

NCAA

Division II

UNO Holds Off Foes, Defends Title

By Roger Moore

Nebraska-Omaha took a four-point lead into Saturday night's finals of the 2011 Division II Wrestling Championships.

Three seniors made sure it stood up.

The first Maverick upperclassmen, 141 pounder Mario Morgan, quickly put the team trophy within reach with a blast double-leg takedown midway through the third period for a 7-2 advantage in a 12-5 victory. It gave UNO an eight-point lead and put St. Cloud State in the predicament of having to win both its finals matches to forge a tie.

The problem was UNO coach Mike Denney had two more bullets in the chamber.

St. Cloud State senior Jon Sundgren (16-3) ground his way to a 3-0 win in the 157 pound final, beating Wisconsin-Parkside's Dillon Bera. It gave SCSU a fighting chance, cutting the UNO lead to four again.

But second-ranked senior Ryan Pankoke put things out of reach with a hard-fought 3-2 win against Wisconsin-Parkside's Luke

Rynish in the 174 pound final. The victory put the Mavericks up eight points and there was no scenario left that would keep UNO from claiming a third consecutive championship.

"To go wire-to-wire being ranked No. 1 and to stay consistent all year is incredibly hard," said Denney, whose squad had seven All-Americans this weekend.

Earlier in the day Denney received a quote by text that said, "The achievements of an organization are the results of a combined effort of each individual."

"If you look at how many bonus points we had and how many guys came through you see a complete team effort," Denney said.

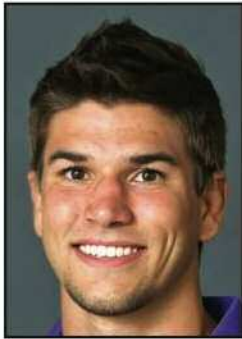
"And it's special for those three seniors, who've all been through adversity, to be able to wrap this thing up by winning in the finals. The work that those guys have put in throughout their careers is the reason we won."

Aaron Denson, a finalist in 2009, made it 3-for-3 in the finals with a 6-4 win against Western State's Charlie Pipher at 184 pounds.

UNO totaled 102.5 points, finishing 12 points better than St. Cloud



Trevor Franklin
125-Upper Iowa



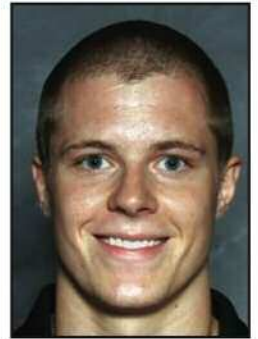
Todd Wilcox
133-Grand Canyon



Mario Morgan
141-Nebraska-Omaha



Nick Walpole
149-Indianapolis



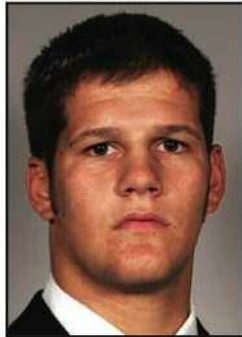
Jon Sundgren
157-Saint Cloud State



Michael Lybarger
165-Findlay



Ryan Pankoke
174-Nebraska-Omaha



Aaron Densen
184 -Nebraska-Omaha



Donovan McMahill
197-Western State College



Matthew Meuleners
285-Northern State

State. Augustana (S.D.) (81.5), Upper Iowa (66) and Western State (64) rounded out the top five.

"We thought we still had a chance on Friday night," said SCSU coach Steve Costanzo, a 1996 graduate of Nebraska-Omaha. "I thought we wrestled hard yesterday but not to the best of our ability. We kind of got on a roll like Augustana did (on Friday). Our guys fed off each other today."

St. Cloud finished with six All-Americans.

Morgan (30-4) finished his career in style, moving one more spot up the medal stand after finishing second in 2010 and third in 2009. The Illinois native had little trouble with Jensen (28-5), a transfer from Division I Iowa State, who pinned the defending champion in 17 seconds in the semifinals.

Pankoke (41-2) was third as a junior. Rynish (24-4) lost in the finals for a second consecutive year.

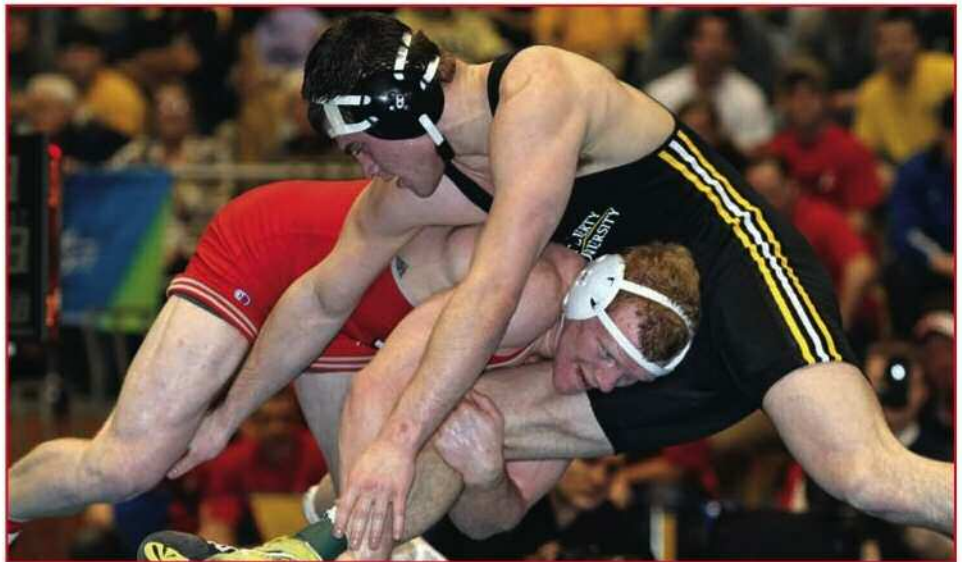
"I may have wrapped it up but this was a team effort," said Pankoke, a native of Beaver Crossing, Neb. "I heard Mario won, and I tried to relax a little bit, then Sundgren won so I knew my match was big. I knew we had two left and one of us had to get the win.

"We had a hard round in the quarterfinals (on Friday) and things didn't go the way we wanted it to. But we stuck together and came back like we knew we had to."

Western State's Donovan McMahon capped a perfect 32-0 season with his second national title at 197 pounds, beating West Liberty's Mitch Knapp 9-3.

"I'm going to take some time off, try and get into grad school," said McMahon, who was also in the finals as a freshman. "I don't know if I'm done with wrestling. We'll have to wait and see."

McMahon was named the tournament's Outstanding Wrestler, voted on by coaches. He beat Augustana's Ty Copsy, last year's finals opponent, in overtime in the semifinals.



2011 NCAA Division II Championship Finals - Donovan McMahon (Western State) finishing a single leg on Mitch Knapp (West Liberty) in their 197 lb. championship match. McMahon went on to defeat Knapp 9-3. Photo by Mike Smith / MatShots.

Three programs, Grand Canyon, Indianapolis and Northern State, reached the top of the medal stand for the first time in Division II.

Todd Wilcox became Grand Canyon University's first NCAA champion, beating Newberry freshman B.J. Young 7-3 in the 133 pound final. A program which was 0-24-1 in its first year of competition in 2007-08 finished seventh in 2011 with Wilcox (36-3) leading a pack of five All-Americans.

"We've got big things coming," said Wilcox, a junior from Sacramento. "We've got a great coach in R.C. LaHaye. We just got a new facility and we are building something. A lot of guys have been working really hard.

"I just wanted to stay composed, stick to my game plan and I knew I'd be alright."

"We've come a long ways in a short time," LaHaye said. "I'm not that surprised it's been this quick. Wrestling is wrestling, East Coast,

2011 NCAA Division II Wrestling Championships Final Team Standings

1. Nebraska-Omaha	102.5	15. Northern State	23.0	29. CSU-Pueblo	4.0
2. St. Cloud State	90.5	16. Gannon	22.5	30t. Central Missouri	3.5
3. Augustana - SD	81.5	17t. North Carolina-Pembroke	20.0	30t. Kings College	3.5
4. Upper Iowa	66.0	17t. West Liberty State	20.0	32. Truman	2.5
5. Western State College	64.0	19. San Francisco State	18.5	33t. Colorado School of Mines	0.5
6. Newberry	60.0	20. Ashland	18.0	33t. East Stroudsburg	0.5
7. Grand Canyon	58.0	21. Adams State	15.5	33t. Mary	0.5
8. Nebraska-Kearney	53.5	22t. Fort Hays State	13.5	33t. Mesa State	0.5
9. Wisconsin-Parkside	43.0	22t. Shippensburg	13.5	37t. American International	0.0
10t. Minnesota State Mankato	31.5	24. Kutztown	13.0	37t. Anderson University	0.0
10t. Pittsburgh-Johnstown	31.5	25. Mercyhurst	11.5	37t. Belmont Abbey	0.0
12. Indianapolis	31.0	26. Minnesota State Moorhead	7.0	37t. Newman	0.0
13. Central Oklahoma	26.5	27. Limestone	6.5	37t. Southwest Minnesota State	0.0
14. Findlay	26.0	28. Chadron State	6.0		

Midwest, West.

"(Wilcox) lost in overtime to the national champ last year and that kind of stuck with him. He's worked really hard to put himself in this position to be a national champion."

Young, a true freshman from New Jersey, finished a solid 34-9 season.

Indiana transfer Nick Walpole, a junior for Indianapolis, capped a monster 42-3 season with a dramatic 4-2 win against home-town favorite T.J. Hepburn of Nebraska-Kearney in the 149 pound finale. Walpole's deciding takedown came in the final seconds when he countered a Hepburn (36-4) shot.

"It feels awesome," said Walpole, sporting a Yosemite Sam mustache that was to be shaved later Saturday night. "I'm so proud of my team, of how hard me and Matt Irwin (All-American at 141) worked all year to get to this point. I'm actually relieved.

"My coach (John Warthan) really let me work back at my own pace after an injury. My dad has been there with me since third grade. So many people are a big part of this."

Northern State sophomore Matthew Meuleners, an All-American at 197 in 2010, avenged two losses to St. Cloud State's Jake Kahnke in the heavyweight final to conclude the weekend. Mueleners finishes his sophomore campaign with a 28-4 mark.

Sundgren, a four-time qualifier, became SCSU's first national champion since 1995 when Gene Hanemann earned a title.

"There is nobody more deserving than Jon Sundgren," Costanzo said. "He was my first recruit at St. Cloud State, so I'm very happy for him."

Upper Iowa sophomore Trevor Franklin completed a 27-2 season with a 3-0 victory against Augustana (S.D.) senior Alex Meger in the 125 pound final. The New York native set up the match's lone takedown with a double under-hook in the first period.

Findlay junior Michael Lybarger (39-4) won the 165 pound championship, beating Gannon's Zach McKendree 3-1 in overtime.

The team title was Nebraska-Omaha's seventh, tying Central Oklahoma for seventh all-time in Division II. Cal Poly and Bakersfield, both currently members of Division I, each won eight.

When wrestling hits the mats for the 2011-12 season don't be surprised when the Mavericks are again the favorites.

Elite 88

Senior 165 pounder Jordan Larson of the Colorado School of Mines, a civil engineering major with a 3.927 GPA, was honored with the NCAA Division II Elite 88 award, given to the student-athlete with the highest grade point average in the tournament.

2011 NCAA Division II All-Americans

125 Pounds

1. Trevor Franklin (Upper Iowa) D3-0
2. Alex Meger (Augustana - SD)
3. John McDonald (Newberry) F1:16
4. Christopher Kochinsky (Shippensburg)
5. Russell Weakley (NC-Pembroke) D8-5
6. Andy Forstner (Minnesota St-Mankato)
7. Corey Ulmer (MN State-Moorhead) D7-6;TB1
8. Jose Matos (Gannon)

133 Pounds

1. Todd Wilcox (Grand Canyon) D8-3
2. BJ Young (Newberry)
3. Jason Jeremiason (Augustana-SD) F4:45
4. Ryan Link (Pittsburgh-Johnstown)
5. Jesse Cruz (Western State) D11-9
6. Kyle Pedretti (Upper Iowa)
7. Trison Graham (Central Oklahoma) D3-1;SV2
8. Cody Zimmerman (Wisconsin-Parkside)

141 Pounds

1. Mario Morgan (Nebraska-Omaha) D12-5
2. Dalton Jensen (Nebraska-Kearney)
3. Gabriel Suarez (St. Cloud State) D3-2
4. Jay Sherer (Augustana-SD)
5. Naveed Bagheri (San Francisco State) D6-0
6. Matt Irwin (Indianapolis)
7. Jimmy Savala (Chadron State) D8-5
8. Jack Bachman (Pittsburgh-Johnstown)

149 Pounds

1. Nick Walpole (Indianapolis) D4-2
2. T.J. Hepburn (Nebraska-Kearney)
3. Nate Herda (Augustana - SD) D6-4
4. Mitchell Means (Fort Hays State)
5. Jacob Horn (St. Cloud State) D7-5
6. John Paukovits (Kutztown)
7. Esai Dominguez (Nebraska-Omaha) Default
8. Kenneth Jordan (Adams State)

157 Pounds

1. John Sundren (St. Cloud State) D4-0
2. Dillon Bera (Wisconsin-Parkside)
3. George Ivanov (Nebraska-Omaha) D5-3
4. Jordan Shields (Mercyhurst)
5. Teddy Bristol (Grand Canyon) D9-2
6. Cory Dauphin (Central Oklahoma)
7. Marcus Edgington (Augustana - SD) D7-3
8. Joshua Nolan (San Francisco State)

165 Pounds

1. Michael Lybarger (Findlay) D3-1;SV1
2. Zack McKendree (Gannon)
3. Tad Merritt (St. Cloud State) D4-1
4. Joey Wilson (Nebraska-Kearney)
5. Mike Williams (NC-Pembroke) D6-5
6. Gavin Nelson (Augustana - SD)
7. Brandon Kelly (Ashland) D13-9
8. Matt Gille (Wisconsin-Parkside)

174 Pounds

1. Ryan Pankoke (Nebraska-Omaha) D3-2
2. Luke Rynish (Wisconsin-Parkside)
3. Victor Carazo (Grand Canyon) D7-6
4. Shamus O'Grady (St. Cloud State)
5. Mark Mueller (Upper Iowa) D2-1
6. Kelly Henderson (Central Oklahoma)
7. Ben Becker (MN State-Mankato) M8-0
8. Gene Choi (San Francisco State)

184 Pounds

1. Aaron Denson (Nebraska-Omaha) D6-4
2. Charlie Pipher (Western State College)
3. Bryant Blanton (Newberry) D5-4
4. Aaron Norgren (Minnesota State Mankato)
5. Ross Brunkhardt (Nebraska-Kearney) D6-0
6. Mitchell Schultz (Upper Iowa)
7. Ryan Becerra (Grand Canyon) D6-5
8. Casey Bradley (Limestone)

197 Pounds

1. Donovan McMahill (Western State) D9-3
2. Mitch Knapp (West Liberty State)
3. Carl Broghammer (Upper Iowa) M Forfeit
4. Tyler Copsey (Augustana-SD)
5. Eli Arizmendez (Grand Canyon) M 15-6
6. Luke McPeck (Adams State)
7. Daniel Stevenson (Findlay) D2-1
8. Matt Baker (Nebraska-Omaha)

285 Pounds

1. Matthew Meuleners (Northern State) D4-3
2. Jake Kahnke (St. Cloud State)
3. Charlie Alexander (Western State) D2-0
4. Jacob Southwick (Ashland)
5. Christopher Dempsey (Pitt-Johnstown) D3-1
6. Taylor Escamilla (Nebraska-Omaha)
7. Jake Elkins (Newberry) D7-2
8. Patrick Carey (Colorado State-Pueblo)

CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

125-Trevor Franklin (Upper Iowa) dec Alex Meger (Augustana), 3-0

133-Todd Wilcox (Grand Canyon) dec BJ Young (Newberry), 7-2

141-Mario Morgan (Nebraska-Omaha) dec Dalton Jensen (Nebraska-Kearney), 12-5

149-Nick Walpole (Indianapolis) dec T.J. Hepburn (Nebraska-Kearney), 4-2

157-Jon Sundgren (St. Cloud State) dec Dillon Bera (Wisconsin-Parkside), 3-0

165-Michael Lybarger (Findlay) dec Zach McKendree (Gannon), 3-1

174-Ryan Pankoke (Nebraska-Omaha) dec Luke Rynish (Wisconsin-Parkside), 3-2

184-Aaron Denson (Nebraska-Omaha) dec Charlie Pipher (Western State), 6-4

197-Donovan McMahill (Western State) dec Mitch Knapp (West Liberty), 9-3

285-Matthew Meuleners (Northern State) dec Jake Kahnke (St. Cloud State), 4-3

Outstanding Wrestler – Donovan McMahill (Western State)

D-II Coach of the Year – Steve Costanzo (St. Cloud State)

Most Falls Award – Jon Paukovitz (Kutztown), 2 falls in 3:24