

Trotman Takes Third, Blevins Fourth At Nationals

Written by Paul Blascovich
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ASU seniors Austin Trotman (Winston-Salem, N.C./Mount Tabor) and Kyle Blevins (Sapulpa, Okla./Sapulpa) lit up the wrestling world, as Appalachian State University completed its performance at the 2012 NCAA Division I Wrestling Championships hosted by Missouri at the

Scottrade Center on Saturday. The wins marked Appalachian's first pair of all-Americans in the same NCAA tournament in over 70 years.

Trotman won both of his final bouts to secure third place, while Blevins' six-match win streak was broken in his final bout, earning him in fourth place.

The pair have lit up the Appalachian record book, becoming Appalachian's first all-Americans since 2003 and first pair in the same year since 1941. Trotman's third-place finish is the program's best since 1941 and he concluded his career with an ASU-record 129 wins. Blevins tallied 40 wins this year, surpassing his own season wins record and was the only unseeded wrestler at this year's event to reach as high as fourth place on the podium.

Appalachian will finish the event tied for 21st-place, its highest showing since re-joining the NCAA in 1972. ASU has tied Nebraska with 28 points and defeated numerous top-tier programs including Hofstra, Missouri, Purdue, Virginia and Harvard. Only nine of the 70 competing teams earned more than two all-Americans, and Appalachian was one of nine with two or more wrestlers finishing among the top four.

The Appalachian duo's performance also marks only the third time since 1955 that any Southern Conference team has crowned multiple all-Americans. In his first match of the day, Trotman took on No. 3 Ben Bennett of Central Michigan, a two-time all-American and three-time MAC champion. Bennett was called for a locked hands penalty early in the match that would provide critical to the bout. Trotman took a 2-0 lead with a second-period escape, and though Bennett picked up his own escape in the third, Trotman survived with the 2-1 win to earn a spot in the third-place bout.

Trotman's final career bout was against No. 2 Robert Hamlin of Lehigh, an NCAA tournament finalist last year. After a scoreless first period, Trotman scored an escape in the second. Hamlin escaped for a point in the third, sending the bout to overtime at 1-1. In sudden-victory, Trotman grabbed Hamlin by one foot before the Mountain Hawk broke loose, but Trotman quickly responded by getting two legs this time for a takedown and 3-1 sudden-victory win for third place.

Not only was Trotman one of only two wrestlers to defeat a No. 1 seed before the finals, but Trotman also defeated a No. 2 and No. 3 en route to third place.

Blevins began the day against No. 7 Josh Asper of Maryland, who entered the day with only two losses on the season. After a scoreless minute, Blevins opened the scoring with a takedown for a 2-0 lead. Asper spun out to cut the lead to 2-1 after one. Asper added another escape in the second period to tie the match 2-2 and would have a chance to ride out the third for the win. With less than 40 seconds to go, Blevins broke out and added a second takedown for the 5-2 win.

In his third-place bout, Blevins drew No. 4 Bekzod Abdurakhmonov of Clarion. The Uzbek scored an early takedown and rode out the first for a 2-0 lead. In the second, the lead expanded to 3-0 on an Abdurakhmonov escape, and Blevins finally scored on an escape in the third.

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Abdurakhmonov tacked on another takedown, and Blevins escaped to wrap up scoring at 6-2 in favor of Clarion. Blevins will climb the podium to fourth place in Saturday's award presentation. Action concludes Saturday evening at the Scottrade Center, when Blevins and Trotman will officially be honored as all-Americans. Championship bouts will be aired on ESPN and streamed at ESPN3.com beginning at 6:30 p.m. / 7:30 p.m. Eastern.

Photo courtesy: Austin Trotman, ASU Athletics