

All for one

Iowa's six All-Americans, including three champs, win NCAAs again

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CLEVELAND

Jim Zalesky may not have won over all of the Iowa wrestling fans yet, but he's won just about everything else.

Zalesky's first Iowa wrestling team won the school's fourth consecutive NCAA Division I Wrestling Championship here last night, outscoring Minnesota by 13 points.

The Hawkeyes, behind three individual champions, scored 115 points compared to 102 for Minnesota and 99.5 for Oklahoma State. Minnesota's finish was the best in the NCAA for a Big Ten team other than Iowa since Penn State was second to the Hawks in 1993.

Mark Ironside, Jeff McGinness and Joe Williams won individual titles for the Hawkeyes, who have now won seven of the last eight titles.

In addition, Eric Juergens and Lee Fullhart each finished third, and Wes Hand was eighth to give the Hawkeyes six All-Americans.

Williams was also named the Outstanding Wrestler in the tournament.

"I'm real happy for Jimmy," said Minnesota coach J Robinson, who recruited Zalesky and coached him at Iowa. "That's a hard job, I had it for a year (in 1984 Robinson was the acting coach while Gable worked on the Olympics). Jimmy weathered the storm very good. Sure, he made mistakes, but he ... remember what place Iowa finished in (Dan) Gable's first year? Third."

Zalesky, one of Iowa's six three-time national champions, said he didn't feel the title was safe until after

Ironside and McGinness had won.

"It feels real good, I'm happy for the team, the staff and the fans," said Zalesky, who is the interim coach this year while Gable takes time off. "The only time I felt any real pressure was after we didn't have a good first round.

"This is a great group of seniors. They faced a lot of adversity and they fought back. This is what we shoot for, the national title. Those three (dual) losses helped us down the road."

Iowa took a 103-98 lead over the Gophers into the finals while Oklahoma State was third with 95.5. Zalesky liked his team's positions with the three senior in the finals.

"I felt good going into the finals," he said. "I felt good about those three, they'd been there before and they're our leaders."

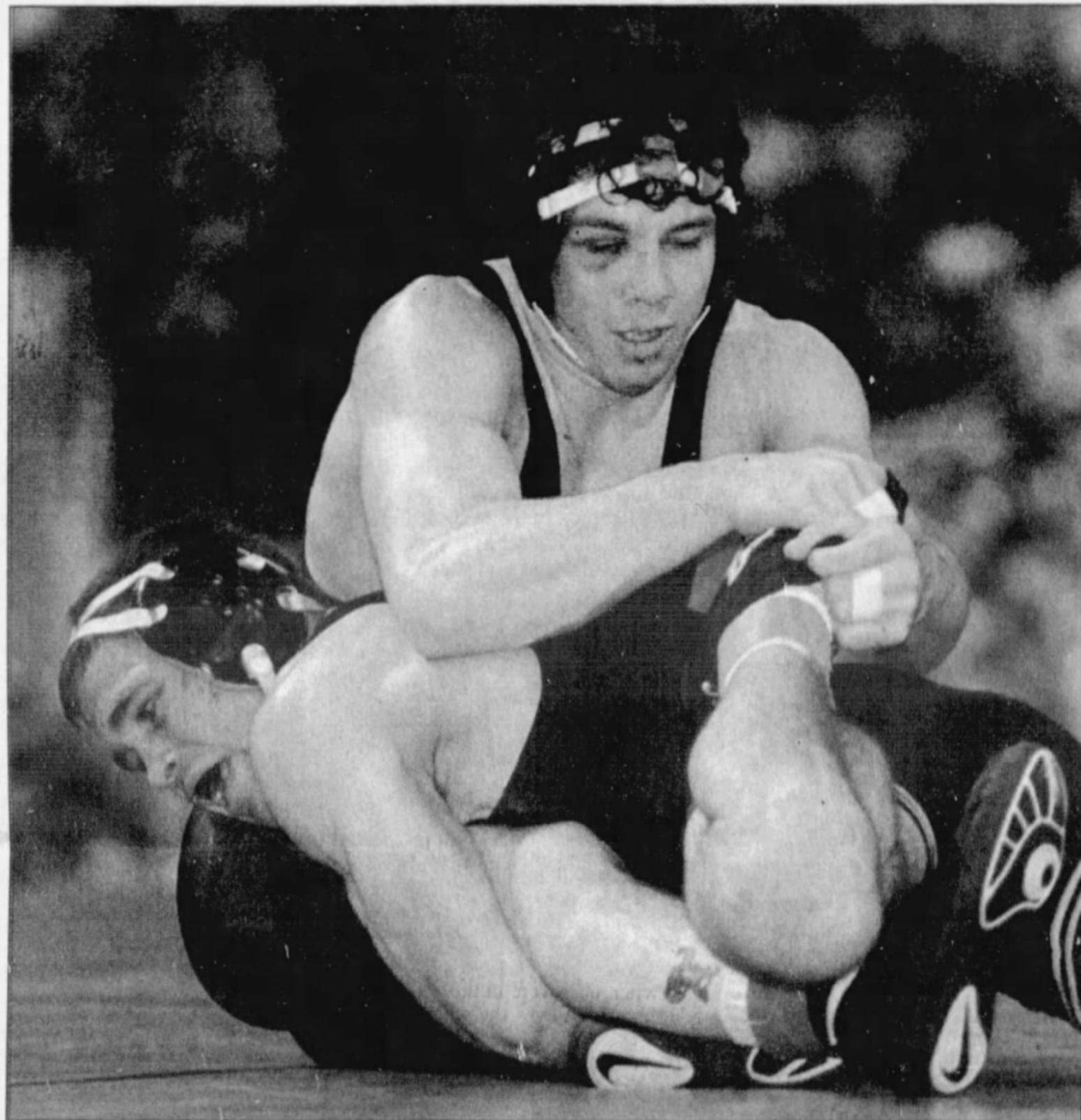
The win for Zalesky comes at the end of a season which saw Iowa lost at Carver-Hawkeye Arena, not once, but three times. Two of the dual losses — to Minnesota and Penn State — were avenged. But not until winning this tournament over favored Oklahoma State did that loss get avenged.

Ironside, who won for the second straight year, and finished his career by being an All-American four times, said he living proof that hard work pays.

"This feels great, the second undefeated season in a row," said the senior from Cedar Rapids. "The bottom line is hard work pays off. If you listened to your coaches and do what they say, this is the outcome. It's not always pretty like tonight wasn't, but I got the job done."

That he did by a 9-3 score over Shawn Enright of Ohio University.

"Back at the hotel I learned that we probably needed one win (to claim the

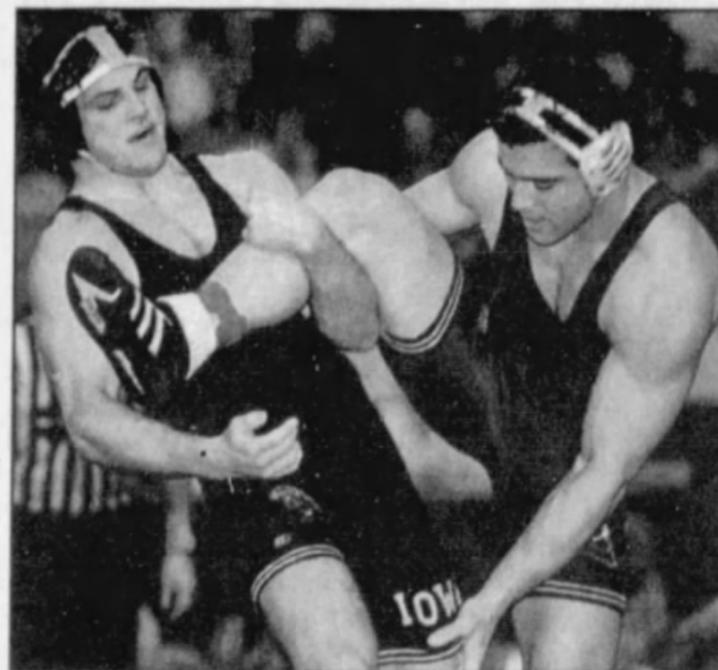


team title) and I like that kind of pressure. We did what they said couldn't be done last year and this year. Last year (when he won) was the most exciting day of my life. This is even bigger. Now I'm ready to go shoot some turkeys."

Technically, Ironside's win didn't give Iowa the title. Minnesota still had a chance until McGinness ended his college career with his second title.

He scored a takedown with just 10 seconds left to beat Casey Cunningham of Central Michigan 3-1. That win also avenged one of his losses this season, a year when he had a 33-4 mark.

See WRESTLING, page D4



AP PHOTOS
Above, Iowa's Mark Ironside, bottom, holds on to Ohio's Shawn Enright in their 134-pound championship match Saturday. Ironside won, 9-3. At left, the Hawkeyes' Lee Fullhart, of Decorah, gets the leg of Pittsburgh's Mark Bodo in a 190-pound consolation match. Fullhart placed third.

WRESTLING

Iowa crowns three champs en route to team title

Continued from page D1

"I was nervous going out there and I didn't wrestle real good," admitted the former four-time Iowa prep champ. "I guess like all Iowa wrestlers I'm somewhat of a perfectionist. I always want to dominate."

McGinness, who won his first title in 1995, failed to place in 1996 and red-shirted last year, said missing part of Iowa's record performance in the UNI-Dome hurt.

"Not being part of that last year hurt and I wanted to be sure we're national champions when I went out," said McGinness, who also won the match that clinched Iowa's 25th straight Big Ten Conference title two weeks ago.

"At the Big Ten I knew, but I had a feeling today. I like that pressure, but every time you go out on the mat at Carver-Hawkeyes there's pressure."

McGinness, who started the season slowly while adjusting to moving up two weight classes, said this title was different from the first.

"In 1995 it was more of a load off my shoulders," he said. "I was still putting a lot of pressure on myself to perform. It was more of a relief."

"This one is more of a celebration. The last half year has been more fun for me, more like it was in high school."

"It's a real emotional win for me. It's something I'll share with my fiance and parents and friends."

Williams, who finished seventh in this event as a true freshman, captured his third straight title, this one up a weight at 167.

He was in control from the start of his title match and scored a 7-4 win over Brandon Slay of Pennsylvania. He is the sixth three-time champion in Iowa history.

It was the third time this year Williams has beaten Slay, also second at this weight last year.

"I wrestled a little bit better tonight," said Williams, who hasn't been happy with some of his matches.

"Winning for the third time feels great. I'm probably more excited about the team winning, but it's nice to go out undefeated in my senior year."

"This one means a little bit more. It's not how you start, but how you finish."

Oklahoma State won the first two

weights, but a couple of team points deducted during the consolation rounds in the morning doomed any hopes of a title.

Coach John Smith and wrestler Mark Smith, his brother, were each penalized a team point for their action after a controversial loss by mark in the match for third place at 167 pounds.

Teague Moore got the Cowboys off to a fast start in the finals with a rare fall. He was ahead of Michigan State's David Morgan in the second period but neither wrestler had control when the fall came at 4:50.

Eric Guerrero defended his 126 title with a 5-4 decision over Wisconsin's Eric Jetton.

Oklahoma State's other finalist was Hardell Moore at 158.

Ohio's Dwight Gardner, seeded third, dominated Moore 7-1. Ohio U is coached by former Northern Iowa assistant Joel Greenlee.

Smith was disappointed his team didn't cap off a perfect season with a national title, but still proud of what the Cowboys accomplished.

"We wanted to win the national championship, it just didn't happen for us," said Smith.

"We didn't fail. We had a good tournament. I'm disappointed we didn't win the tournament, but this team shouldn't feel like a failure."

Minnesota moved up a notch to second after being third last year. Robinson didn't say he was happy with the placing, but he likes the direction his program is going.

"It's like, when you get this close ... I guess it's a good stepping stone for us," he said.

"It shows us we're going in the right direction, we're making progress."

The other individual champions were Illinois' undefeated Eric Siebert at 150, Mitch Clark of Ohio State at 177, Tim Hartung of Minnesota at 190 and undefeated Stephan Neal of Cal-Bakersfield at heavyweight.

Neal won his title with a dominating 20-5 technical fall over Iowa state junior Trent Hynek, the No. 11 seed who made it to the title match with a 23-9 record.

Clark, the No. 1 seed, completely dominated the final. He beat Vertus Jones of West Virginia 17-0 in just 3:00.

Siebert won his title despite suffering separated ribs in the Big Ten tournament.

He was less than 100 percent and there was some doubt he could even compete, but he won the title with a 7-3 decision over Chad Kraft of Minnesota.

"Not being part of that last year hurt, and I wanted to be sure we're national champions when I went out."

— Jeff McGinness
Iowa wrestler