

NJCAA

Labette Edged Iowa Central for Title Nassau Wins Non-scholarship Division

By Johnnie Johnson

Labette finished with 161.5 points, four points short of tying the record of 165.5 set by Iowa Central. The Tritons were the number one ranked team heading into the tournament and had beaten Labette twice in duals this season — was second Saturday with 145 points. It was Labette's first national championship since 2005.

"We worked so hard for this national title," said Labette freshman Ethan Orr, who also won an individual crown at 165 pounds. "We were pretty sure the (team) champion would be us or Iowa Central. But our coach (Joe Renfro) never talked about Iowa Central and trying to beat them. We focused on us. We trained so hard for this national tournament. And when it started, (Renfro) told us to go out and win it." They did, putting four wrestlers in the finals to help get there.

"They performed outstanding," said Renfro, who was named 2012 NJCAA Wrestling Coach of the Year. "They went above and

beyond. They got the pins whenever they had to get the pins. They came together and bonded well. It was a great performance. That's all I can say. I can't take credit," said Renfro. "The boys performed well at the right time. That's the bottom line. They performed well and I'm proud of them."

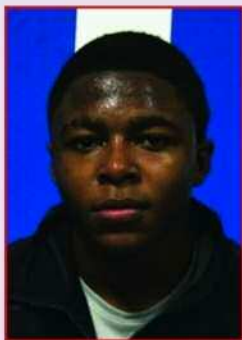
Iowa Central did have three individual champions as top-ranked Edwin Cooper (149) and Jahwon Akui (174) each back-up their rankings. Terell Wilbourn (141) entered the tournament ranked No. 4 nationally but wrestled his way to a title. Top-ranked Brandon Wright (133) lost in the finals. Jacob Colon (125) and Kolten Kersten (197) finished third and Michael Perez was fourth. All seven Tritons earned All-American honors for finishing in the top-8. "We didn't come back with a title this year, but I thought we did some good things and we had lots of individual success," said head coach Luke Moffitt. "Unfortunately we didn't get many chances to go head-to-head with them. To come away with three



Jeff Vesta
125-Neosho



Anthony Abidin
133-Nassau



Terrell Wilbourn
141-Iowa Central



Edwin Cooper
149-Iowa Central



Devin Aguirre
157-Labette



Ethan Orr
165-Labette



Jahwon Akui
174-Iowa Central



John McArdie
184-Middlesex



Mike Johnson
197-Lincoln



Curtis Blaydes
285-Harper

2012 NJCAA All-Americans

125 pounds

1. Jeff Vesta, Neosho County D 3-2
2. Steven Romero, Highline
3. Jacob Colon, Iowa Central D 5-2
4. Jose Torres, Triton
5. Garrett Jones, Labette D 3-2
6. Andrew Clark, Ellsworth
7. Joseph Deangelo, Nassau M 10-2
8. Marco Tamayo, Colby

133 pounds

1. Anthony Abidin of Nassau D 7-4
2. Brandon Wright, Iowa Central
3. LeRoy Barnes, Neosho County F 4:08
4. Michael Rodriguez, North Idaho
5. Eric Hughes, Labette Injury Default
6. Martin Gonzales, Clackamas
7. Philippe Walker, Minnesota West D 11-7
8. Josh Martinez, Colby

141 pounds

1. Terrel Wilbourn, Iowa Central M 11-3
2. Ethan Raley, Lincoln
3. Jordan Basks, Labette F 1:50
4. Cody Randall, Clackamas
5. Wismit Moinius, North Iowa D 6-2
6. Simeon Everett, Springfield Tech
7. Sam Emburgia, Middlesex County D 9-2
8. Jarrett Morrill, North Idaho

149 pounds

1. Edwin Cooper, Iowa Central D 11-8
2. Mac Malderelli, Nassau
3. Mark Marianovich, Lincoln F 6:00
4. Sean Turner, Muskegon
5. Jeremy Davenport, Labette D 4-2
6. Nick Bendon, Southwestern Oregon
7. Nathaniel Garcia, Northwest D 8-6
8. Casey Williams, Itasca

157 pounds

1. Devin Aquirre, Labette D 12-6
2. Justin Pencoock, Gloucester County
3. Ryan Zumwalt, North Idaho F 0:58
4. Michael Perez, Iowa Central
5. Jaksen Cottrell, Northwest M 9-1
6. Billy Bonnette, Middlesex County
7. Mike Togher, Lincoln OT 7-5
8. Chris Gonzalez, Harper

165 pounds

1. Ethan Orr, Labette D 4-0
2. Kris Schimek, Niagara County
3. Ryan Fox, Nassau M 14-2
4. Bryce Lewis, Colby
5. Oshea Smith-Taylor, Rend Lake M 18-8
6. Dylan Bushby, Western Wyoming
7. Bernie Dupuy, Northwest F 4:54
8. Trent Williams, Spartanburg Methodist

174 pounds

1. Jahwon Akui, Iowa Central D 3-2
2. Kyle Sweedman, North Idaho
3. Ray Hall, Labette D 4-3
4. Trent Noon, Clackamas
5. Eric Landon Keiswetter, Pratt 2-OT 3-1
6. Thomas Moman, Iowa Lakes
7. Jameel Bryant, North Iowa M 11-1
8. Lucas Huyber, Highline

184 pounds

1. John McArdle, Middlesex County D 9-8
2. Austin Morehead, Clackamas
3. Matt Dwyer, Lincoln D 8-3
4. Miles Nixon, Northwest
5. Basil Minto, North Iowa D 6-3
6. Dylan Braun, Colby
7. Caleb Rivera, North Idaho Injury Default
8. Trey Hicks, Darton

197 pounds

1. Mike Johnson, Lincoln D 3-1
2. Zach Anderson, Labette
3. Koltan Kersten, Iowa D 3-1
4. Simas Norkus, Western Wyoming
5. Ben Price, Northwest Injury Default
6. Rudi Burtschi, Clackamas
7. Kyle Folk-Freund, Nassau D 11-5
8. Charles Argue, Harper

285 pounds

1. Curtis Blydes, Harper D 6-5
2. Trey Page, Labette
3. Lance Moore, Niagara County D 4-2
4. Jake Laden, Clackamas
5. Matt Wyss, Iowa Lakes D 2-1
6. Yasheen Muddassar, Nassau
7. Gabe Barry, Lincoln D 4-3
8. Tim Tuaquoi, Pratt

champions, a runner-up and two more All-Americans is great," said Moffitt. "I couldn't ask them to do anything more."

Coach Joe Renfro and his team felt they had the team to win the title, but those outside of the Cardinal nation felt that it was Iowa Central's title for the taking based on the strength of the Triton's team, previous meetings between the team during the season.

Earlier in the year, Iowa Central would show their strength during the Cliff Keen NWCA National Duals where the Tritons would dominate the Cardinals 31-10 in the finals for the national dual title. A few weeks after the national duals, they would dual again and not be decided until the

heavyweight match. Labette had shown that they could close the gap on the Tritons and would be a contender for the title come February.

At the traditional tournament, the Labette and Iowa Central would enter the tournament with a full ten member contingent between the two teams, both would have four finalist, and Iowa Central would crown three and Labette two champs. But, the Cardinals would come away with nine All-Americans to Iowa Central's seven All-American's which would prove to be the difference for the title. The two teams only had one head-to-head meeting in the tournament and that would take place at the 141-pound semi-finals where Iowa

Central's top ranked Terrel Wilbourn would down the Labette's third ranked Jordan Basks by the score of 10-4. Despite only meeting once in the tournament, Iowa Central and Labette would have wrestlers in eight of ten finals matches.

Anthony Abidin of Nassau defeated Brandon Wright of Iowa Central, 7-4, to claim the national title at 133 pounds. Abidin is Nassau's 10th national champion in the college's fifty year history. Abidin's victory helped Nassau to a fifth-place finish over-all, but were the top non-scholarship team and were crowned the NJCAA Champions for non-scholarship teams.

Coach Schmidt was honored as the non-scholarship coach of the year for his efforts, but after receiving the award, coach Schmidt graciously declined the award and presented it to his assistant coach Vougar Orounjov. Orounjov a former world champion was recognized by his peers for his outstanding coaching skills. Coach Orounjov was very instrumental in the success of the Nassau wrestling program and preparing the wrestlers for the national stage.

Anthony Abidin (133lbs) led the Nassau Lions to their fifth NJCAA (Div. III) non scholarship wrestling national championship. Nassau had a total of six All-Americans: Joe DeAngelo (125lbs), Anthony Abidin (133lbs), Mac Maldarelli (149lbs), Ryan Fox (165lbs), Kyle Folk-Freund (197lbs), Yaseen Mudassar (285lbs). Coach Vougar Orounjov was named NJCAA (non scholarship) Coach of the Year. Nassau sent eight wrestlers to the NJCAA after a disappointing second place finish at the District Championships.

Defending national champion Clackamas finished fourth in the team standings with 97 points. The Cougars were on fire during the opening day, finding four of the team's qualifiers (133, 174, 184, 197) in the semifinals and two others (141, 285) having a strong showing in the consolation wrestle back for a shot at third place. At the end of the day, six Cougars were guaranteed All-American status. Saturday was an entirely different story for Clackamas as they encountered some bad luck in close finishes as well as crucial injuries to #4 ranked Martin Gonzalez and #4 ranked Rudi Burtschi.

Clackamas' lone national finalist was Austin Morehead, who fell in the finals at 184 pounds to John McArdle of Middlesex. It marked the second straight year in which

Morehead finished as the national runner-up. McArdle raced out to a 5-0 lead after a takedown and three-point nearfall from a cradle. McArdle took an 8-3 lead into the second period. Morehead mounted a late comeback, but came up short, 9-8. Top-ranked 2011 All-American Austin Morehead was the lone Cougar to advance to the championship round where he lost a heartbreaking 9-8 decision. Morehead also finished 2nd place in the 2011 championships. Morehead's grace under defeat was recognized by tournament officials as he was awarded the Joseph Rockenbach Sportsmanship Award.

Lincoln College finished third in the team standings behind Labette and Iowa Central, and crowned one national champion, Mike Johnson (197), and six placewinners. Johnson, a seventh-place finisher at the 2011 NJCAA Wrestling Championships, scored the go-ahead takedown against Zach Anderson of Labette off a bear hug with six seconds remaining to win his national title in dramatic fashion, 3-1.

Curtis Blaydes of Harper, an Illinois state champion, won the title at heavyweight with a 6-5 victory over Jack "Trey" Page of Labette.

Next year the NJCAA Wrestling Championships Tournament moves to Des Moines, Iowa, at the Jacobson Building located on the Iowa State Fairgrounds.

2012 NJCAA Wrestling Championships Final Team Standings

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Labette 161.5 | 22. Iowa Western 18.5 |
| 2. Iowa Central 145 | 23. Mercyhurst NE 17.5 |
| 3. Lincoln 111 | 24. SW Oregon 16.5 |
| 4. Clackamas 97 | 25. Itasca 13 |
| 5. Nassau 87.5 | 25. Minnesota West 13 |
| 6. North Idaho 86 | 25. Rend Lake 13 |
| 7. Northwest 79 | 28. Darton 10.5 |
| 8. Harper 54.5 | 28. Spartanburg 10.5 |
| 9. Middlesex 52 | 28. Springfield Tech 10.5 |
| 10. Colby 51.5 | 31. Thaddeus Stevens 10 |
| 11. Neosho 47 | 32. Ridgewater 8.5 |
| 12. Gloucester 42 | 31. Rochester CTC 5.5 |
| 13. Niagara 41 | 32. Jamestown 5 |
| 14. Highline 38 | 33. Waubensee 4.5 |
| 14. Iowa Lakes 38 | 33. Yakima Valley 4.5 |
| 16. North Iowa 35 | 35. Bergen 3 |
| 17. Muskegon 33.5 | 35. Wentworth Military 3 |
| 18. Western Wyo 32.5 | 37. Wright 2 |
| 19. Pratt 25.5 | 38. Arkansas Baptist 0 |
| 20. Ellsworth 22 | 38. Kennedy King 0 |
| 21. Triton 20.5 | 38. NW Kansas Tech 0 |

Championship Finals

- 125:** No. 3 Jeff Vesta (Neosho) dec. No. 1 Steven Romero (Highline), 3-2
- 133:** No. 10 Anthony Abidin (Nassau) dec. No. 1 Brandon Wright (Iowa Central), 7-4
- 141:** No. 4 Terrel Wilbourn (Iowa Central) maj. dec. No. 1 Ethan Raley (Lincoln), 11-3
- 149:** No. 1 Edwin Cooper (Iowa Central) dec. No. 2 Mac Malderelli (Nassau), 11-8
- 157:** No. 3 Devin Aguirre (Labette) dec. No. 1 Justin Pencook (Gloucester), 12-6
- 165:** No. 1 Ethan Orr (Labette) dec. No. 6 Kris Schimek (Niagara), 4-0
- 174:** No. 1 Jahwon Akui (Iowa Central) dec. Kyle Sweedman (North Idaho), 3-2
- 184:** No. 3 John McArdie (Middlesex) dec. No. 1 Austin Morehead (Clackamas), 9-8
- 197:** No. 1 Mike Johnson (Lincoln) dec. No. 3 Zach Anderson (Labette), 3-1
- 285:** No. 2 Curtis Blaydes (Harper) dec. No. 11 Jack "Trey" Page (Labette), 6-5

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