

# Wrestling Awards 2016-17 Team Honors

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**BLOOMINGTON, Ind.** – Indiana head coach [Duane Goldman](#) revealed the coaches' selections for Indiana's team award winners at the Hoosiers' end-of-year banquet. The awards, selected annually by the Indiana coaching staff, provide an outline for the most impactful wrestlers both in the room and on the competition mat.

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## 2016-17 Indiana Wrestling Team Awards

Taylor Walsh Most Falls Award – [Devin Skatzka](#) (10)  
Brian Dolph Most Improved Wrestler Award – [Jake Danishek](#)  
[Angel Escobedo](#) Most Courageous Wrestler – [Cole Weaver](#)  
Billy Thom Leadership Award – [Luke Blanton](#)  
Hoosier Pride Award – [Chris Perez](#)  
Joe Dubuque Most Outstanding Wrestler – [Nate Jackson](#)

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It was no surprise when Goldman announced that senior [Nate Jackson](#) (184) received the highest honor of the evening, the Joe Dubuque Most Outstanding Wrestler award. Jackson completed his second consecutive All-American season, taking eighth place at the NCAA Championships in his first season at 184 lbs. In addition, Jackson led the Hoosiers through the regular season with an unbeaten 19-0 dual meet record, the first unblemished dual season since Matt Powless (2011).

Jackson's podium finish made him Indiana's first two-time NCAA All-American since [Angel Escobedo](#) earned four consecutive honors from 2007 to 2010. He finishes a thrilling collegiate career at 107 varsity wins over four years, 60 with bonus points.

Freshman [Devin Skatzka](#) (174) was Indiana's sole winner of this year's Taylor Walsh Most Falls award, given to grapplers with nine or more varsity wins by fall in a single season. Skatzka stuck 10 opponents in his first year with the IU singlet, trailing only Jackson in total wins last season.

At one point, Skatzka pinned five opponents in a row, ending the run with a 3:38 stunner over No. 15 C.J. Brucki (Central Michigan). Skatzka finished his freshman season with a 26-13 record and his first NCAA Championships qualification.

The Brian Dolph Most Improved Wrestler Award landed in the hands of sophomore [Jake Danishek](#) (157), who achieved his first NCAA qualification after a turnaround season. As a freshman, Danishek went 15-11 with a 6-7 dual meet record; this season, he upped his win total with a 21-15 overall record while going 12-7 in dual meets and 4-5 against the Big Ten.

Danishek grabbed the conference's ninth qualifying spot with a win in sudden victory over Jake Ryan (Ohio State) at the Big Ten Wrestling Championships. The Lebanon, Ohio Native is an Academic All-Big Ten honoree with two career tournament championships.

Sophomore [Cole Weaver](#) (141) took home this year's [Angel Escobedo](#) Most Courageous Wrestler award for his inspiring comeback last season. Weaver's freshman season came to an abrupt halt in 2016 with a season-ending head injury against Ohio State. Another injury to his leg in the offseason added doubt to the prospect of a return to the mat.

But Weaver persevered and regained his strength by the second weekend of the year, making his long-awaited season debut against George Mason (11/17). From there, Weaver earned 11 wins on the year with three pins and

came one match away from battling for an NCAA qualifying spot.

The last pair of awards went to Indiana's senior tandem at 149 lbs., [Luke Blanton](#) and [Chris Perez](#). Blanton earned the Billy Thom Leadership award, while Perez secured the Hoosier Pride award.

Blanton's leadership award was well deserved. As a captain, Blanton set an example for work ethic in the room, on the mat, and in the classroom. A two-time Academic All-Big Ten honoree, Blanton walked onto the Indiana wrestling team as a freshman and earned a scholarship by his second season, entering the starting lineup in each of his three varsity years. Blanton was also the wrestling representative for IU's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC).

Blanton ends his collegiate career with a 45-32 varsity record. His many career highlights include a weekend in the 2015-16 season with two stunning victories over top-20 wrestlers, for which he was named the Big Ten Wrestler of the Week.

Perez's honor, the Hoosier Pride Award, is given annually to the wrestler who "provides inspiration through sacrifice and perseverance". For the Indiana coaches and teammates, nobody fit that description better than Perez.

After joining the Hoosiers in the fall as a graduate transfer from Princeton University, Perez set a high standard in the wrestling room. Throughout Perez's career, his perseverance against a litany of injury setbacks was enough to light a fire in the hearts of teammates and fans; Perez took that to another level when he started his year on the winning path. He won nine of his first 13 matches on the year, scoring back-to-back pins after upsetting No. 18 Andrew Crone (Wisconsin) to force a dual tiebreaker in Indiana's home opener.

Perez finishes his collegiate career with a 60-46 overall record, and he continues his pursuit of both a Master's Degree in Strategic Management and a Management MBA from the Kelley School of Business.

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