



Press-Citizen/Scott Norris

Drexel's Damien Craighton tries to fight off Iowa's Lee Fullhart during Fullhart's 197-pound, second-round victory at the NCAA Championships in State College, Pa., Thursday night.

Iowa grabs narrow lead after 1st day

By Bryce Miller ★
The Press-Citizen

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — The Oklahoma State wrestling team suffered the equivalent of a crushing right hand to the jaw Thursday night at the NCAA Championships.

Minnesota and Iowa will decide whether it was a knock-out punch or not.

After a strong first round, the top-ranked Cowboys finished 3-6 in the night session — including a stunning loss by previously-undefeated Mark Smith at 174 pounds — to stagger the top-ranked team favorite at the Bryce Jordan Center.

"Probably the worst two hours of my life in this sport,"

Oklahoma State coach John Smith said.

Iowa leads the field with 30

Inside, 4B

■ Notes from the tournament.

■ Team scores and individual results.

■ The NCAAs in pictures.

points, including four wrestlers alive in the championship bracket. Oklahoma State (29 ½), Minnesota (29), Oklahoma (28) and Cal-

Bakersfield (25) round out the top five.

Iowa State and Penn State stand tied for sixth with 23½ points.

Minnesota and Iowa State

Iowa matchups

TODAY

Championship bracket

■ **133 pounds** — Eric Juergens (32-6) vs. Eric Larkin, Arizona State (25-3).

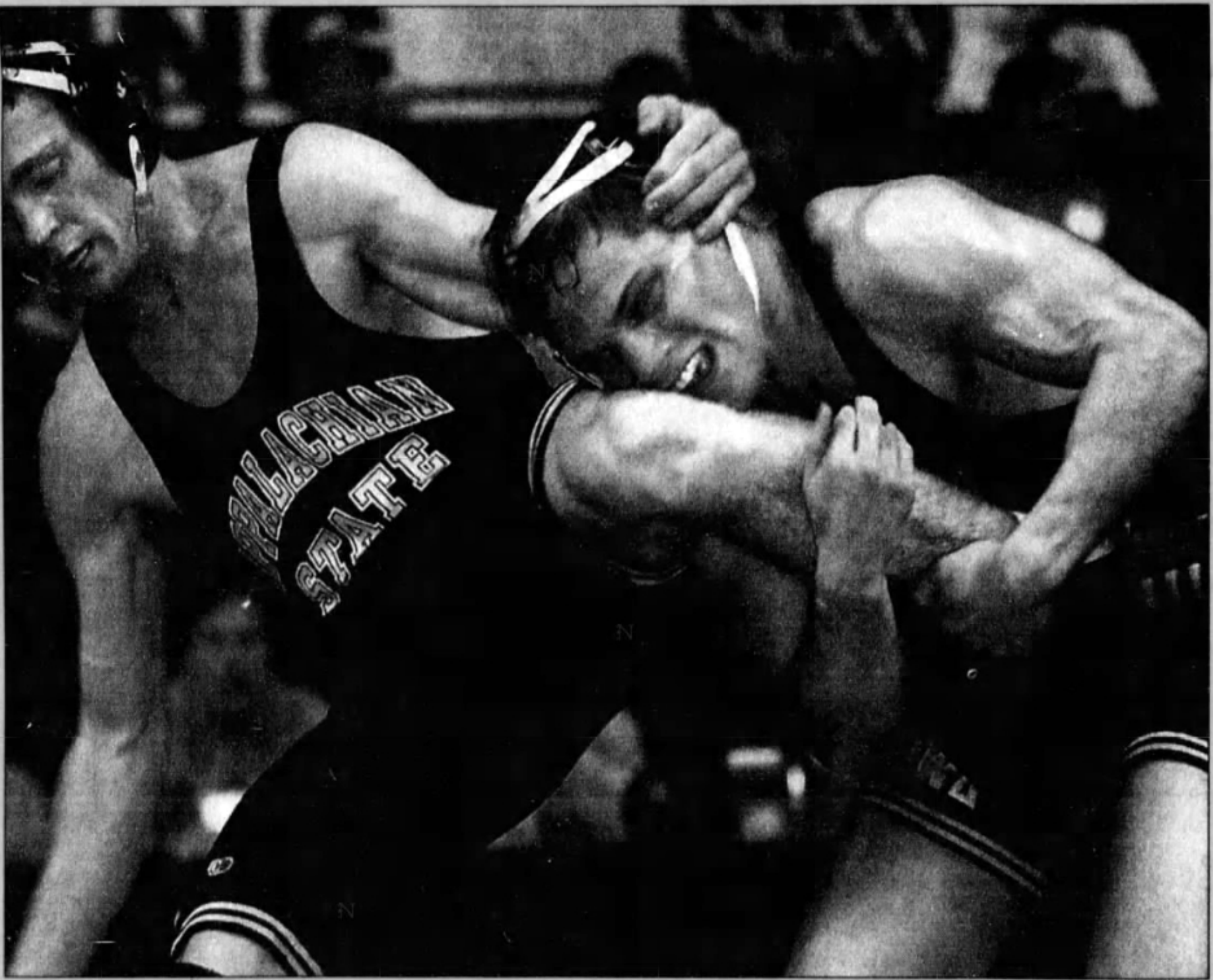
■ **141** — Doug Schwab (35-4) vs. Whitey Chlebove, West Virginia (25-6).

■ **149** — T.J. Williams (37-0) vs. Shawn Bradley, Cornell (37-10).

■ **197** — Lee Fullhart (32-4) vs. Sam Neider, Northwestern (27-9).

claim the most wrestlers in the championship round with five each. Iowa, Oklahoma, Penn State and Central Michigan each have four.

See WRESTLING/4B



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UI's Doug Schwab (right) gets in on the leg of Appalachian State's Jeremy Hart in a second-round match at 141.

Wrestling

from 1B

Minnesota coach J Robinson said that if Oklahoma State left the door open for other team championship contenders, it is too early to forecast who did — or did not — go through it.

"Is the door opened? It can close real quick," Robinson said. "So who knows?"

Four Iowa wrestlers remain in the hunt for national titles: Eric Juergens (133), Doug Schwab (141), T.J. Williams (149) and Lee Fullhart (197).

Each of the four scored bonus points for the Hawkeyes, while Schwab and Williams picked up additional team points in both matches. Schwab decked Tommy Davis of North Carolina State 16-6 before rolling past Appalachian State's Jeremy Hart 13-5. Undefeated and top-ranked Williams used just 1 minute, 8 seconds of his first match to pin UNC-Greensboro's Melvin Saunders before scoring a 13-3 major decision against West Virginia's Joe Carr.

Iowa also ran into its share of second-round problems.

Big Ten champion Jamie Heidt fell 7-6 to Chris Ayres of Lehigh and all-American Wes Hand dropped a 4-1 decision to North Carolina's Matt Kenny. In a matchup of No. 8 and No. 9 seeds, lower-seeded Gabe McMahan lost a 9-7 decision to Sam Kline of West Virginia.

"Right now it looks like, the way things are going, it could be won in

wrestle-backs — for everybody," Iowa coach Jim Zalesky said. "We started with nine guys, we've still got nine guys left. That's the best thing about it."

Minnesota survived the second round with the least amount of bracket-related cuts and bruises.

The Gophers carried five wrestlers into today's championship quarterfinals, while all nine of their entrants remain alive. The only loss for Minnesota in the winner's bracket happened at 125, where Chuckie Connor of North Carolina caught Leroy Vega and recorded a fall in 40 seconds.

The upset of the night came at 174, where unseeded Kevin Boross of North Carolina State stunned top-ranked Smith of Oklahoma State 3-2 — the first loss for Smith in 33 matches this season. Boross entered the tournament with a 21-6 record.

Mark Smith appeared to either misread the clock or the score at the end of the match.

"Mark Smith didn't know what the score was," John Smith said. "But you can't stand around for two, three periods and expect to win against somebody you should be able to control."

The Cowboys sprinted in front during the opening round Thursday morning by winning nine of their 10 matches.

Oklahoma State's only loss in the first round came during an unseeded match at 157, where Paris Ruiz of Fresno State beat Charles Walker 5-3 in overtime. Six of the Cowboys wins provided bonus points, including a come-from-behind win at 184 when seventh-seeded Mark Munoz — who trailed 6-2 in the third period — pinned

Nate Burroughs of Brown.

Iowa posted a 7-2 record in the opening session and notched bonus points in six of those matches.

The Hawkeyes picked up Williams' fall and a technical fall from Hand, three major decisions for Juergens, Schwab and McMahan, as well as an injury default at 157 from Heidt.

First-round losses for Iowa came at 165 — Ben Uker fell 12-3 to Cal State-Bakersfield's Andy Varner — and 184, where 1998 NCAA runner-up Vertus Jones of West Virginia rolled to a 24-9 technical fall over Paul Jenn.

Uker rebounded in Thursday night's consolations with a 16-7 major decision over Brian Wood of Wyoming, while Jenn knocked off Ohio State's Nick Preston, 11-6.

Minnesota finished 6-3 in the opening session, but suffered the biggest upset of the three team favorites when Mike Mendoza of Cal State-Bakersfield held on for a 6-5 win against fourth-seeded Troy Marr.

The Gophers rebounded in the second session, though.

Consolation rounds today will give Oklahoma State an indication of where it stands heading into the back stretch of the tournament.

"We have to go back and we have to regroup as a team, there's no question about it," John Smith said. "We can't assume that we're not in this anymore. We've got quite a few good people in the consolations that can help us a ton."

Iowa coach Zalesky shares that philosophy.

"There's still a lot of wrestling left," he said.