

CHARLESTON, S.C. — It's a SoCon Sweep for Appalachian State's wrestling team.

After wrapping up a third straight regular season championship in the same venue last month, App State completed a sweep of Southern Conference titles by winning the eight-team championship tournament with 110.0 points on Saturday at McAlister Field House.

Second-place Chattanooga finished 22 points behind the Mountaineers, who benefited from individual titles by top-seeded senior Forrest Przybysz at 174 pounds and fourth-seeded tournament MVP Irvin Enriquez at 141 pounds. Redshirt freshman Alan Clothier joined Przybysz and Enriquez in clinching an NCAA Championships berth by securing the SoCon's second automatic spot at 184 pounds.

App State dominated the 10 weight classes with eight finalists, four more than the second-place total, and two wrestlers in third-place matches. As a result, JohnMark Bentley was named the league's coach of the year for the third time in the last four seasons and the fourth time in his nine seasons as the Mountaineers' head coach.

"Today was a great day for Appalachian," Bentley said. "We came in, and our guys responded. They were ready to go this morning. We had really good quarterfinal and semifinal rounds to put eight in the finals and placed all 10 of our guys in the top four in the tournament. That's really important as far as the team title. I just can't say enough about our guys because we have a young group and have a lot of these guys coming back. We're growing and continuing to improve."

The 2018 team joined the groups from 2016, 2003, 2001 and 1997 as two-way champions in the Southern Conference.

In addition to Przybysz, Enriquez and Clothier, App State was also represented by De'Andre Swinson-Barr (125 pounds), Codi Russell (133 pounds), Gavin Londoff (149 pounds), Angel Najar (157 pounds) and Cary Miller (285 pounds) in championship matches. An at-large berth into the NCAA Championships is still possible for Randall Diabe, who finished third at 197 pounds thanks to an escape in the Tiebreaker-2 period against Campbell's Chris Kober, and Laken Cook placed fourth at 165 pounds.

Enriquez opened with an 11-2 major decision against SIUE's Dakota Leach and reached the final with a 3-1 upset of top-seeded Chattanooga standout Mike Pongracz, who had claimed a victory by major decision against Enriquez during the regular season. Enriquez then won by a 14-3 major decision against Campbell's Jonathan Ryan in the final.

"I came in here and obviously had some nerves, but I knew I could win this tournament," Enriquez said. "I knew people were going to sleep on me. I came here to have fun, wrestle as hard as I could and attack. It paid off."

Przybysz, who competed at the NCAA Championships two years ago as a sophomore, secured a return trip with an 11-1 major decision against The Citadel's Robert Tywater, a 5-1 decision against Gardner-Webb's Christian Maroni and a 3-2 decision against Campbell's Andrew Morgan.

Morgan officially took a 2-1 lead on a takedown with 1:02 left in the final, but Przybysz already had a point locked up for riding time. He executed an escape with 45 seconds left to regain control and win his first conference title.

"I can't even describe how much better it is to go out like this than had I lost," said Przybysz, who also received the Pinnacle Award that goes to the student-athlete with the highest cumulative GPA on the championship team. "It's just a night-and-day difference."

Clothier dropped an 8-2 decision against Chattanooga's Bryce Carr, the SoCon Wrestler of the Year, after recording a 10-1 major decision against Gardner-Webb's Cole Graves in the semifinal round and a 4-2 decision against Campbell's Charlie Andrews in the opening round. Since Clothier hadn't faced third-place finisher Conor Fenn of Davidson during the tournament, they concluded the event by wrestling for the league's second automatic NCAA berth at 184 pounds, and Clothier won by an 11-3 major decision.

Diabe, who went 7-0 against his SoCon competitors during the regular season, is one wrestler who could still join three of his teammates in Cleveland from March 15-17. With 33 wrestlers filling every bracket at the NCAA Championships, there are five at-large spots available for the 197-pound wrestlers who don't qualify automatically, and those selections are based on head-to-head competition, quality wins, coaches' ranking, results against common opponents, RPI, qualifying event placement and winning percentage. Those announcements are scheduled for Tuesday.

As a No. 5 seed, Swinson-Barr had the most improbable run to the championship round Saturday. He collected a third-period pin against VMI's Clifton Conway and moved on to the final because of a medical forfeit by SoCon freshman of the year Korbin Meink from Campbell.

Russell followed an 18-1 technical fall against The Citadel's Nicholas Long with an 11-5 decision against reigning SoCon champion Chris Deben, and Londoff reached his final thanks to a Tiebreaker-1 takedown that helped him claim a 4-2 semifinal win against The Citadel's Tyler Buckiso. Londoff started his day with a first-period pin of VMI's Kevin Keaveney.

Najar had technical falls by scores of 20-2 and 20-3 to advance to his final, and Miller posted an 11-0 major decision against

Chattanooga's Connor Tolley in the semifinals after winning with a first-period pin against VMI's Jake Tomlinson in the opening round.

125 pounds: (5) De'Andre Swinson-Barr

W, by fall (6:21) vs. (4) Clifton Conway, VMI
W, by medical forfeit vs. (1) Korbin Meink, Campbell
Final: L, 9-5 dec. vs. (3) Alonzo Allen, Chattanooga

133 pounds: (2) Codi Russell

W, 18-1 tech. fall vs. (7) Nicholas Long, The Citadel
W, 11-5 dec. vs. (3) Chris Debien, Chattanooga
Final: L, 5-4 dec. vs. (1) John Muldoon, SIUE

141 pounds: (4) Irvin Enriquez

W, 11-2 maj. dec. vs. (5) Dakota Leach, SIUE
W, 3-1 dec. vs. (1) Mike Pongracz, Chattanooga
Final: W, 14-3 maj. dec. vs. (2) Jonathan Ryan, Campbell

149 pounds: (1) Gavin Londoff

W, by fall (3:00) vs. (8) Kevin Keaveney, VMI
W, 4-2 (tiebreaker 1) vs. (4) Tyler Buckiso, The Citadel
Final: L, 3-1 dec. (SV) vs. (2) Tyshawn Williams, SIUE

157 pounds: (1) Angel Najar

W, 20-2 tech. fall vs. (8) Ethan Phillips, The Citadel
W, 20-3 tech. fall vs. (5) Karsten Van Velsor, SIUE
Final: L, 10-3 dec. vs. (2) Tyler Marinelli, Gardner-Webb

165 pounds: (6) Laken Cook

L, 10-3 dec. vs. (3) Quentin Perez, Campbell
W, by fall (1:12) vs. (7) Hunter Costa, Davidson
W, 8-4 dec. vs. (4) Brett Stein, Gardner-Webb
Third-place match: L, 11-7 dec. vs. (3) Quentin Perez, Campbell

174 pounds: (1) Forrest Przybysz

W, 11-1 maj. dec. vs. (8) Robert Tywater, The Citadel
W, 5-1 dec. vs. (4) Christian Maroni, Gardner-Webb
Final: W, 3-2 dec. vs. (3) Andrew Morgan, Campbell

184 pounds: (2) Alan Clothier

W, 4-2 dec. vs. (7) Charlie Andrews, Campbell
W, 10-1 maj. dec. vs. (4) Cole Graves, Gardner-Webb
Final: L, 8-2 dec. vs. (1) Bryce Carr, Chattanooga
Match for 2nd NCAA berth: W, 11-3 maj. dec. vs. (5) Conor Fenn, Davidson

197 pounds: (1) Randall Diabe

W, by fall (2:01) vs. (8) Jake Koch, VMI
L, 4-3 dec. vs. (4) Sawyer Root, The Citadel
W, by fall (6:19) vs. (3) Christian Dulaney, SIUE
Third-place match: W, 5-4 (Tiebreaker 2) vs. (6) Chris Kober, Campbell

285 pounds: (2) Cary Miller

W, by fall (1:48) vs. (7) Jake Tomlinson, VMI
W, 11-0 maj. dec. vs. (3) Connor Tolley, Chattanooga
Final: L, by fall (1:48) vs. (1) Jere Heino, Campbell

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