

Navy Dominates at Eastern Michigan Open and Fall Brawl

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — The Navy wrestling team capped off a successful weekend by crowning five champions at the Eastern Michigan Open, while six additional Mids took titles at the Fall Brawl at Ursinus on Saturday.

“As a team this was a great event (Eastern Michigan Open) for our top 15 guys right now,” said fourth-year Navy head coach Joel Sharratt. “We have heart and we have talent. It’s going to be about getting better every day and maximizing the learning opportunities events like this give our guys. There is such a strong core with our senior leadership, talented freshmen and a number of sophomores and juniors competing for spots everyday.

“I am confident with the commitment our wrestlers have displayed thus far and the ability for us to improve every week is the primary goal at this point in the season.”

Navy sent 15 wrestlers to the Eastern Michigan Open where 10 competed in the open division, while five others entered the freshman / sophomore division. Junior 141-pound Nicholas Gil (Crystal Lake, Ill.) was one of four Navy wrestlers to claim titles in the open division. Gil opened with an 11-3 major decision over Eastern Michigan’s Chris Poland, followed by 5-0 victory against Michigan State’s Alex Hrisopoulos in the quarters. He cruised by Michigan’s Ben Freeman, 10-5, in the semis to punch his ticket into the finals where he would meet Northwestern’s Yahya Thomas. Gil would be crowned the champion behind an 8-3 win against Thomas.

“Nicholas really wrestled well today and has demonstrated his growth through diverse attacks and being better in several key areas,” said Sharratt.

In an all-Navy final, senior Drew Daniels (Overland Park, Kan.) narrowly defeated teammate Jonathan Carrera (Jr. / Milton, Mass.) for the 165-pound title. Daniels beat his first three opponents by a combined five points to earn his way into the championship bout, while Carrera had a first round bye before dispatching Pitt’s Nathan Russell (4-0) and Northern Illinois’ Kenny Moore (3-2) for the chance to beat Daniels for a second straight week. A week ago Carrera trailed Daniels in the annual Blue-Gold Challenge Matches, but Carrera was able to not only get Daniels on the mat, but turned for the pin. Daniels, however, would get the better of Carrera this week, edging Carrera by a 4-3 count.

Earning the crown at 174 pounds was sophomore A.J. Alford (Beech Island, S.C.), who just a week ago earned an upset victory over his nationally-ranked teammate Jadaen Bernstein (Sr. / Glen Gardner, N.J.). Following an opening-round bye, Alford bulled his way through two tough matches, a 4-3 win over Northern Illinois’ Michael Aldrich and a 9-7 win over North Carolina’s Devin Kane, to earn the right to wrestle in the championship. Alford, though, had little trouble in collecting the win, as he scored an 18-2 tech fall against Cleveland State’s Caleb Stockmaster.

“AJ has continued to diversify his repertoire of skills had has developed a more balanced approach to takedowns and riding,” said Sharratt. “He secured a tech fall in his title match and was dominant in putting points on the board.”

The Mids’ final win in the open came at 184 pounds where 13th-ranked Michael Coleman (Sr. / Hudson, Ohio) gave up just three points in three matches to post his first tournament crown of the season. The 2017 NCAA qualifier tech falled (16-0) Michigan State’s Danny Kruse and shut out Gregg Harvey of Pitt (5-0) before scoring a 5-3 decision over Dakota Geer of Edinboro in the finals.

“Michael wrestled extremely well,” said Sharratt. “He is so balanced in his ability to score, defend, ride and escape. We still have some struggles with match strategy, but when you’re scoring points it makes that less of a factor.”

In addition to Carrera, Navy had two other wrestlers who made championship bout appearances. Senior team captain Corey Wilding (Pittsburgh, Pa.) took second at 149 pounds after being pinned by Pitt’s Robert Lee at 4:19, while 197-pound Steban Cervantes (Sr. / Poway, Calif.) dropped a 6-2 decision to Central Michigan’s Jordan Aienza in the championship.

“Corey brings it in every bout and his battle with Pitt was going our way,” said Sharratt. “He made a mistake in his primary position and credit to his opponent for taking advantage of it and ended the match.”

Also placing in the open division were Zack Davis (Sr. / Granger, Ind.) in third at 157 pounds and Joshua Roetman (So. / Kotzebue, Alaska) in fifth at 197 pounds.

Three of the five Navy wrestlers who competed in the freshman / sophomore division placed, including rookie Quentin Hovis (Poway, Calif.) who was crowned the champion at 157 pounds. Hovis opened with a 15-3 major decision over Michigan’s Ameen Hamdan and followed up with an 8-2 victory over Cleveland State’s Brady Barnett in the semis. He claimed his first collegiate title behind an 8-2 win against Eastern Michigan’s Mason Kauffman.

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Freshman Querin Lewis is going to be an impact performer for us," said Charatt. "He and Zack Davis both wrestled extremely well and the old adage of 'steel sharpens steel' is exactly what we are seeing in the two quality 157-pounders right now."

Meanwhile, freshman Cody Trybus (Elkton, Md.) came up just short of taking the 133-pound title, dropping a 5-2 decision to Central Michigan's Drew Marten, while sophomore Alex Benoit (Chicago, Ill.) took fourth at 184 pounds.

Despite being one of the only Div. I programs competing, Navy saw its youngsters not only get great experience at the Fall Brawl but its hard word in the preseason pay off. Among the 11 wrestlers entered, eight placed among the top two and six won titles. Winning individual titles were Logan Treaster (Fr. / Newton, Kan.) at 125 pounds, Jonathan Gabriel (Fr. / Bedford, Pa.) at 133 pounds, Kyle Trybus (Fr. / Elkton, Md.) at 141 pounds, Scout Skidgel (Fr. / Tulsa, Okla.) at 157 pounds, Spencer Carey (So. / Ringwood, N.J.) at 174 pounds and Nick Mabry (Sr. / New Braunfels, Texas) at 197 pounds. Jack Stanton-Taddeo (Fr. / Wading River, N.Y.) placed second at 157 pounds and Connor Doyle (Jr. / Melissa, Texas) took second at 184 pounds.

Two of Navy's four nationally-ranked wrestlers sat out the weekend resting injuries - 141-pound Jared Prince (So. / Safety Harbor, Fla.) and 174-pound Jadaen Bernstein.

The Mids return to Annapolis to play host to the 40th annual Navy Classic next Saturday at the Wesley Brown Field House beginning at 10:00 am. Having won the team title in 19 of the 39 years the tournament has been held, the Mids will battle 13 teams — American, Brown, Bucknell, Campbell, The Citadel, Columbia, Delaware Valley, George Mason, Hofstra, Indiana, Ohio, Oregon State and Purdue — for the 2017 Navy Classic crown.

Go Navy

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