

Blevins Selected to NCAA Wrestling Field

Written by Paul Blascovich
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The NCAA Wrestling Selection committee has announced all qualifying participants for the 2012 NCAA Division I Wrestling Championship to be held at the Scottrade Center in St. Louis, Mo., March 15-17. Four Mountaineers have qualified for the event, including 165-pound at-large selection Kyle Blevins

(Sapulpa, Okla./Sapulpa), who joins Southern Conference champion teammates Tony Gravely (Martinsville, Va./Magna Vista), Mike Kessler (Bay City, Mich./Western) and Austin Trotman (Winston-Salem, N.C./Mount Tabor), who qualified automatically with their league titles. Head coach JohnMark Bentley was excited but not entirely surprised by Blevins' selection. "I believe that Kyle deserves to be at the NCAA Championships based on the consistency he has shown throughout the year. He has beaten the champions of the Big 12, ACC, and Colonial, which made him an easy choice for an at-large bid."

Appalachian's foursome is the Black and Gold's largest contingent of national competitors since 2003, when five Mountaineers won SoCon crowns and advanced to the national tournament. Blevins' selection as an at-large qualifier is Appalachian State's first under the current allocation procedure, implemented in 2009. In 2008, Trotman and teammate Terrelly Williams were the last Mountaineers chosen to receive bids under the former "wild card" system.

Formerly, each conference was given a set number of invitations ("wild cards") to extend to those wrestlers who did not win conference titles but were most-deserving of a spot at the NCAA tournament. Coaches determined which wrestlers moved on, and each league's wild card allocations were determined historical performance.

Under the new procedure, conference allocations are determined strictly by current year's performance, using objective criteria, and these automatic-qualifying slots are won by wrestlers based on overall finish at the conference tournament; the remainder of the field is filled through at-large berths. This year, the system was further refined to ensure that each weight class is entitled to exactly four at-large berths, selected by a national committee.

Photo Courtesy: Kyle Blevins, ASU Athletics