

Four ASU Wrestlers Hit National Rankings

Written by Paul Blascovich
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Four Appalachian State University wrestlers have been named among the nation's best in the first coaches' panel rankings as announced by the NCAA on Friday. Austin Trotman (Winston-Salem, N.C./Mount Tabor), Kyle Blevins (Sapulpa, Okla./Sapulpa), Mike Kessler (Bay City, Mich./Western) and

Savva Kostis (Boone, N.C./Watauga) were tabbed among the country's 33 best grapplers in their respective weight classes.

Along with winning percentage and rating percentage index (RPI), the final coaches' rankings are one of three criteria used to determine each conference's automatic qualification allocation for the 2012 NCAA Division I Wrestling Championships. The coaches' rankings are also used as a major factor in determining "at-large" qualifiers. Friday's rankings are the first of three to be issued this season.

Trotman (26-4) was slotted in a tie for No. 10 at 184 pounds. The senior began the season with 14-straight victories, and all four of his losses have come to nationally-ranked opponents.

Trotman's 117 career wins are an Appalachian program best.

At 165 pounds, Blevins (28-5) received a No. 16 ranking from the coaches and has finished on the podium in all four his tournaments, including a championship at the Keystone Classic.

Blevins joins Trotman as having reached the 100-win mark this season.

Kessler (26-10) picked up a No. 25 ranking from the coaches. The 141-pounder assembled a nine-bout winning streak early in the season and has gone 10-2 in dual matches, including a perfect 3-0 against Southern Conference rivals.

Kostis (22-12) rounded out the Mountaineers' selections, securing No. 33 at 149 pounds. The senior won each of his first nine dual matches this season and has six falls on the year, most among ASU's ranked foursome.

The coaches' rankings are compiled by a vote of coaches across the nation. Each qualifying tournament has five coaches rank the top 33 wrestlers in two weight classes. Each team's coach may only select one wrestler per weight class for consideration.

Appalachian's four selections match those of defending SoCon-champion Chattanooga. The Apps and Mocs' ranked wrestlers share one common weight class, as UTC's Brandon Wright was tabbed No. 31 at 165 pounds. The Citadel received two ranked wrestlers, while VMI and Campbell rounded out the SoCon with one selection each.

In a clash of the SoCon unbeatens, the Mountaineers are set to face Chattanooga in their next dual on Sun., Feb. 5 at 2 p.m. The match will be the Apps' final road test of the season and could likely be decisive in determining the SoCon regular-season champion.

Appalachian Wrestling to Send Fan Bus to Chattanooga Dual

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Appalachian State University wrestling fans looking to support the squad in the team's dual meet at Chattanooga are invited to ride an ASU-sponsored fan bus to the event. On Sun., Feb. 5, a bus will be available to transport spectators from Boone to Chattanooga for the Mountaineers' showdown with the seven-time defending Southern Conference champion Mocs. The fan bus will depart from Kidd Brewer Stadium Parking Lot on Sunday morning at 7:45 a.m. and will return following the ASU-UTC match. Seats cost \$15 per person and include admission to the event. Meals are not included, but the bus will stop for a short brunch en route to Chattanooga and for dinner on the return leg.

Appalachian (9-3) and Chattanooga (10-3) square off at Maclellan Gym at 2 p.m. in a showdown that will likely determine the 2012 SoCon dual-meet champion. Chattanooga was touted as the league's top team in the preseason coaches' poll, edging Appalachian by a single point. UTC and ASU remain as the only undefeated teams in the conference standings, as both have a 3-0 SoCon record to date.

Fans interested in taking advantage of this opportunity should please email JohnMark Bentley at bentleyjmo@appstate.edu , or call (828) 262-7163 to reserve your seat on the fan bus.

Photo Courtesy: Savva Kostis, ASU Athletics