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Wisconsin places seventh at the Big Ten Championships

Badgers drop one place in team standings on day two

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – It was a tough final day at the Big Ten Championships for the Wisconsin wrestling team, which wrapped up a seventh-place finish Sunday while seeing several wrestlers lose tough battles in the final rounds.

Sophomore Evan Wick found himself in the third-place match at 165 pounds against Logan Massa of Michigan, an opponent Wick defeated several times last season. Massa led 1-0 going into the third period, but Wick rode him out through most of the third to earn a riding time point. That would have sent the match to overtime, but Wick was hit with a second stalling call with seconds left in the match to give Massa a 2-1 victory.

At 149 pounds, junior Cole Martin entered the tournament as a five seed but made his way to the third-place match, where he faced Pat Lugo of Iowa. Lugo started the match with a takedown and four-point near fall to take a 6-0 lead, and Martin wasn't able to make up the deficit, losing an 11-6 decision. The fourth-place finish was Martin's highest in his career at the Big Ten tournament.

The final third-place match for Wisconsin was at heavyweight with freshman Trent Hillger against Youssif Hemida of Maryland. It was another heartbreaker for the Badgers, as Hemida broke a 1-1 tie with a takedown with 15 seconds to go, sealing the win for Maryland.

The Badgers also had two wrestlers in fifth-place matches. Junior Tristan Moran dropped a 7-4 decision to Kanen Storr of Michigan, and sophomore Beau Breske's impressive tournament run ended with a 6-0 decision defeat to Christian Brunner of Purdue. Breske finished sixth despite not being seeded for the tournament.

Two more Badgers finished in eighth place to round UW's podium finishes. Senior Ryan Christensen was injured in a match Saturday and had to medically forfeit the seventh-place match at 174 pounds. Junior Mason Reinhardt lost 8-1 to Max Lyon of Purdue at 184 pounds to finish eighth.

Sophomore Ethan Rotondo came into the tournament seeded last at 125 pounds but found himself one win away from finishing ninth and qualifying for the NCAA tournament. Ultimately, Rotondo dropped an 8-5 decision to Malik Heinselman of Ohio State and did not qualify, but the 10th-place finish was still four spots higher than where he was expected to finish.

Freshman Garrett Model (157) and senior Jens Lantz (133) both lost in the extra bracket semifinals of their weight classes.

Wisconsin will send six wrestlers – Moran, Martin, Wick, Christensen, Reinhardt and Hillger – to the NCAA Championships March 21-23 in Pittsburgh.

Straight From the Mat

Head Coach Chris Bono

On the team's performance:

"It wasn't a good day, results-wise. But effort, hustle and all that was there. We were one call away from winning a ton of those matches, whether it was having a guy's leg in the air and not finishing or getting a stalling call with one second left. We're close. It's a matter of picking our heads up; we've got 10 days to get ready to go accomplish our goals in Pittsburgh. We've got our six guys and we are ready to represent this university."

On the wrestlers competing in their first Big Ten tournament:

"It's crazy that 70 percent of our team was competing at their first Big Ten tournament. Plus it's our coaching staff's first tournament as well. They did great, some of them accomplished what they needed to do to get to the NCAA tournament, but we are leaving with no Big Ten champs, which is what we were here to do, so we've got to get ready."

On who impressed him in the tournament:

"You got to look at Beau Breske and Ethan Rotondo. One isn't seeded and one is the last seed, and they come in and they get close to being in the NCAA tournament. But that's not what the program is about, we aren't about getting close loses. We've got to do a better job, but all 10 of them competed like champions and that's what we want to see."

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