

Blevins, Trotman Reach All-America Rounds

Written by Paul Blascovich
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Seniors Kyle Blevins (Sapulpa, Okla./Sapulpa) and Austin Trotman (Winston-Salem, N.C./Mount Tabor) made ASU history by becoming the program's seventh and eighth all-Americans, as Appalachian State University wrestling competed in the second day of competition at the 2012 NCAA Division I Wrestling

Championships hosted by the University of Missouri at the Scottrade Center on Friday. Blevins and Trotman will compete in the final day of action on Saturday, beginning at 10 a.m. / 11 a.m. Eastern.

Appalachian's duo has rattled the ASU record book as Trotman has expanded his career wins record to 127 victories and sits in fourth on the season-wins list with 36, while Blevins has set a new season-wins record with 39 and is second on the career-wins chart with 123.

The pair are Appalachian's first all-Americans since 2003 and have become the first Apps to reach the NCAA podium together since Charles Parks and Al Crawford earned all-America status in 1941.

Blevins (165 pounds) and Trotman (184 pounds) enter Saturday in the wrestleback semifinal round. Each will wrestle an initial bout to try to earn a berth in the third-place bout, while a loss yields a spot in the fifth-place bout. Each will finish no better than third but no worse than sixth in his respective class.

The day began with Appalachian's third remaining participant, junior Tony Gravely (Martinsville, Va./Magna Vista), squaring off against No. 12 Steve Bonanno of Hofstra in the first bout on the floor. Bonanno caught the Mountaineer off guard and stole a 4-1 lead after the first period. Gravely fought back in the second but could not stop Bonanno from piling on points, and Gravely's efforts were just enough to prevent a technical fall, as the App lost by major decision, 15-2.

The two-time Southern Conference champion will have one more shot to try to summit the NCAA bracket when he returns next season.

Blevins day began against Michigan's Dan Yates in the wrestleback third round. Yates caught hold of Blevins' foot, but the Mountaineer showcased his dancing skills by defending on one leg for over 30 seconds, resulting in a scoreless first period. Blevins' escape in the second was the bout's only score entering the final period, where Blevins was able to score two early near-fall points to extend his lead to 3-0. After a Yates escape, Blevins turned defensive and was penalized for stalling, but the Mountaineer prevailed, 3-2, to move on to the next round.

No. 9 Trotman came into the day facing an uphill battle against No. 1 Joe LeBlanc of Wyoming. With nothing to lose, Trotman fired away and stunned the top-seed with four first-period takedowns, opening up an 8-4 lead. LeBlanc regained control with an escape early in the second and scored a takedown to cut the deficit further. In the waning seconds, Trotman was hit with a second stall warning and was penalized one point, making it 8-8 with two minutes to go. In the third, Trotman elected to start neutral and scored a takedown 20 seconds into the period. LeBlanc scrambled out of the App's grip and desperately tried to score, but Trotman took advantage by scoring his sixth takedown to clinch a 12-9 victory and guaranteed all-America status.

The early session also featured Blevins' second bout of the day, a showdown with Dominic

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Kastl of Cal Poly. Blevins struck first with a takedown and held a 2-1 lead after one. In the second period, Kastl's explosive moves carried the wrestlers out of bounds five times in the first minute, and after the Mustang finally broke loose, Blevins scored a takedown for a 4-2 edge. In the final period, Blevins earned a fast escape and preserved his riding time advantage for a 6-2 win.

Friday's evening session saw Blevins wrestle No. 8 Robert Kokesh of Nebraska for a guaranteed spot on the podium. After a scoreless first period, Blevins pulled out a reversal in the second and yielded an escape for a 2-1 lead. In the final period, Kokesh escaped to tie the bout 2-2, and Blevins carefully negotiated a precarious position into an advantageous one as the App scored a late takedown for a 4-2 lead. Blevins held on to the Cornhusker and won 4-2 to become Appalachian's second all-American of the year.

As the only wrestler to knock off a No. 1 prior to the semifinals, Trotman's match against No. 4 Steve Bosak of Cornell was a topic of conversation around the arena. Trotman struck first with a takedown in the first period before letting the escape slip away. Trailing 2-1, Bosak was able to pry Trotman away early in the second to level the match, 2-2. Trotman made a strategic choice to start neutral in the third, hoping his takedown skills would do the trick, but after two scoreless minutes, the match was destined for overtime.

In sudden-victory, Trotman sprawled several times and nearly landed a score, but Bosak capitalized on the aggression by pouncing on Trotman for the 4-2 sudden-victory decision. Appalachian's day concluded with Blevins challenging No. 9 Conrad Polz of Illinois. Like Blevins, Polz lost his first match and was faced with the arduous path of navigating the width of the wrestleback bracket. Polz scored first with a takedown late in the opening period. Trailing 2-0, Blevins started the second period on top and successfully rode the full two minutes. The Mountaineer escaped in the third and after a flurry of attempts, neither wrestler notched a takedown, allowing Blevins' riding point to equalize the bout 2-2.

In sudden-victory, Blevins caught Polz in a standing headlock and, after a few more seconds, was able to tear Polz to the ground. With the 4-2 decision in hand, Blevins completed a 4-0 day and secured a spot no lower than sixth on the podium.

Trotman will next face No. 3 Ben Bennett of Central Michigan in his wrestleback semifinal bout. Blevins is set to take on No. 7 Josh Asper of Maryland in his wrestleback semifinal. Blevins is one of only six non-seeded wrestlers across all weights who will stand on the podium on Saturday and is one of only two (with Hofstra's Justin Accordino) who will step up higher than seventh.

Coverage of Saturday's matches will be available at GoASU.com, and live results, brackets and team scores will continue to be available at TrackWrestling.com.

Photo Courtesy: Klye Blevins, ASU Athletics