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2010 NCAA DIVISION III WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . The 37th Annual NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships are set for this Friday and Saturday, March 5-6, at the U.S. Cellular Center in downtown Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The two-day event, which features 160 wrestlers from 59 schools, is being hosted by Coe College, Cornell College, and the Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

Last year, Wartburg placed seven wrestlers in the top three and got National Championships from Jacob Naig at 149 pounds and Aaron Wernimont at 165 pounds en route to the school's second consecutive championship and seventh title overall. The Knights scored 117.5 points to top Augsburg (105), Wisconsin-La Crosse (87), and Coe (78.5).

This year's field of 160 sports six returning national champions – **Jake Oster** of Elmhurst at 125, **Minga Batsukh** of Saint John's (Minn.) at 141, **Matt Mauseth** of Wisconsin-LaCrosse at 149, **Evan Brown** of Dubuque at 174, **Jared Massey** of Augsburg at 197, and two-time defending champ **Dan Laurent** of Wisconsin-LaCrosse at heavyweight. In addition, Coe's **Tyler Burkle** captured the title at 165 in 2008. There are a total of 43 former All-Americans in the draw, including Oster, who is looking to become a four-time All-American. A group of 13 others – Augsburg's **Jason Adams**, Coe's **Clayton Rush**, Burkle, and **Rob Kramer**, Cornell's **Nick Nothern**, Delaware Valley's **Kyle Bilquist**, Elmhurst's **Mark Corsello**, North Central's **Gabe Youel**, Wartburg's **Matt Kelly**, Wisconsin-LaCrosse's Mauseth and Laurent, **Jesse Milks** of Wisconsin-Platteville, and Wisconsin-Whitewater's **Austin Bautista** – are all aiming for their third All-America honors.

No. 1-ranked Augsburg brings nine wrestlers to the 2010 Championships, including seven with previous NCAA experience, and will be looking to capture the tradition-rich program's 11th NCAA Division III title. The Auggies captured the title at January's National Duals and has to be considered a favorite. Massey enters the tournament as Augsburg's only top-ranked wrestler in most recent NWCA/Brute-Adidas individual rankings. All nine Auggies wrestlers have been seeded, though. Massey is No. 1 at 197, with Jafari Vanier (141), Tony Valek (149), and Zach Molitor (174) all seeded second and Paul Bjorkstrand (133) is third. The rest of Augsburg's lineup has been seeded as follows – Joshua Roberts (7th at 125), Jason Adams (5th at 157), Orlando Ponce (7th at 165), and Andrew Witzel (8th at heavyweight). The Auggies will not be represented at 184 pounds.

Two-time defending national champion Wartburg, the No. 2 ranked team, qualified all 10 wrestlers for this year's Championships – including four with previous NCAA experience. Of those 10, eight are seeded, let by second-ranked Mark Kist at 125 pounds and top-ranked Carrington Banks at 165. Sean White (133) is seeded third, Byron Tate (197) and John Helgersen (heavyweight) are seeded fifth, Todd Becker (184) is seeded sixth, and Jacob Groth (149) and Adam Weber (157) are seventh. Matt Kelly (141), a two-time All-American who was rated eighth in the last NWCA individual rankings, is not seeded and drew No. 5-seed Ben Anderson of Concordia College-Moorhead in the first round.

The Auggies and Knights have wrestled a pair of very tight duals during the season, both Augsburg wins – an 18-15 decision in the finals at January's NWCA/Cliff Keen National Duals, and a 16-15 win Feb. 4 at Waverly. Coe also fared well in duals against the top two teams, falling 22-14 to Augsburg in the semifinals of the National Duals, and 18-12 to Wartburg at the Iowa Conference Duals.

No. 3 Wisconsin-La Crosse, last year's third-place finisher, brings seven wrestlers to Cedar Rapids. Interestingly, the two defending national champions head coach Dave Malecek brings back – Mauseth and Laurent – are not top seeds. Beбето Yewah, the top-ranked wrestler at 133 pounds, is the Eagles' only top seed. Third-ranked Michael Schmitz (174) and Andy Moore (197) are both seeded third, as is Laurent at heavyweight. Mauseth is seeded fourth.

No. 4 Coe, the fourth-place finisher each of the past two years, also qualified the maximum. In the last few years, the Kohawks have mounted a serious challenge to Wartburg's supremacy in the Iowa Conference. Although the Knights were able to capture their 18th straight title, the margin of victory was only 9.5 points – the smallest since 1989. Top-ranked Clayton Rush (125) and Tyler Burkle (184) were each rewarded with No. 1 seeds. Nick LeClere, who spent part of the year ranked first at 165 pounds, is seeded third, while Rob Kramer (197) and Mitch Sander (heavyweight) are both seeded seventh.

Fifth-ranked Delaware Valley will bring seven wrestlers to the City of Five Seasons, including four who were rewarded with seeds. Two-time national qualifier Jesse Harrington is the top seed at 157, while heavyweight Kyle Bilquist, a two-time All-American, is seeded second. Unranked Terrance Clendenin is seeded fifth at 125, while eighth-ranked Emanuel Ajagbe (149) is seeded eighth.

Sixth-ranked Ithaca is one of four schools with three seeded wrestlers, led by top-ranked Blaine Woszczak, who hauled in the top seed at 149. All-Americans Chad Winowich (133) and Jon Gregory (125) are seeded fifth and eighth, respectively.

Only two of seventh-ranked Dubuque's three qualifiers is seeded, but both are No. 1 seeds. Josh Terrell (165) is a two-time All-American, while Evan Brown (174) is the defending national champion.

Eighth-ranked North Central (Ill.) has three seeded wrestlers. Nathan Fitzenreider (133) is seeded second, while John Starzyk (141) and two-time All-American Gabe Youel (184) are both seeded fourth.

Each of three qualifiers from No. 9 Saint John's (Minn.) is seeded, including defending national champion Minga Batsukh, who is top-seeded at 141. Two-time All-American Mogi Bataar (133) is seeded sixth, while Matt Baarson (165) is seeded seventh.

Championship co-host No. 11 Cornell also has three seeded wrestlers. Nicholas Loughlin (157) is seeded second, while returning All-Americans Nicholas Nothorn (133) and Kevin Donahue (141) are both seeded seventh.

Adding to the local flavor, No. 12 Luther has five qualifiers, including two who are seeded. Returning All-American Jason Pyle is seeded third at 197, while Allyn Plattner is seeded fourth at heavyweight.

Weight-by-Weight

125 – Rush (Coe) and Kist (Wartburg) are the top seeds, but Elmhurst's Jake Oster is the defending national champion. Among the 17 wrestlers at this weight, Rush, Kist, Oster, third-seed Tyler Erdman of Elizabethtown, and eighth seed Jon Gregory of Ithaca are returning All-Americans. Oster will be looking to become a four-time All-American, but will have a longer route to a repeat title after being drawn into a preliminary round match against Riki Reynolds of Mount Union.

133 – Only five of 16 wrestlers have NCAA championship experience and none were awarded a top-four seed. Top-seeded Beбето Yewah (Wisconsin-La Crosse) has been ranked No. 1 since late December. Seventh-seeded Nicholas Nothorn of Cornell, last year's national runner-up and a two-time All-American, also held the top national ranking at one point during the season. No. 5 seed Chad Winowich of Ithaca (eighth) and unseeded Corey Brown of Thiel (sixth) were All-Americans last year, while sixth-seeded Mogi Bataar of Saint John's (Minn.) placed eighth at 125 in 2008. Will Livingston of Centenary (N.J.) is one of four wrestlers sporting unblemished records at this year's Championship, albeit at 5-0 after getting a very late start to the season. Livingston landed back home in New Jersey after spending time at both Ohio State and Virginia Tech earlier in his career.

141 – Defending champion and top seed Minga Batsukh of Saint John's is one of three wrestlers to lead the individual rankings at this weight this season. Third-seeded Austin Bautista (Wis.-Whitewater), a two-time All-American who finished third last year, ended the year ranked No. 1, while 2009 All-American Kevin Donahue – seventh a year ago – also spent time at the top. The only other returning All-American is Jafari Vanier, a national runner-up at 133 pounds in 2007. Two-time All-American Matt Kelly of Wartburg is unseeded and will face Ben Anderson (Concordia-Moorhead) in the first round. Eighth-seed Jake Strausbaugh (Wabash) is one of six wrestlers entering the tournament with 40 or more victories, entering with a 40-4 record.

149 – At 18 wrestlers, this weight has the largest field in this year's Championships. No. 1-seed Blaine Woszczak has been the top ranked wrestler at this weight most of the season. He enters with a 35-5 record after placing fourth a year ago. Tony Valek (Augsburg) and 2009 seventh-place finisher Jason Pyle (Luther) make strong cases as No. 2 and No. 3 seeds, respectively, but Woszczak could face a significant test with a potential semifinal matchup with defending champion Matt Mauseth (Wis.-La Crosse) looming. Unseeded Corey Paulish (Williams) placed fourth at 141 pounds last year, but it will not be easy to repeat the feat as he faces Woszczak right off the bat in a second-round match.

157 – Top-seed Jesse Harrington (Delaware Valley) has been atop the rankings since just after the first of the year. There are four returning All-Americans in the field, including three in Harrington's half of the draw. Two-time All-American Jason Adams (Augsburg), third last year, matches up in the second round with 2009 eighth-place finisher Willie Horwath (Ithaca) with the winner facing a potential quarterfinal matchup with Luke Miller (Ohio Northern), last year's fourth-place finisher. Two-time All-American and 2009 fifth-place finisher Jesse Milks (Wis.-Platteville) escaped that half of the bracket and is seeded third. Joining Milks in the bottom half of the bracket are second-ranked Nic Loughlin (Cornell), the No. 2 seed, and third-ranked Zach Mizer (Heidelberg), the No. 6 seed.

165 – There are only three returning All-Americans at this weight and all were placed in the same half of the bracket. Two-time All-American Josh Terrell (Dubuque), the No. 1 seed, placed fourth in 2008 and sixth a year ago. Fourth-seeded Michael Morin (Southern Maine) placed fourth a year ago and spent the first part of the season ranked No. 1. Fifth-seed Chris Dahlheimer (Lycoming) took seventh a year ago. The two most-recent top-ranked wrestlers find themselves in the opposite half of the draw. Coe's Nick LeClere, the No. 3 seed, held the top spot through most of January before yielding the top spot to Wartburg's Carrington Banks, who is seeded second. Terrell gained the top seed due much in part to his wins over LeClere and Banks en route to the Iowa Conference title.

174 – There are four returning All-Americans at this weight, including Evan Brown (Dubuque), the top-seeded defending NCAA champion. Brown has held the top ranking in the NWCA poll all season with his only two losses coming at the Midlands Championship. Seeded into Brown's half of the bracket is No. 4 Kyle Kwiat (Ohio Northern) and No. 5-seed Frank Heffernan (Wilkes). Kwiat enters the meet with a 40-4 mark, while Heffernan placed seventh a year ago. Michael Schmitz (Wis.-La Crosse), last year's fourth-place finisher, and Zach Molitor (Augsburg), last year's sixth-place finisher, have been ranked in the top-four all year and are seeded third and second, respectively.

184 – With only 13 wrestlers, this weight is the smallest at this year's Championship and includes four returning All-Americans. Top-seeded Tyler Burkle, a two-time All-American and 2008 national champion at 165 pounds, has bumped up two weight classes this season and has been ranked first by the NWCA since late December. Second-seed Ben Engelland (Wis.-Stevens Point), a fifth-place finisher last year, enters at 30-0, one of only four unbeaten marks at the Championships. Seeded third is Phil Moenkedick (Concordia-Moorhead), last year's runner-up who started the year as the NWCA's top-rated 184-pounder. Two-time All-American Gabe Youel (North Central) is seeded fourth after back-to-back fourth-place finishes. Moenkedick and Youel each drew one of the three byes directly into the quarterfinals.

197 – While there are only three returning All-Americans at this weight, 197 does produce some intrigue and the potential for a rematch for a national title. The weight includes an undefeated defending national champion in top-seeded Jared Massey (Augsburg) and last year's runner-up in Ryan Malo (Williams), who comes in sporting a gaudy 43-4 mark, the most wins for any competitor in this year's Championship. Rob Kramer (Coe), the other returning All-American, is seeded seventh after placing fourth in 2008 and fifth last year. No. 4-seed Troy Carlson (Chicago), No. 6-seed Bill Schindel (Mount Union), and unseeded Zach Pizarro (Wilkes) each participated in last year's Championship.

285 – There is a vast amount of experience in this year's heavyweight field as all eight All-Americans and three other qualifiers return from last March. Two-time All-American Mark Corsello (Elmhurst) is undefeated at 27-0 and looking to take that last step to the top of the podium after taking second a year ago. Eighth-seed Andrew Witzel (Augsburg) was fifth a year ago and has drawn a bye into the quarterfinals and a potential match-up with Corsello. Allyn Plattner (Luther) and John Helgersen (Wartburg), seeded fourth and fifth, respectively, met in each of the past two Iowa Conference Championship finals and could meet in the quarterfinals if each can get out of the first round. Helgersen faces 2009 qualifier Joe Murphy (Cortland St.), while Plattner was drawn Jamison Sacco (Western New England), a freshman who has posted a sparkling 25-1 mark. Two-time defending NCAA Champion Dan Laurent (Wis.-La Crosse) was the only seed to draw another returning All-American. Laurent will face 2009 eighth-place finisher Brock Glotfelty (McDaniel) in the first round, with the winner to face Adam Sutter (Lakeland), who placed sixth last season. Seventh a year ago, Mitch Sander (Coe) finds himself in familiar territory as the No. 7 seed, while a potential quarterfinal matchup looms with No. 2 seed Kyle Bilquist (Delaware Valley), a two-time All-American who took fourth last year.