

NCAA DIVISION II

WRESTLING COACHES' ASSOCIATION

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EDMOND, Okla. -- Pittsburgh-Johnstown 133-pound national champion Shane Valko has been named the 2009-10 NCAA Division II Wrestler of the Year, it was announced Tuesday.

Valko is the third winner of the award, sponsored by the NCAA Division II Wrestling Coaches' Association and voted on by eight regional representatives from around the country. Nebraska-Kearney heavyweight Tervel Dlagnev took the inaugural award in 2008, with Nebraska-Omaha 157-pounder Todd Meneely winning it last year.

Each of the four regions nominated a candidate, with Valko the Super Region One nominee. The senior star finished with 28 points to easily claim the coveted honor.

Upper Iowa 165-pound national champion Travis Eggers of Super Region Three was runner-up in the voting. Wisconsin-Parkside 149-pound national champion Craig Becker was the Region Two representative and Nebraska-Kearney 174-pound national winner Marty Usman the Super Region Four nominee.

Valko capped a dominating 2009-10 season by capturing the 133-pound title with a 6-3 win over previously unbeaten Cody Garcia of Nebraska-Omaha on March 13 in Omaha, Neb., winning the tournament's Outstanding Wrestler honor in the process.

A product of Forest Hills High School in Windber, Pa., Valko finished the season 28-1 with 16 bonus-point wins and he ended his career with a 20-match winning streak.

Valko was a four-time national qualifier and three-time All-American for the Mountain Cats, placing fourth at 141 pounds in 2008 and runner-up at 133 in 2009 after losing a tiebreaker decision in the finals. He ended with a 115-30 career record, including a 56-2 mark the last two years.