


From: Basler, Samuel samuel-basler@hawkeyesports.com 
Subject: Iowa Men's Wrestling: Ayala Finishes as NCAA Runner-Up; Hawkeyes Fifth as a Team
Date: March 23, 2024 at 7:30 PM
To:

SB

March 23, 2024

Iowa Men's Wrestling
Communications Contact: Sam Basler

Ayala Finishes as NCAA Runner-Up; Hawkeyes Fifth as a Team

KANSAS CITY, Missouri – University of Iowa wrestler Drake Ayala finished as the NCAA runner-up at 125 pounds on Saturday night at the 2024 NCAA Championships in the T-Mobile Center.

Ayala dropped a 7-2 decision to eighth-seeded Richard Figueroa of Arizona State in the finals. After a scoreless first period, Figueroa escaped after choosing down and earned a takedown on the edge right before the buzzer sounded. Ayala earned an escape to start the third period but another takedown from Figueroa with 14 seconds remaining sealed the match.

“It is too early to get analytical,” said head coach Tom Brands. “I say that a lot. You don’t just start talking about what needs to happen. He is dealing with a lot right now. That is what competitors do. He will deal with it. He is an extraordinary competitor. We will go forward from here.”

The finals appearance was the first of Ayala’s career and he finished the tournament as an All-American for the first time. He went 1-2 in 2021 as the 13 seed. He finished the 2024-24 season with a 27-5 record.

Ayala was one of four Hawkeyes to reach the medal stand. He advanced to the title bout winning a pair of bonus point victories (one major decision and one technical fall) and two decisions. His appearance in the championship round extended Iowa’s streak of NCAA finalists to 34 consecutive tournaments.

Iowa placed fifth in the team race with 67 points.

“I think our guys handled it as well as you can handle that stuff,” said Brands. “That is what life is about. You can talk about all that, but they handled it well. They went forward with it. It is too early to talk about next year. Drake Ayala has two years of eligibility left. He was in the national finals. He wants to find a way to win that match. Didn’t happen. Have to go forward.”

GRADUATING SENIORS

Iowa’s NCAA lineup included three graduating seniors. Those seniors include Brody Teske (133, four-time NCAA qualifier), Real Woods (141, four-time All-American, 2023 NCAA finalist) and Jared Franek (157, two-time All-American, five-time NCAA qualifier)

OF NOTE

- The Hawkeyes have 69 top 10 finishes in program history.
- Iowa has had an NCAA finalist in 34 consecutive national tournaments (every year since 1990).
- Iowa has crowned at least one All-American in 53 consecutive tournaments, a stretch dating back to 1972. Iowa has totaled 327 All-Americans during that stretch.

– Iowa has had at least four All-Americans in 16 straight seasons and 16 times in Brands' 17 years.

ALL-AMERICANS

2nd – Drake Ayala (125)

4th – Real Woods (141), Michael Caliendo (165)

8th – Jared Franek (157)

NCAA FINALS RESULTS

285 | #1 Greg Kerkvliet (Penn State) major dec. #10 Lucas Davidson (Michigan), 13-4

125 | #8 Richard Figueroa (Arizona State) dec. #3 Drake Ayala (Iowa), 7-2

133 | #6 Vito Aruja (Cornell) dec. #1 Daton Fix (Oklahoma State), 5-3

141 | #1 Jesse Mendez (Ohio State) dec. #2 Beau Bartlett (Penn State), 4-1

149 | #4 Caleb Henson (Virginia Tech) major dec. #6 Austin Gomez, 15-7

157 | #1 Levi Haines (Penn State) dec. #2 Jacori Teemer (Arizona State), 5-0

165 | #4 David Carr (Iowa State) dec. #2 Mitchell Mesenbrink (Penn State), 9-8

174 | #9 Carter Starocci (Penn State) dec. #6 Rocco Welsh (Ohio State), 2-0

184 | #1 Parker Keckeisen (Northern Iowa) major dec. #3 Dustin Plott (Oklahoma State), 14-5

197 | #1 Aaron Brooks (Penn State) dec. #2 Trent Hidlay (NC State), 6-0

TEAM STANDINGS - TOP 10

1. Penn State, 172.5

2. Cornell, 72.5

3. Michigan, 71

4. Iowa State, 68.5

5. Iowa, 67

6. Arizona State, 64.5

7. Virginia Tech, 64

8. Ohio State, 62

9. Nebraska, 60.5

10. Oklahoma State, 56

Sam Basler

Assistant Director, Strategic Communications

Field Hockey, Men's Wrestling, Baseball Contact

S300 Carver-Hawkeye Arena | Iowa City, IA | 52242

515.494.4993 Mobile | 319.335.1320 Office

