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**March 24, 2023**

**Iowa Wrestling  
Communications Contact: James Allan**

**Real Woods Named Mike Howard Most Valuable Wrestler**

**IOWA CITY, Iowa** – Senior Real Woods was named the recipient of the Mike Howard Most Valuable Wrestler Award on Friday night at the University of Iowa wrestling team's annual awards banquet in the Feller Club Room at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

Woods was the 141-pound runner-up at the 2023 NCAA Championships last week in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He earned his third career All-America honor and reached the finals to extend Iowa's streak of consecutive NCAA finals appearances to 33 straight national tournaments.

The Albuquerque, New Mexico, native finished his first season as a Hawkeye with a 20-1 record with 12 bonus point wins. Woods tied for the team lead with six major decisions, and he won 12 matches against ranked opponents on the year.

Woods was one of six Hawkeyes presented All-America awards. Spencer Lee and Jacob Warner earned their fifth career All-America honor, Tony Cassioppi became a four-time All-American, Max Murin earned his second All-America distinction and Nelson Brands reached the podium for the first time.

Cassioppi finished fourth at the NCAA Championships at 285, Nelson Brands (174) and Warner (197) were fifth and Murin (149) and Lee (125) both finished sixth. Lee and Warner are the second and third five-time All-Americans in program history, while Cassioppi is the 25th four-timer.

Iowa has crowned at least one All-American in 52 consecutive NCAA Championships.

Cassioppi earned the Most Pins Award, as he finished his senior season with 11 falls – the most by a Hawkeye since Thomas Gilman's 11 in 2017. The Illinois native tied for the team lead with 25 wins with 16 bonus point victories.

Murin and Warner – both sixth-year seniors -- shared the Mike J. McGivern Award, presented to the most courageous wrestler, and Murin was the recipient of the John and Dorothy Sill Award, presented to the most dedicated wrestler.

Murin won a Blood Round match for the first time in his career to earn a spot on the podium at the NCAA Championships. He finished the season with a career-high 25 victories, which includes career-bests in falls (4) and technical falls (4).

Warner earned his fifth All-America honor after winning four consecutive matches on the consolation side of the bracket before finishing fifth at the NCAA Championships. He

entered the tournament as the No. 14 seed overall. Warner finished the season with a 22-8 record, running his career record to 97-28.

Warner was also the recipient of the J. Donald McPike, Sr., Award for having the highest-grade point average by a graduating senior.

Nelson Brands was the recipient of the Most Improved Award. Brands earned the first All-America honor of his career, finishing fifth at 174 pounds. The Iowa City, Iowa, native advanced to the quarterfinals as a No. 11 seed before winning three matches on the back side to land on the podium for the first time. Brands finished the season with a 15-8 record with nine wins over ranked opponents.

Three Hawkeyes – Lee, Cassioppi and freshman Drake Rhodes – were presented Coaches Appreciation Awards. Lee wrapped up his career with 98 career victories and five All-America honors, Cassioppi was the anchor at the end of Iowa's dual lineup and as a 165 pounder, Rhodes wrestled up a weight class in five duals at 174 and 184 pounds as a true freshman.

The Hawkeyes completed the 2022-23 season with second place finishes at both the Big Ten Championships and NCAA Championships. It marked the 14th time in the last 15 national tournaments that Iowa earned a team trophy.

Iowa crowned at least five All-Americans for the 10th straight year and the team was one of four in the nation to have 10 national qualifiers. The Hawkeyes had 14 wrestlers earn Academic All-Big Ten honors -- tied for the second most in a season in program history. Iowa has had 10 or more Academic All-Big Ten honorees in six straight seasons.

## **2023 AWARD WINNERS**

**Mike Howard Most Valuable:** Real Woods

**Mike J. McGivern Award (Most Courageous):** Max Murin, Jacob Warner

**John and Dorothy Sill Award (Most Dedicated):** Max Murin

**Most Improved Award:** Nelson Brands

**J. Donald McPike, Sr., Award (High Senior GPA):** Jacob Warner

**Coaches Appreciation:** Spencer Lee, Tony Cassioppi, Drake Rhodes

**Most Pins Award:** Tony Cassioppi (11)

**All-American Award:** Spencer Lee, Real Woods, Max Murin, Nelson Brands, Jacob Warner, Tony Cassioppi

James Allan | Associate Director, Athletic Communications | The University of Iowa  
S300 Carver-Hawkeye Arena | Iowa City, IA 52242-1020  
Office: 319-335-9411 | Cell: 319-530-5792 | [james-allan@uiowa.edu](mailto:james-allan@uiowa.edu) | Twitter: @jcallan04

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