

NAIA

Notre Dame Became the Ninth Team to Win Back-to-Back National Titles

By Amanda Dahl

The Notre Dame Falcons successfully defended their title at the 2011 NAIA Wrestling National Championships held March 3 - 5 at the U.S. Cellular Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Notre Dame's win also marked the 16th time that a team has won consecutive championships in the event's 54-year history. The Falcons finished with 170 points and crowned two individual champions in Dante Rini at 125 pounds and heavyweight Orlando Scales. Six additional teams had at least one grappler take home top honors.

"Coming into the tournament after winning last year, we wanted to repeat," Notre Dame head wrestling coach Frank Romano said. "I thought we wrestled really well and we had a tremendous day today, other than this evening. In the morning session we won every bout, going 7-for-7, and last night we had a tremendous round, which is the reason that we won. Putting five men into the finals; that sealed it for us."

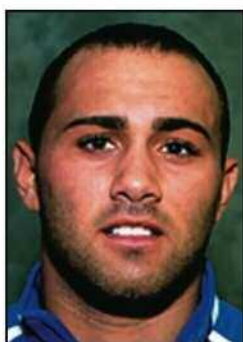
"Both [national championships] are special, very special, but maybe the first one is a little bit more special," Romano said. "I

hoped that we would wrestle well here and we did. I knew that we were ready and we were prepared. The guys were fresh and those are key factors."

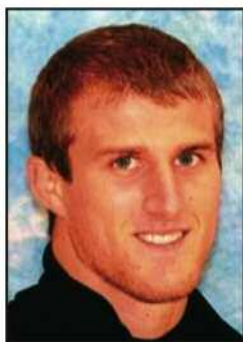
Rini faced a 2-1 deficit heading into the second period against Campbellsville's (Ky.) Johnny Papesh, but used a three-point nearfall in the second period and an escape in the third to tally a 5-3 decision to take first place at 125 pounds.

"I thought Dante Rini [stood out for us], even though he didn't wrestle a whole lot of matches this year, he really came on in the last month of the season," Romano said. "He was able to defeat [Johnny] Papesh in the group tournament and tonight. Papesh is a great wrestler, and Dante was able to get by him in both matches."

A pair of title matches went undecided through regulation, with one determined in sudden victory and the other in the first tie-breaker. Scoring was limited as no more than five points were registered in any of the 10 bouts. McKendree's (Ill.) Wade Lowe notched the largest margin of victory with a 5-2 decision over Matt Katusin of Midland (Neb.) at 133 pounds. Five national champions won by two points and four others claimed victory by just one point.



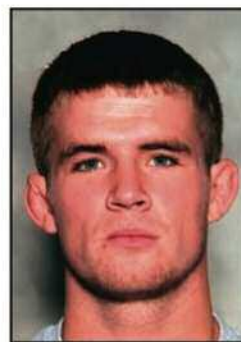
Danti Rini
125-Notre Dame



Wade Lowe
133-McKendree



Anthony Varnell
141-Great Falls



Matt Burns
149-Grand View



Corey Bleaken
157-Cumberland



Ross Mosher
165-Great Falls



Chris Chionuma
174-Lindenwood



Evan Hinebauch
184-MSU Northern



Andrew Sanchez
197-McKendree



Orlando Scales
285-Notre Dame

2011 NAIA All-Americans

125 pounds

1. Dante Rini, Notre Dame (OH), D 5-3
2. Johnny Papesh, Campbellsville (KY)
3. Justin Forrest, Lindenwood (MO), D 6-2
4. Brandon Benvenuti, Lindenwood (MO)
5. Sean Blumhardt, Jamestown (ND), D 6-4
6. Larone Madison, Cumberlands (KY)
7. Akmal Adilov, Great Falls (MT), M Forfeit
8. Paulie Hansen, Missouri Valley

133 pounds

1. Wade Lowe, McKendree (IL), D 5-2
2. Matt Katusin, Midland (NE)
3. Tim Thurston, Campbellsville (KY), D 8-7
4. Rashad Riley, McKendree (IL)
5. Alfonso Valles, Embry-Riddle (AZ), D 2-1
6. Travis Evans, Grand View (IA)
7. Cameron Neiss, MSU-Northern, Default
8. Anton Prater, Missouri Baptist

141 pounds

1. Anthony Varnell, Great Falls (MT), 5-3
2. Eddie McCray, Midland (NE)
3. Tommy Pretty, Campbellsville (KY), D 5-4
4. Kyle Wirkuty, Southern Oregon
5. Myles Mazurkiewicz, Great Falls (MT), D 8-2
6. Drew Smith, Morningside (IA)
7. Brett Freeman, Notre Dame (OH), Fall 4:36
8. Kyle Williams, McKendree (IL)

149 pounds

1. Matt Burns, Grand View (IA), D 5-3
2. Ashtin Primus, Notre Dame (OH)
3. Jeffrey Pelton, Notre Dame (OH), D 3-1
4. Ryan Jahn, McKendree (IL)
5. Eric Burgey, William Penn (IA), D 11-5
6. Shay Shive, Missouri Valley
7. Jarell Price, Baker (KS), D 6-5
8. Adam Kurimski, Grand View (IA)

157 pounds

1. Corey Bleaken, Cumberland (TN), D 4-3 (TB1)
2. Thomas Straughn, Notre Dame (OH)
3. Tyler Chang, Embry-Riddle (AZ), TF 22-6
4. Vince Hannon, Lindenwood (MO)
5. Tommie Norton/Hooper, Southern OR, F 0:22
6. Kyle Conley, Midland (NE)
7. Jeremy Padilla, Waldorf (IA), D 6-4
8. Nick Haferkamp, McKendree (IL)

Of the seven previous national champions that arrived in Cedar Rapids, two were able to finish on top of the podium. After winning a national title at 149 pounds in 2009, Grand View's (Iowa) Matt Burns earned his second championship by posting a 5-3 decision over Ashtin Primus of Notre Dame. The senior scored a first-period takedown for the early lead and added another in the second for a 4-0 advantage heading into the final period. Primus got a takedown in the third, but it was not enough, as Burns secured riding time and the victory. Burns' career came to an end as a two-time All-American and a two-time national champion.

McKendree's Andrew Sanchez capped off his career by winning his second national title, edging defending national champ

165 pounds

1. Ross Mosher, Great Falls (MT), D 4-2
2. Noah Hatton, Great Falls (MT)
3. Kevin Hardy, Notre Dame (OH), D 10-6
4. Clayton MacFarlane, Lindenwood (MO)
5. Drae Cox, Lindenwood (MO), D 6-3
6. Ben Knight, Morningside (IA)
7. James Casadaban, Cumberland (TN), M Forfeit
8. David Clemens, Campbellsville (KY)

174 pounds

1. Chris Chionuma, Lindenwood (MO), D 3-2
2. Glenn Rhees, Grand View (IA)
3. Jon Bittenger, Notre Dame (OH), D 5-1
4. Austin Vanderford, Southern Oregon
5. Brian Block, Morningside (IA), Fall 4:37
6. Alex McKinney, Missouri Valley
7. Dirk Hurrin, Lindenwood (MO), D 4-3
8. Cameron Scrempf, Dickinson State (ND)

184 pounds

1. Evan Hinebauch, MSU-Northern, D 5-3 (SV2)
2. Michael French, Great Falls (MT)
3. Kyle Reid, McKendree (IL), Default
4. Steven Urquizo, Dickinson State (ND)
5. Tommy Perez, Grand View (IA), Fall 2:11
6. Derek Rottenberg, Southern Oregon
7. Clete Hanson, Simon Fraser (B.C.), MD 11-1
8. Andrew Hairston, Lindsey Wilson (KY)

197 pounds

1. Andrew Sanchez, McKendree (IL), D 2-1
2. Derek Foore, Notre Dame (OH)
3. Deron Winn, Lindenwood (MO), D 7-3
4. Charlie Gibbs, Missouri Valley
5. Derek Nightser, Grand View (IA), D 5-2
6. Jeff Roman, Waldorf (IA)
7. Spencer Adams, Campbellsville (KY), D 7-2
8. Jacob Bradford, Lindsey Wilson (KY)

285 pounds

1. Orlando Scales, Notre Dame (OH), D 3-2
2. Levi Roberson, Midland (NE)
3. Travis Ewart, Missouri Valley, Fall 6:22
4. Levi Calhoun, Baker (KS)
5. Rudy Schaffroth, MSU-Northern, M Forfeit
6. Josh Geppert, Dakota Wesleyan (SD)
7. Steven Butler, Lindenwood (MO), Fall 6:44
8. Bojan Djukic, Grand View (IA)

Derek Foore of Notre Dame with a 2-1 decision. After a scoreless first period, Sanchez got on the board with an escape in the second for a 1-0 lead. He was able to maintain control of Foore throughout the third period to accumulate 1:26 worth of riding time, which proved to be the deciding factor. The four-time All-American concluded his stellar Bearcat career with a 144-23 record, including a 38-1 mark in his final season. For his performance in his final season on the mat, Sanchez was named NWCA/NAIA National Wrestler of the Year.

Five finalists, including a trio newly crowned national champions, earned their third All-America accolade. Three-time honorees that captured top-honors were 133-pounder Wade Lowe of McKendree,

Lindenwood's Chris Chionuma at 174 pounds and 184-pounder Evan Hinebauch of Montana State-Northern. Also earning their third All-America accolade were runners-up Thomas Straughn of Notre Dame and Michael French of Great Falls at 157 and 184 pounds, respectively.

Evan Hinebauch became Montana State-Northern's 30th individual champion with a 5-3 sudden victory decision over Great Falls' (Mont.) Michael French. The Lights rank second in all-time individual champions behind Simon Fraser (B.C.) with 40.

Sanchez was the only four-time All-American among the 80 individuals that earned the accolade by placing among the top-eight at their respective weight. Eight grapplers tallied their third honor, 18 wrestled to their second and 53 registered their first All-American finish.

Corey Bleaken of Cumberland (Tenn.) was named the NAIA Most Outstanding Wrestler with the Gorriaran Award after winning the 157-pound title in the first tiebreaker, 4-3, over reigning national champ Thomas Straughn of Notre Dame. The senior became the first Bulldog wrestler to earn the award.

Southern Oregon 157-pounder Tommie Norton/Hooper was named the event's Most Falls in the Least Time award winner, sticking three opponents in a total of 1:52. McKendree head coach James Kisgen was named NAIA National Coach of the Year. It marked the second time Kisgen has been tabbed with the honor, with the first coming in 2008.

CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

125 – Dante Rini, Notre Dame (OH) dec.

Johnny Papesh, Campbellsville (KY), 5-3

133 – Wade Lowe, McKendree (IL) dec. Matt Katusin, Midland (NE), 5-2

141 – Anthony Varnell, Great Falls (MT) dec. Eddie McCray, Midland (NE), 5-3

149 – Matt Burns, Grand View (IA) dec. Ashtin Primus, Notre Dame (OH), 5-3

157 – Corey Bleaken, Cumberland (TN) dec. Tyler Straughn, Notre Dame (OH), 4-3 (TB1)

165 – Ross Mosher, Great Falls (MT) dec. Noah Hatton, Great Falls (MT), 4-2

174 – Chris Chionuma, Lindenwood (MO) dec. Glenn Rhees, Grand View (IA), 3-2

184 – Evan Hinebauch, Montana State-Northern dec. Michael French, Great Falls (MT), 5-3 (SV2)

197 – Andrew Sanchez, McKendree (IL) dec. Derek Foore, Notre Dame (OH), 2-1

HWT – Orlando Scales, Notre Dame (OH) dec. Levi Roberson, Midland (NE), 3-2

2011 NAIA Wrestling Championships Final Team Standings

1. Notre Dame (OH)	170.0	14. Dickinson State	38.5	24t. William Penn	13.5
2. Lindenwood	141.0	15. Lindsey Wilson	36.0	28. Concordia	12.0
3. McKendree	138.5	16. Baker	33.5	29. Northwestern	11.5
4. Great Falls	108.5	17. Jamestown	25.0	30. Menlo	9.5
5. Grand View	106.0	18. Dakota Wesleyan	24.5	31. Hastings	8.5
6. Missouri Valley	97.5	19. Waldorf	21.0	32. Sioux Falls	5.0
7. Campbellsville	90.5	20. Shorter	17.0	33t. Bacone	3.0
8. Midland	75.0	21t. Cumberland	15.5	33t. Briar Cliff	3.0
9. Southern Oregon	73.5	21t. York	15.5	35t. Calumet of St. Joseph	2.0
10. MSU-Northern	57.0	23. Oklahoma City	14.5	35t. Central Baptist	2.0
11. Morningside	49.5	24t. Minot State	13.5	37t. Hannibal-LaGrange	1.0
12. Embry-Riddle	43.0	24t. Missouri Baptist	13.5	37t. Wayland Baptist	1.0
13. Cumberland	40.0	24t. Simon Fraser	13.5	39. West Virginia Tech	.5