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Wisconsin's NCAA Tournament comes to a close

Strong first season under Bono ends at NAAs

PITTSBURGH, Penn. – The Wisconsin wrestling team's NCAA Tournament came to a close at the end of session five, with the team's two All-Americans, sophomore Evan Wick and freshman Trent Hillger, wrestling their final matches of the tournament, finishing in fourth and eighth place, respectively.

Wisconsin's place in the team standings is subject to change based on results in the championship matches tonight, but the team currently is in 21st place with 27 points.

In the consolation semifinals today, Evan Wick faced a familiar foe at 165 pounds, No. 7 Isaiah White of Nebraska. Wick had faced White twice this year and won both times, but it looked like White might get the win for most of the match. White scored the first takedown in the first and took a 2-1 lead into the second. He then proceeded to ride Wick for the entire second to lock up riding time. At the start of the third, White was hit with a hands-to-the-face call to tie the match at two. With under a minute left, Wick got in on a single leg and recorded a takedown, riding out White for the remainder of the match to win 4-3 and secure a spot in the third-place match for the second year in a row.

Moving to the third-place match, Wick was set for another rematch, this time against No. 5 Chance Marsteller of Lock Haven, who Wick pinned in last year's third-place match and in this year's quarterfinals. However, unlike in his third match against White, Wick wasn't able to complete the sweep of Marsteller. The scoring started with a takedown by Marsteller in the first, which Wick countered in the second with his own takedown to tie the match. Wick chose top to start the third, and Marsteller was able to avoid the cradle and get a reversal to take the lead. Wick escaped, but the Lock Haven wrestler answered with another takedown, and eventually took the match with a 6-5 decision over Wick.

Freshman Trent Hillger faced No. 9 Matt Stencel of Central Michigan in the seventh place match at heavyweight. Each wrestler earned an escape point at the start of the second and third periods, and were tied at one with less than a minute ago. Hillger took a shot late, but Stencel countered and recorded a takedown just before the buzzer to win the match 3-1, giving Hillger eighth place in his NCAA Tournament debut.

With that, the Badgers' first season under head coach Chris Bono came to a close. The team made a lot of progress in his inaugural season, going 9-6 in dual meets, the team's highest finish at Midlands since 2010, two All-Americans for the first time since 2017, and setting records for the highest single dual and average dual attendance in program history.

Straight from the mat

Head coach Chris Bono

On his team's NCAA Tournament performance:

"This team is a bunch of fighters. We've got some really great kids; I've been saying that all along. Wouldn't trade these guys for the world. We didn't end on the brightest note but we are leaving here with two All-Americans, which is something to build on and bring back to Madison. We are excited to start building for next year."

On the future for Evan Wick and Trent Hillger:

"We'll look at them they're both young. Hillger is a freshman, we've got three more years with him. And

Wick is a Two-Time All-American as a sophomore, so the sky is the limit for both of them. They did a great job in here, we could have got them a little bit higher up the podium but they did a great job and I'm proud of them."

On his first year as coach at Wisconsin:

"The institution is unbelievable. The University of Wisconsin is a first-rate place and I love being here. As far as the team, we come together and we are excited about the future with the young guys we are bringing in and the guys we redshirted this year. The future is bright in Madison, Wisconsin."

Results

165 pounds

No. 4 Evan Wick (Wisconsin) over No. 7 Isaiah White (Nebraska) by dec. 4-3

No. 5 Chance Marsteller (Lock Haven) over No. 4 Evan Wick (Wisconsin) by dec. 6-5

Evan Wick finishes in fourth place

285 pounds

No. 9 Matt Stencel (Central Michigan) over No. 7 Trent Hillger (Wisconsin) by dec. 3-1

Trent Hillger finishes in eighth place

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