoma State, and Cornell were given the best chance to score a major upset this season.

Nick Amuchastegul of Stanford scored the biggest upset of the first round when he downed third seeded Nick Marable of Missouri 4-1. Dustin Schlatter of Minnesota, a 2006 champion and three-time All-American, was severely hampered by a torn ACL and defaulted early into his first round match. Defending champion and number two seed Troy Nickerson of Cornell was an upset victim in the evening round. A takedown at the final buzzer gave Fred Santaite of Boston University a 2-1 victory. Iowa had a big lead after the first day's action with 34½ points and eight men left in the championship round. A total of six teams, lead by Oklahoma State, were in a pack about 10 points behind the Hawkeyes.

The Second Day

Iowa won five of eight quarterfinal matches and widened its lead on the field. Cornell, which posted ten straight wins in the afternoon round, moved into second place, 19 points behind the Hawkeyes. There had not been many upsets in the tournament and 28 of the top 40 seeds, including all the number ones, were still in the championship hunt entering the evening session.

Iowa advanced all five of its wrestlers to the finals and locked up the team title by the end of the semi-finals. It was nearly just four finalists for the Hawkeyes — Jay Borschel overcame an early 7-1

deficit and nipped Chris Heinrich of Virginia 10-9 at 174 pounds. Iowa's other finalists were 2008 champ Brent Metcalf, freshman Matt McDonough, sixth seed Montell Marion, and Daniel Dennis. The latter continued his season long mastery of defending 133-pound champion Frank Gomez of Michigan State with a 5-3 win in overtime. In the finals, Dennis would meet Jayson Ness of Minnesota, who scored the only point in 11 minutes of wrestling to edge Jordan Oliver of Oklahoma State 1-0 after two tiebreaker sessions.

Iowa State advanced three men to the finals, but the Cyclones trailed Cornell by eight points in the team race since they had no other wrestlers left in the tournament. Top seeds Jake Varner and Dave Zabriskie reached the finals as expect. Freshman Andrew Long, however, was a 7-4 upset winner over 2008 125-pound champion Angel Escobedo of Indiana. The Big Red had two finalists – Kyle Dake, who beat Reese Humphrey of Ohio State in the tiebreaker period, and Mack Lewnes.

The Finals



Since Iowa had clinched the team title Friday night, Saturday morning's consolation round lacked the excitement of the previous season. Cornell wrapped up second place as Cam Simaz and Troy Nickerson finished in third and fourth place, respectively. It was the best finish ever for the Big Red and with two finalists they extended their streak of four All-Americans to six years.

The 125-pound final was just the second championship meeting between two freshmen. The first was in 1980, when Matt Reiss of North Carolina State beat Perry Hummel of Iowa State. The bout

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was also the fourth meeting of the year between Matt McDonough of Iowa and Andrew Long of Iowa State. McDonough made it four-for-four with a 3-1 victory. At 133 pounds, Jayson Ness of Minnesota used a late takedown and two back points to score a 6-4 triumph over Daniel Dennis of Iowa. Ness finished the season with a perfect 31-0 record and was named Outstanding Wrestler of the tournament. Ness had a career total of 73 falls (45% of his bouts), which is the highest total for a lightweight since Gene Mills of Syracuse was throwing his half-nelson three decades ago.

Kyle Dake of Cornell, with a 7-3 victory over Montell Marion of Iowa, became the first true freshman to win a title since 2006. Early in the first period, Marion appeared to have Dake in real trouble in a bear hug, but Dake managed to counter it into his own takedown. He added two back points in the second period on his way to becoming the Big Red's first ever freshman champion. At 149 pounds, Brent Metcalf of Iowa reversed the outcome of the Big Ten final and defeated Lance Palmer of Ohio State by a 3-2 count. Metcalf's takedown early in the first period was the only offensive scoring in a cautiously wrestled bout. Metcalf completed his career with a 108-3 record and 47 falls.

J.P. O'Connor of Harvard overcame an early takedown by Chase Pami of Cal Poly-SLO and became just the third NCAA champion for the Crimson. A late takedown in the first period, a reverse in the second, and riding time gave O'Connor a 6-4 victory at 157 pounds. Andrew Howe of Wisconsin, who finished second in 2009, topped Dan Vallimont of Penn State 9-3 to win the 165-pound title. Howe dominated the match with three takedowns and finished with a 37-0 perfect record.

Jay Borschel of Iowa won the Hawkeyes' third title of the evening with a 6-2 victory over Mack Lewnes of Cornell at 174 pounds. Borschel scored a pair of takedowns against Lewnes, who had not surrendered a two pointer all season. Max Askren of Missouri used a fast start to defeat Kirk Smith of Boise State 10-3 in the 184-pound final. Askren, whose brother Ben won titles in 2006 and 2007, scored a quick takedown and two near falls to take a 7-0 lead half way through the first period.

Jake Varner of Iowa State became the only defending champion to repeat with a 5-2 victory over Craig Brester of Nebraska. The 197-pound final was a repeat of the 2009 matchup, but this time Varner won by a wider margin thanks to two takedowns. The four-time finalists had a perfect 31-0 record on the season and a career record of 121-10. Varner was joined at the top of the podium by teammate Dave Zabriskie who defeated Jared Rosholt of Oklahoma State 3-2 for the 285-pound crown. A second period takedown by the Cyclone enabled Zabriskie to win the seventh of ten meetings with Rosholt.

Iowa finished with 134½ points and was far ahead of runner-up Cornell with 90. The margin of victory was the largest since 1997, when Iowa scored a record 170 points. Iowa State was third in the team race and Wisconsin fourth. The tournament had a record nine former champions in the field, but just two, Varner and Metcalf, won titles.

Collegiate wrestling programs continued to be a target for termination as the recession strained school budgets. The problem is particularly acute in California – California Davis was to drop after the 2010 season and Cal State Fullerton and Cal State Bakersfield were guaranteed just one more season. Division I wrestling on the West Coast was clearly an endangered species.

Preseason Outlook

The 2011 wrestling season offered the tantalizing prospect of a new name on the NCAA Division-I team trophy. Cornell returned the most points of any school and the Big Red were the first school from the East to be ranked number one in the preseason poll since Penn State in 1994. Cornell had a lineup that included three wrestlers ranked number one at the start of the season – NCAA champion Kyle Dake, runner-up Mack Lewnes, and two-time All-American Cam Simaz. Mike Grey, an All-American in 2008, and round of 12 finishers Jeff Kerber and Steve Bosak made the Big Red a solid pick for the top spot. This was especially the case since Iowa, the team champion for the last three seasons, would have to replace seven starters. Also, Montel Marion, 2010 runner-up at 141 pounds, had been suspended from the team. The Hawkeyes would have to rely upon 125-pound champion Matt McDonough and a lot of talented, albeit inexperienced, newcomers.

Boise State was ranked second and like Cornell had three wrestlers ranked number one. Kirk Smith, runner-up at 184 pounds, Adam Hall, and Andrew Hochstrasser, who was ineligible for most of 2010, gave the Broncos a lot of tournament scoring power. Oklahoma State and Penn State, like Iowa, had young lineups that might mature into serious title contenders by tournament time. The Cowboys had three returning All-Americans and PSU had two, but red-shirt freshmen would play an important role for both squads. Wisconsin was not to be overlooked. The Badgers had matched their all-time best finish of fourth at the 2010 tournament and were led by NCAA champion Andrew Howe at 165 pounds.

Regular Season

Lehigh and Penn State met for the 99th time in an early season dual at Penn State. The Nittany Lions, despite being without two veteran starters, prevailed 21-17, thanks to falls from freshmen Andrew Alton and David Taylor. Robert Hamlin of Lehigh scored his second straight upset in this meeting of long-time rivals when he posted a 4-3 win over Quentin Wright at 184 pounds. Cornell also had injury problems at the start of the season and would be without Mike Grey until late January. Despite Grey's absence, Cornell won the Cliff Keen Las Vegas Tournament by 38½ points over runner-up Wisconsin.

Oklahoma State scored a pair of important early season wins by nipping Minnesota 17-16 on the road and then topping Oklahoma in the first Bedlam dual of the season 22-12 in Gallagher Hall. Meanwhile, Iowa was continuing its dominance in another intrastate rivalry with a 22-13 win over Iowa State. It was the 66th straight dual meet win for the Hawkeyes. Oregon State shocked Boise State by overcoming a 14-0 deficit to deadlock the dual at 18-18. The Broncos were without Kirk Smith, who would miss virtually the entire season with multiple injuries.

Missouri was the surprise winner of the Midlands tournament and managed it without a finalist. The Tigers finished eight points ahead of Wisconsin, while Lehigh was third and pretournament favorite Iowa was fourth. In a matchup of NCAA champions, Jordan Burroughs of Nebraska scored four

takedowns on his way to a 10-7 defeat of Wisconsin's Andrew Howe. Cornell and Penn State finished in a tie for the team title at the Southern Scuffle. The Nittany Lions were led by freshmen Ed Ruth and David Taylor. Ruth dominated Cornell's Mack Lewnes in the 174-pound semi-final and Chris Henrich of Virginia in the finals. The undefeated Taylor had yet to be tested and his closest match so far was a 9-3 win.

Cornell became the first EIWA school to win the Cliff Keen NWCA National Duals by downing Virginia Tech 25-10 in the finals. The seventh-seeded Hokies upset Wisconsin 20-19 in the semi-finals and Oklahoma State 18-16 in the quarterfinals. Cornell also had a pair of tight wins over Missouri 18-15 and Minnesota 20-16 on its way to the finals. Iowa, despite numerous pleas from the NWCA, declined an invitation to participate in the event and padded its win streak with a 49-0 win over SIU-Edwardsville.

At the Virginia Duals, Lehigh and Penn State seemed headed for the finals and their 100th meeting. However, Michigan avenged an earlier season loss to Lehigh in the semi-finals with a 21-18 win. Penn State downed the Wolverines 24-12 in the finals. The midseason transfer by Andrew Long to Penn State had strengthened the Nittany Lions' lineup. Long, a 2010 NCAA runner-up at 125 pounds, had been dismissed from the Iowa State squad, with a full release, prior to the start of the season.

Lehigh bounced back from a disappointing fourth at the Virginia Duals by handing top-ranked Cornell, still without Mike Grey, its only loss of the season. The Engineers edged Cornell 17-15 before over 3,000 fans in Stabler Arena. Meanwhile, Oklahoma State snapped Iowa's dual meet win streak at 69 by holding the Hawkeyes to a 15-15 draw in Stillwater. Cowboy 133-pounder Jordan Oliver narrowly missed scoring a major decision that would have given OSU a victory.

Penn State, now ranked number one, hosted number-eight Iowa before 6,686 fans in a sold out Rec Hall and planned on putting an end to the Hawkeyes' unbeaten streak. Iowa had a different idea and upset the Nittany Lions 22-13. Montel Marion was wrestling his first match since being reinstated and he overcame a first period five-point move by PSU true freshman Andrew Alton for an 11-9 victory that gave Iowa an early 12-0 lead. Quentin Wright was back in the Penn State lineup after missing six weeks with a shoulder injury. However, he was far from full strength and lost 8-3 to Grant Gambrell at 184 pounds.

Cornell moved back to number one after the Penn State loss and was unchallenged for the rest of the season. Iowa won the remainder of its dual meets and finished the season with a 77-meet unbeaten streak, nine short of the record of 86 set by Oklahoma State. Penn State was held to an 18-18 draw at Minnesota. Rutgers knocked off third-ranked Virginia Tech 24-7 and then hosted Lehigh before over 5,000 fans, including the school president and head football coach. Lehigh won the last five bouts and prevailed 21-9.

Conference Tournaments

Penn State won its first ever Big Ten championship with a spectacular final round performance. The Nittany Lions went five-for-five in the finals and edged defending champion Iowa by a single point.

It was the tightest race since Minnesota nipped Michigan by a point in 1957. An unexpected title by Quentin Wright of Penn State, the eighth seed at 184 pounds and the tournament's Outstanding Wrestler, capped a perfect round for PSU, who won their last nine bouts. Wright edged Kevin Steinhaus of Minnesota 4-3 for the title and avenged a 10-1 dual meet loss. Freshman David Taylor captured the only head-to-head Penn State versus Iowa matchup in the finals by defeating Derek St. John 8-3. Andrew Long, Frank Molinaro, and Ed Ruth also won crowns for PSU. Matt McDonough and Blake Rasing of Iowa won a bookend of titles for the Hawkeyes at 125 and 285 pounds. Kellen Russell of Michigan and Andrew Howe of Wisconsin each won a third Big Ten title at 141 and 165 pounds, respectively.

Oklahoma State won the Big 12 title in what might be the last tournament for the conference, which will be down to just four teams in 2012. Nebraska is moving to the Big 10 next season. The Cowboys crowned five individual champions and finished with 77 points, 17 ahead of runner-up Missouri. Jordan Oliver, Jamal Parks, and Clayton Foster were repeat winners for OSU. Missouri edged Oklahoma by half a point for second and crowned two champions – Todd Schavrien at 141 pounds and Dom Bradley at 285 pounds. Jordan Burroughs of Nebraska won his third title, one each at 149, 157, and 165 pounds. Iowa State matched its worst finish ever in fifth, but did have the consolation of 174-pound champion Jon Reader being named Outstanding Wrestler.

Cornell waltzed to its fifth straight EIWA team title, matching the run by Lehigh from 2002 through 2006. The Big Red had four individual champions and scored a school record 173½ points. One disappointment for them was the upset of 2010 EIWA and NCAA champion Kyle Dake in the 149-pound final by Kevin LeValley of Bucknell. The Bison edged Dake 4-2 in the second sudden victory period and was named the tournament's Outstanding Wrestler. Cornell's champs included four-time, three-time, and two-time winners Mack Lewnes, Cam Simaz, and Mike Grey. The heavyweight final was a meeting of the previous two champions and Ryan Flores of American topped Zack Rey of Lehigh 4-2 in the first tiebreaker. Lehigh was second in the team race and Rutgers finished third, its best showing since 1952.

NCAA Tournament

Philadelphia played host to the NCAA Division I wrestling tournament for the first time. Pennsylvania, which is certainly a hotbed of wrestling, has hosted the tournament just three times in the last five decades. Cornell, preseason favorite and ranked number one for most of the season, was banking on its experience to become just the second school from the East to win the team title. The Big Red had wrestlers with six All-American medals in their lineup and not a single freshman among its qualifiers. On the other hand, Penn State, NCAA champion way back in 1953, was counting on three freshmen to provide a lot of its scoring. The other serious challengers – Iowa and Oklahoma State – also had young lineups.

The first day of action went about as expected and Penn State had 1½ point lead on Cornell in the team race. Iowa and Oklahoma State were third and fourth and both were well within reach of the leaders. Darrion Caldwell of North Carolina State, the top seed at 149 pounds and 2009 Outstanding Wrestler, was forced to default 2:02 into his second round match with Eric Grajales of Michigan when he dislocated his shoulder. Fourth-seeded James Nicholson of Old Dominion lost to Ben Kjar

of Utah Valley State 2-1. Fifth seeds Jesse Dong from Virginia Tech and Joe LeBlanc of Wyoming were also upset victims.

The Second Day

The second day of the tournament was full of surprises, as first Cornell seemed to have the upper hand and then Penn State. Both teams advanced four men to the semi-finals, but Penn State had two wrestlers injury default in the quarterfinals and their future participation was in question. Second-seeded 174-pounder Ed Ruth of Penn State jumped to an early lead against Nick Amuchastegui of Stanford, but the Cardinal used a punishing ride to turn Ruth three times in the second period before Ruth defaulted.

Penn State took control of the tournament in the semi-finals by winning three of its four matches, while Cornell could manage just a single finalist. Frank Molinaro, David Taylor, and Quentin Wright advanced for PSU. Taylor won a battle of unbeaten wrestlers by downing Steve Fittery of American 5-1 and Wright avenged another dual meet loss by pinning Grant Gambrall of Iowa. Kyle Dake was the only winner for the Big Red. Mack Lewnes and Cam Simaz lost to lower seeded opponents and Steve Bosak suffered a 4-2 overtime loss to Robert Hamlin of Lehigh. Also, Ed Ruth was also able to wrestle back to the consolation semi-finals and the Nittany Lions had a 17½ points lead at the end of competition on Friday night.

Arizona State, which briefly dropped wrestling at the end of the 2008 season, advanced two men to the finals and was in the middle of the top ten in the team race. The Sun Devils had a pair of intriguing finalists – Anthony Robles, who was born with just one leg, and Bubba Jenkins, a transfer from Penn State who would meet Taylor at 157 pounds. Oklahoma State and Lehigh were the only other schools with multiple finalists. The 285-pound final would see Zach Rey of Lehigh and Ryan Flores of American meet for the fourth time this season.

The Finals

Penn State's lead entering in the fifth session was not insurmountable, but when Andrew Long pinned Mike Grey of Cornell in the 133-pound consolation semi-final, the Nittany Lions essentially wrapped things up. Then Ed Ruth's 5-2 triumph over Mack Lewnes of Cornell for third at 174 pounds officially clinched the title for Penn State.

In the finals, Anthony Robles of Arizona State was out of the gate fast with a takedown and two near falls in the first period on his way to a 7-1 defeat of defending 125-pound champion Matt McDonough of Iowa. The victory insured that Robles would get blanket coverage on practically every media outlet during the next news cycle. Jordan Oliver of Oklahoma State also used a strong first period to complete an undefeated season with an 8-4 defeat of Andrew Hochstrasser of Boise State at 133-pounds. Oliver had a pair of takedowns and near fall in the first stanza.



Kellan Russell of Michigan finished a perfect season with a 3-2 win over Boris Novachkov of Cal Poly-SLO. Russell scored a counter takedown in the final minute of the match to capture the 141-pound crown. Kyle Dake of Cornell won his second NCAA title by defeating Frank Molinaro of Penn State 8-1 at 149-pounds. It was a dominant performance by Dake, who had a takedown, a near fall, a reverse, and an astonishing 6:17 of time advantage. The only point Dake surrendered all tournament was a penalty point for hyperextending Molinaro's knee with a figure-four.

No bout in the finals was more anticipated than the 157-pound meeting between Bubba Jenkins of Arizona State and David Taylor of Penn State. Jenkins had departed from Penn State prior to the 2011 season, on not the best of terms, and Taylor was undefeated in his red-shirt freshman season. After a scoreless first period, Taylor escaped in the second and then got in on Jenkins with a high crotch single. Jenkins countered, locked up a cradle, and pinned Taylor in 4:14. It was a stunning end to the bout and Taylor's hope of becoming a four-time undefeated NCAA champion like his coach. Jordan Burroughs of Nebraska, who won his first title following another exciting final (i.e. Caldwell versus Metcalf in 2009), downed Tyler Caldwell of Oklahoma 11-3 to win the 165-pound crown. Burroughs scored five takedowns and added a point for time advantage.

Jon Reader of Iowa State jumped to an early 6-0 lead on his way to a 10-3 win over seventh-seeded of Nick Amuchastegui Stanford at 174-pounds. Reader had a takedown and two sets of back points by midway through the first period. Quentin Wright of Penn State defeated Robert Hamlin of Lehigh 5-2 for the 184-pound title. Wright used a pair of double leg takedowns in the second period

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to become the Nittany Lions' only individual champion. It marked the sixth time in either the Big Ten or NCAA tournament that Wright avenged a dual meet loss.

Dustin Kilgore, Kent State's first finalist since 1942, became its first-ever champion by pinning Clayton Foster of Oklahoma State with four seconds left in the second period. Foster led 5-1 before Kilgore came out on top in a scramble. After an uneventful first period at 285 pounds, Zach Rey of Lehigh escaped quickly in the second and rode Ryan Flores of American for nearly the entire third period. Flores almost reversed Rey to his back, but Rey was able to create a stalemate with 20 seconds left in the match. Rey released Flores on the restart and won 2-1 with 1:33 time advantage.

Penn State finished with 107½ points and its first team title in 58 years, perhaps the longest gap between NCAA titles in any sport. However, it took Cael Sanderson just two years in Happy Valley to win the coveted crown. While Sanderson came east seeking a team title, it is ironic that a midseason transfer from Iowa State provided a key ingredient in the championship recipe. Cornell, with a school record 93½ points and five All-Americans, finished runner-up for the second straight year and provided the first ever one-two finish for the East. Perennial champions Iowa and Oklahoma State finished third and fourth. American (fifth) and Lehigh (eighth) also had strong tournaments to give the EIWA three top ten teams.

The event saw the end of two distinguished coaching careers. Jack Spates of Oklahoma and Jack Childs of Drexel had announced their retirements prior to the tournament. Spates, who coached for 18 years at Oklahoma and five at Cornell, had six NCAA champions and 61 All-Americans. His teams finished third in the team race on four occasions. Childs coached for 35 years at Drexel and had a dual meet record of 421-285-9 and two All-Americans. Mark Cody of American University, the 2011 Coach of the Year, was named to succeed Spates at Oklahoma.