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Subject: UW WREST: Wick and Hillger advance to quarterfinals
Date: March 21, 2019 at 8:41 PM
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Wick and Hillger advance to quarterfinals

All six Badgers still alive after day one of NCAA Tournament

It was a strong first day at the NCAA Championships for the Wisconsin wrestling team. All six competing wrestlers picked up a win and are still alive going into third session, and sophomore Evan Wick and freshman Trent Hillger both secured spots in the quarterfinals at 165 pounds and heavyweight, respectively.

Junior Cole Martin is a three-time NCAA qualifier, but had gone winless in his first two NCAA appearances. In his first match of the 2019 tournament at 149 pounds, Martin ended his winless streak with an OT victory over No. 14 Requir van der Werwe of Stanford. Martin trailed 4-1 early after a pair of takedowns by van der Werwe in the first, but Martin shifted the momentum back in his favor with a reversal at the end of the period. The third period ended with a 6-6 tie, and Martin eventually sealed the comeback with a takedown in the second sudden victory period.

In his second match, Martin met No. 3 Mitch Finesilver of Duke. Martin couldn't fight off Finesilver's attacks and dropped a 9-1 major decision, sending him to the consolation bracket.

At 165 pounds, sophomore Evan Wick has his eyes on a title, but has to take it one match at a time. In the first round, he cruised to a 10-2 major decision victory over No. 29 Nick Kiussis of West Virginia. Wick scored five takedowns in the match and accumulated over 3:30 of riding time.

A match against a higher ranked opponent meant very little to Wick in his second round match. Facing No. 13 Andrew Fogarty of North Dakota State, Wick was able to get on the offensive once again, scoring three takedowns and a reversal to take a 9-2 decision and sending him to the quarterfinals. Wick will face No. 5 Chance Marsteller of Lock Haven in the quarters, who Wick defeated in the third place match last season.

This isn't senior Ryan Christensen's first rodeo, as he is a four-time NCAA qualifier, and the 174-pounder showed his poise in his opening match against No. 18 Andrew Morgan of Campbell. Christensen held a 1-0 lead heading into the third and was starting on top. The senior not only stayed on top for the entire period, he also picked up a two point near fall and a stalling point against Morgan to lock up a 4-0 win.

In the second round, Christensen faced the red-hot No. 2 Daniel Lewis of Missouri, and Lewis got the best of him, securing a fall in the first period to send Christensen to the consolation bracket.

The youngest Badger at the NCAA Tournament, freshman Trent Hillger at heavyweight, earned his first NCAA win in his first-ever match at the national tournament. Hillger faced No. 26 Ian Butterbrodt of Brown, and started fast, picking up a takedown almost immediately after the whistle was blown to start the match. His offense went quiet through most of the rest of the match, but with a 3-2 lead in the third, Hillger recorded a late takedown to clinch a 5-2 decision.

Hillger's second match was against a familiar foe in No. 10 Youssif Hemida of Maryland. Hillger beat Hemida in the Wisconsin-Maryland dual, but Hemida defeated Hillger in the third place match at the Big Ten Tournament. But today was Hillger's day, as he rode out Hemida for the entire second period, and then escaped immediately in the third to take a 2-0 decision, securing his spot in the quarterfinals. Hillger will face No. 2 Anthony Cassar in the quarterfinals.

Two more Badgers made their NCAA debuts in the first round, but couldn't come away with victories

Two more badgers made their NCAA debuts in the first round, but couldn't come away with victories. Junior Tristan Moran was on the wrong side of the only takedown in his match against No. 22 Max Murin of Iowa at 141 pounds, and he dropped a 3-2 decision. Junior Mason Reinhardt had a tough first period against No. 11 Lou Deprez of Binghamton after a six-point move by Deprez and couldn't recover, dropping a 10-2 major decision and moving to the consolation bracket.

Moran fought off a valiant attempt from No. 27 Anthony Sparacio of Binghamton in the wrestlebacks. Moran was trailing 4-3 late in the second, but scored a reversal just before the buzzer to take the lead, followed by a third period takedown to secure the 7-4 decision.

Reinhardt had to fight hard in his second match of the day. Facing No. 27 Christian LaFragola of Brown, the two went back-and-forth but couldn't break the other, that is, until the second sudden-victory period. Right off the jump, Reinhardt secured a takedown to earn his first-ever NCAA Tournament win and is moving on to the next round of the consolation bracket.

Up next is Session III, starting at 10 a.m. CT. on Friday. The session will include both the quarterfinals and wrestlebacks.

Straight from the mat

Head coach Chris Bono

On what he liked from day one:

"We are winning the close ones. Everything is rolling along well. We just gotta keep winning and advancing."

On Trent Hillger:

"He's great. His mindset is unbelievable. He's calm, he's cool, he knows how to win. We are excited, and he's got a big match up tomorrow against Penn State."

On the Badgers in the wrestlebacks:

"We're not looking at it like one loss away from being out. We are looking at it like win and advance. You have to win and get to the next round. This is where our conditioning takes over, all of our hard work is going to pay off on days two and three. We're excited to get to day two and show off what we like to do and collect some All-Americans and national champions."

Freshman Trent Hillger

On his match with Hemida:

"I was able to ride him out the whole second period. The past couple weeks I haven't been able to ride people as well as I was hoping, and had been all year, so that was definitely the game plan going in. I just had to get back to my stuff and I would win the match."

On his first NCAA Tournament matches:

"It feels great to be 2-0. One match at a time, keep moving on, but that's the main goal: to win a national championship. 2-0 is great but you have to win more to win a championship. It's obviously a great start but I want to keep it going."

Junior Cole Martin

On his first NCAA Tournament win of his career:

"It feels good. I've been trying to get that first win for the last three years and it just feels good to finally get that, especially in the first round and staying on the winning side."

On his comeback victory:

"It's been kind of evident the whole season that I start slow in the first period, but luckily the coaches have helped us build up that gas tank so that when we do find ourselves down in those situations, that we still have enough in us to keep fighting and wear that other guy down."

Results

141 pounds

No. 22 Max Murin (Iowa) over No. 11 Tristan Moran (Wisconsin) by dec. 3-2

No. 11 Tristan Moran (Wisconsin) over No. 27 Anthony Sparacio (Binghamton) by dec. 7-4

149 pounds

No. 19 Cole Martin (Wisconsin) over No. 14 Requir van der Werwe (Stanford) by SV-2 8-6

No. 3 Mitch Finesilver (Duke) over No. 19 Cole Martin (Wisconsin) by maj. dec. 9-1

165 pounds

No. 4 Evan Wick (Wisconsin) over No. 29 Nick Kiussis (West Virginia) by maj. dec. 10-2

No. 4 Evan Wick (Wisconsin) over No. 13 Andrew Fogarty (NDSU) by dec. 9-2

174 pounds

No. 15 Ryan Christensen (Wisconsin) over No. 18 Andrew Morgan (Campbell) by dec. 4-0

No. 2 Daniel Lewis (Missouri) over No. 15 Ryan Christensen (Wisconsin) by fall 2:42

184 pounds

No. 11 Lou Deprez (Binghamton) over No. 22 Mason Reinhardt (Wisconsin) by maj. dec. 10-2

No. 22 Mason Reinhardt (Wisconsin) over No. 27 Christian LaFragola (Brown) by SV-2 5-3

Heavyweight

No. 7 Trent Hillger (Wisconsin) over No. 26 Ian Butterbrodt (Brown) by dec. 5-2

No. 7 Trent Hillger (Wisconsin) over No. 10 Youssif Hemida (Maryland) by dec. 2-0

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