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WRESTLING UPDATE

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Jayson Ness Wins Hodge Trophy

Newton, Iowa - Minnesota Wrestling senior, and new National Champion, Jayson Ness has been bestowed the greatest honor in college wrestling, as the winner of the Dan Hodge Trophy, announced today (Mar. 26) by Wrestling Insider News Magazine (W.I.N.).

The honors continue to pour in for the Bloomington, Minn. native, who was also named Big Ten Wrestler of the Year and the Most Outstanding Wrestler of the National Tournament, by the National Wrestling Coaches Association. Ness completed his first perfect season at 31-0, winning his first National Title the 2010 NCAA Championships. He also won his second Big Ten title just two weeks prior at the Big Ten Championships.

The Dan Hodge Trophy, considered the Heisman Trophy for amateur wrestling, has been presented to the nation's best wrestler since 1995. Created by W.I.N. founder Mike Chapman, the award is named after the former three-time University of Oklahoma national champion (1955-57) who never allowed a takedown in his college career. He also pinned 36 of his 46 victims. Criteria for the award includes a wrestler's record, number of pins, dominance on the mat, past credentials, quality of competition, sportsmanship/citizenship and heart.

"Winning this award is an amazing feeling as there were many great wrestlers competing this year," Ness said. "I feel extremely honored to receive this prestigious award."

Ness edged out Iowa State's Jake Varner and Iowa's Jay Borschel, champs at 197 and 174 respectively. Each also capped off undefeated seasons, but Ness earned the honor on the strength of his number of pins. Finishing with one of the best seasons in school history, Ness claimed 19 of his victory's by fall, nearly doubling Varner and Borschel.

Awarded annually since 1995, Ness becomes the 14th different Hodge Trophy winner and the first from Minnesota. Cael Sanderson (2000-02) is the only three-time winner, and Ben Askren (2006-07) won the award twice.

As Golden Gopher Wrestling honors its long and great tradition with its centennial this season, Ness now stands alone as the most decorated wrestler in program history. As a four-time All-American, two-time Big Ten champion and National Champion, he rests alongside the Gopher greats. As the Gophers seventh Big Ten Wrestler of the Year, just the fifth Big Ten Freshman of the Year (2007), only the second Outstanding Wrestler of the Tournament, and first in the modern era, and now the only Hodge Trophy winner, he has set himself apart.

"Jayson epitomizes everything a coach could ask for from an athlete," head coach J Robinson said. "His dedication to wrestling and academics sets the bar for what every student-athlete should strive for. There are athletes, who as a coach, you hope will affect their teammates in a positive way - Jayson has been that true leader both on and off the mat. Winning the Hodge Trophy caps off every wrestler's dream, to be the best in the country. We could not be more proud to have Jayson representing the University of Minnesota and know he will continue to be the great role model that his strong faith in God has led him to be."

One could have seen early that it would be a record setting season for Ness, as he opened the year with a school-record tying eight straight falls. His first decision was still dominant, as it came by way of a shutout, before he ripped off five straight more falls on his way to a Southern Scuffle title, totaling 13 pins with a 16-0 record as the calendar turned.

After opening the season at No. 2, he assumed the No. 1 ranking in the first week of February and never let it go. His first two matches at No. 1 were wins by fall, spending less than six total minutes on the mat. He went perfect through the Big Ten and NCAA tournament for his 31-0 record, just the sixth tally without a blemish in school history, while ending his career on a 33-match winning streak. He was completely dominant through his run, with just 14 matches that saw the second period, and only 11 that saw the third. If he wasn't pinning his opponents, he won each match by at least a three-point margin, until a one-point victory in the national quarterfinals.

The team captain ranks third all-time with 148 career wins, and has crushed the career pins record as his 73 are better than 20 ahead of second place. He lost just two Big Ten matches in his career, and had 30+ wins all four seasons, including 40 as a freshman. He is one of just two Gophers in program history to average better than a third place finish over four years at the NCAA Championships (Konrad, 2004-07), and is the first four-time All-American to go out with his first National Championship.

Already a University of Minnesota graduate, Ness has begun graduate school for his Masters of Education, and is currently student teaching in the Twin Cities.

Past Hodge Trophy Winners

1995: ...T.J. Jaworsky(North Carolina)	2002: ...Cael Sanderson..... (Iowa State)
1996: ...Les Gutches(Oregon State)	2003: ...Eric Larkin..... (Arizona State)
1997: ...Kerry McCoy(Penn State)	2004: ...Emmett Willson..... (Montana State Northern)
1998: ...Mark Ironside..... (Iowa)	2005: ...Steve Mocco.....(Oklahoma State)
1999: ...Stephen Neal(Cal State Bakersfield)	2006: ...Ben Askren..... (Missouri)
2000: ...Cael Sanderson..... (Iowa State)	2007: ...Ben Askren..... (Missouri)
2001: ...Cael Sanderson..... (Iowa State)	2008: ...Brent Metcalf..... (Iowa)
.....Nick Ackerman(Simpson College)	2009: ...Jake Herbert..... (Northwestern)

Ness' Career Statistics

Year	Overall (pins)	Dual	Big Ten	Big Tens (place)	NCAAs
2005-06	<i>redshirted</i>				
2006-07	40-5 (15)	20-1	8-0	3-0 (1st)	4-2 (5th)
2007-08	39-2 (20)	21-0	8-0	2-1 (2nd)	4-1 (2nd)
2008-09	38-8 (19)	19-4	6-2	3-2 (4th)	5-1 (3rd)
2009-01	31-0 (19)	11-0	4-0	3-0 (1st)	5-0 (1st)
Career	148-15 (73)	71-5	26-2	10-3	18-4

