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Bison, Jacks Tuning Up for Big 12 Championship Saturday in Last Chance Challenge

This Week

The North Dakota State wrestling team makes its third trip of the season to Brookings, S.D., this Saturday, Feb. 20, to face South Dakota State in the Last Chance Challenge. Action begins at 2 p.m. inside Frost Arena. The event will include more than 40 matches across all 10 weight classes as a tune-up for the Big 12 Championships coming up in two weeks in Tulsa, Okla. There will be no team scoring. Live results will be available on Trackwrestling.com and a live video stream of the main mat will be available on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com).

TV Coverage Set for Big 12 Championship

The first three sessions of the Big 12 Wrestling Championship on March 6-7 will be distributed on Big 12 Now on ESPN+ and the championship matches will be televised live on ESPN2. Saturday's first session begins at 11 a.m. with preliminary and quarterfinal matches followed by the 5 p.m. session with semifinal and consolation quarterfinals. Sunday's action begins at 10 a.m. with consolation semifinals, third- and fifth-place matches followed by the 5 p.m. championship session. All matches will be available on the ESPN app.

Big 12 Championship Tickets on Sale

All-session tickets are on sale at BOKcenter.com for the 2021 Big 12 Wrestling Championship scheduled for March 6-7 at the BOK Center in Tulsa, Okla. General admission reserved tickets start as low as \$49, while reserved seating is \$69 and premium seats are available for \$89 and \$109. All fans will be in pod seating, which increases distancing and minimizes fan crossover when entering and exiting their seats. Fans must purchase all tickets in a selected pod group, available in select section groupings of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 seats.

Four Bison in First NCAA Coaches Ranking

NDSU has four wrestlers in the first coaches ranking for the NCAA Division I Championship released Thursday, Feb. 11. Rankings are determined by a vote of 14 coaches in each weight class with two head coaches from each conference. NDSU freshman 133 Kellyn March is ranked 27th, sophomore 157 Jared Franek is 12th, senior 165 Luke Weber is 31st, and junior heavyweight Brandon Metz is 18th. Among other rankings, Franek is 11th in Trackwrestling (top 33), 13th in InterMat (top 20) and 12th in FloWrestling (top 25), Metz is 29th in Trackwrestling and 21st in FloWrestling, March ranks 26th in Trackwrestling and Dylan Droegemueller ranks 32nd in Trackwrestling.

Big 12 Allocated 45 NCAA Qualifying Spots

The Big 12 Conference has been pre-allocated 45 qualifying spots for the NCAA Division I wrestling championship to be held March 18-20 in St. Louis. Due to a decrease in overall matches, and in particular non-conference matches, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Division I wrestling committee's pre-allocations were based on five-year historical averages. After the 10 automatic qualifying champions from each weight class, the Big 12 will have four additional qualifiers at 125, 133, 149, 165, 197 and 285; three additional at 141, 174 and 184; and two additional at 157 pounds.

Bison Hold Steady in InterMat Top 25, Rank 7th in Mid-Major Top 20

North Dakota State remains ranked 24th in the InterMat Top 25 dual meet rankings this week and is receiving votes in the latest NWCA Coaches Top 25. The Bison also debuted at No. 7 this week in the NWCA/NDS Mid-Major Top 20.

Franek, Pentz Lift Bison to Pair of Wins in Brookings

Jared Franek won both matches at 157 pounds, including the first pin of his career, to help the North Dakota State wrestling team defeat Air Force 28-19 and Utah Valley 25-12 last Saturday, Feb. 13, in Frost Arena. NDSU freshman 197 Owen Pentz added the second and third pins of his career to clinch both victories for the Bison, who finished their dual meet schedule with a 7-3 overall record and 5-2

both victories for the Bison, who finished their dual meet schedule with a 7-3 overall record and 3-2 against Big 12 Conference opponents. The Bison won six of 10 matches against Air Force, including two by pin, a major decision, and an injury default. The Bison went on to win six of 10 matches against Utah Valley, including two pins and a major. Five Bison went undefeated on the day, with Dylan Droegemueller, Luke Weber, and Michael Nelson joining Franek and Pentz.

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