

Knights rule Division III

By JIM NELSON
 Courier Sports Writer

A D A . O H I O

How good can you be?

That is all Wartburg College wrestling coach Jim Miller asked of his team.

Each time the Knights thought they answered that question, Miller raised the bar higher.

In the end, Miller couldn't raise it high enough.

With the greatest team performance in NCAA Division III national wrestling tournament history, Wartburg claimed its third team title Saturday at Ohio Northern University.

It did so by vaulting high over the bar Miller set.

Ten Knights earned all-America status, six made the finals with three winning national championships, and nine competitors finished fourth or better.

When it was all added up, Wartburg racked up a tournament record 166.5 points, shattering the 1976 record of 143 set by Montclair State.

Its 82 point margin of victory over runner-up Augsburg was the widest in the tournament's 28-year history. UW-Stevens Point finished third.

Luther finished fifth with 56.5 points, and Upper Iowa was ninth with 33.5

Wilkes College won the first Division III title in 1974 by 49 points. That had been the largest margin of victory.

"That is what I wanted to find out," said Miller. "How good could this team be? If you don't set the bar real high, you are not going to find out.

"Like Iowa in 1997, or Rulon Gardner beating an unbeatable guy. You never know what you can accomplish.

"You can't put limits on anybody. If you put a limit on them, they are probably not going to go over that limit.

"It has been a dream season. It has been a magical year. It's almost like I've quit being surprised."

Heath Ropp at 125, Wil Kelly at 141 and LeRoy Gardner III won individual national titles for the Knights.

After leading Kings College's Mitch

Marcks 3-0 early, Ropp had to use an escape with 31 seconds left in the match to force overtime at 4-all.

Overtime didn't settle the tie, and Ropp scored a reversal in the tiebreaker to win, 6-4.

Kelly dominated James Morgan of Kings, 7-1 in his title match.

"I've been wanting this for a long time," said Kelly, the former Dubuque Wahlert three-time state champ who began his career at Iowa.

Gardner, who didn't start wrestling until he was a high school sophomore, beat Wisconsin-LaCrosse freshman Ryan Allen, 3-2, for his title.

After losing in the semifinals twice previously, Gardner wasn't going to settle for second Saturday.

"It feels good to help out," said Gardner. "Especially the way we won the tournament. I couldn't ask for anything more.

"We did it as a team. It wasn't a bunch of individuals out there. We wrestled

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Photo courtesy of JOHN HOLINKA / Ohio Northern Sports Information

Wartburg's Wil Kelly (right) contributed to the Division III title run with an 8-2 semifinal decision over Kris Harrington of SUNY-Brockport at 141 pounds.

Victory party to be held for Wartburg Tuesday

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together, and we wrestled our hearts out."

Wartburg's other three finalists fell short.

Ozzie Saxon dropped a 4-1 decision to Dave Ilaria of the College of New Jersey at 133.

At 157, Kevin Bratland lost to undefeated freshman Marcus LeVesseur of Augsburg, 4-2.

Sonny Alvarez led early in his 184-pound final with Wisconsin-Stevens Point's Bradley Marten, but lost in overtime, 6-4.

Bart Mehlert was third at 149, Ryan Sturm was fourth at 165, Mark Sturm was sixth at 174 and Alain Djoumessi was third at 197 to round out Wartburg's all-Americans.

The Knights picked up right where they left off Friday in the semifinals.

Ropp, Saxon and Kelly each dominated their opponents, with Kelly beating top-seeded Kris Harrington of SUNY-Brockport 8-2 at 141.

Bratland won the rubber match against Aaron Loewens of Buena Vista with a 4-1 win.

Ryan Sturm almost joined his teammates in the finals, but after falling behind 8-0 to Pat North of RIT in the first period, Sturm's furious comeback fell short, 10-8.

Alvarez also won a rubber match, beating top-seeded Paul Cleary of Loras, for the second straight time, 2-1 on a technical violation in a tie-breaker.

Gardner made it six in the finals, with a 5-3 decision over Pat Thomas of Loras.

Wartburg lost two other semi-final matches, and both were to Iowa Conference opponents.

At 149, Kurth beat Bart Mehlert, 7-5, in the rubber match of their season series, avenging a loss in the conference finals. Meyers made it a season sweep of Alain Djoumessi at 197, 4-2.

Other national champions were Rami Ratel of Montclair State at 149, Jesse Reyerson of Luther at 165, Cody Koenig of Wisconsin-Stevens Point at 174, Brent Meyers of Upper Iowa at 197.

NCAA Division III

Team Standings

1. Wartburg	166.5
2. Augsburg	84.5
3. UW-Stevens Point	71.0
4. Montclair State	69.0
5. Luther	56.5
6. SUNY-Brockport	52.5
7. College of New Jersey	45.5
8. UW-LaCrosse	41.5
9. Upper Iowa	33.5
10. Loras	31.5

125

SEMIFINALS - Heath Ropp (Wartburg) dec. Greg Brendemuehl (Augsburg) 8-2; Mitch Marcks (Kings) dec. Jason Peck (Montclair St.) 7-6.

THIRD ROUND CONSOLATIONS - Jared Selover (Baldwin-Wallace) dec. Nick Kahagias (Chicago) 9-4; Tom Prairie (Williams) threw Salvador Cruz (Brockport), 4:06.

CONSOLATION SEMIFINALS - Selover threw Brendemuehl, 6:16; Prairie dec. Peck 11-6.

SEVENTH - Cruz threw Kahagias, 6:10.

FIFTH - Peck medical forfeit over Brendemuehl.

THIRD - Prairie threw Selover, 2:25.

CHAMPIONSHIP - Ropp dec. Marcks 6-4 TB.

133

SEMIFINALS - Dave Ilaria (TCNJ) dec. Mike Waldron (Lycorning) 2-1; Ozzie Saxon (Wartburg) dec. Brady Holtz (UW-Stevens Point) 7-4.

THIRD ROUND CONSOLATIONS - Barry Wise (Delaware Valley) dec. Gary Mikolay (Montclair St.) 12-4; Mark Matzek (Augsburg) dec. Tenkoran Agyeman (Oswego St.) 12-4.

CONSOLATION SEMIFINALS - Wise dec. Holtz 11-4; Matzek dec. Waldron 12-8.

SEVENTH - Agyeman dec. Mikolay 5-3.

FIFTH - Waldron dec. Holtz 10-3.

THIRD - Wise dec. Matzek 8-2.

CHAMPIONSHIP - Ilaria dec. Saxon 4-1.

141

SEMIFINALS - Wil Kelly (Wartburg) dec. Kris Harrington (SUNY Brockport) 8-2; Jim Morgan (Kings) dec. Keith Poloskey (Springfield) 3-2.

THIRD ROUND CONSOLATIONS - Matt Kapraun (Augustana) dec. Nate Yeasted (Muhlenberg) 7-2; Jamell Tidwell (Augsburg) dec. Jeff Patzke (Luther) 15-5.

CONSOLATION SEMIFINALS - Harrington dec. Kapraun 16-4; Tidwell dec. Poloskey 13-9.

SEVENTH - Yeasted dec. Patzke 4-2.

FIFTH - Poloskey dec. Kapraun 8-7.

THIRD - Tidwell dec. Harrington 6-3.

CHAMPIONSHIP - Kelly dec. Morgan 7-1.

149

SEMIFINALS - Rami Ratel (Montclair St.) technical fall over Clint Manny (Simpson) 17-2, 6:33; Garrett Kurth (Luther) dec. Bart Mehlert (Wartburg) 7-5.

THIRD ROUND CONSOLATIONS - Sean Collins (Wheaton) dec. Zak Kallai (Case Western) 3-2; Troy Fabry (UW-LaCrosse) dec. Andrew Vogel (Messiah) 3-2.

CONSOLATION SEMIFINALS - Mehlert dec. Collins 7-1; Manny dec. Fabry 4-2.

SEVENTH - Vogel dec. Kallai 11-6.

FIFTH - Collins dec. Fabry 3-2.

THIRD - Mehlert dec. Manny 8-3.

CHAMPIONSHIP - Ratel dec. Kurth 12-4.

157

SEMIFINALS - Marcus LeVesseur (Augsburg) dec. Garrett South (Luther) 8-1; Kevin Bratland (Wartburg) dec. Aaron Loewens (Buena Vista) 4-1.

THIRD ROUND CONSOLATIONS - Dustin Roland (Central) dec. Sean Howard (Ursinus) 5-2; Greg Ilaria (TCNJ) dec. Darren Buseman (Scranton) 5-3.

CONSOLATION SEMIFINALS - South won by injury default over Roland; Loewens threw Ilaria, 6:45.

SEVENTH - Buseman dec. Howard 5-4.

FIFTH - Ilaria medical forfeit over Roland.

THIRD - Loewens dec. South 9-3.

CHAMPIONSHIP - LeVesseur dec. Bratland 4-2.

165

SEMIFINALS - Pat North (RIT) dec. Ryan Sturm (Wartburg) 10-8; Jesse Reyerson (Luther) dec. Cory DeBias (Roger Williams) 11-10.

THIRD ROUND CONSOLATIONS - Arthur Weidler (Brockport) dec. Bill Deniz (Montclair St.) 6-5; Jarad Ridley (Manchester) dec. Bill Parry (Ithaca) 3-2.

CONSOLATION SEMIFINALS - Sturm dec. Weidler 16-9; DeBias threw Ridley, 2:08.

SEVENTH - Parry dec. Deniz 2-1 TB.

FIFTH - Weidler dec. Ridley 10-5.

THIRD - DeBias dec. Sturm 8-6.

CHAMPIONSHIP - Reyerson dec. North 5-1.

174

SEMIFINALS - Eduard Aliakseyenka (Montclair St.) dec. Gary Franck (Coe) 5-3; Cody Koenig (UW-Stevens Point) threw Joe Moon (Augsburg), 4:36.

THIRD ROUND CONSOLATIONS - Jason Luloff (UW-LaCrosse) dec. Paul Vaccaro (TCNJ) 5-3 OT; Mark Sturm (Wartburg) dec. Chris Healy (Wabash) 6-5.

CONSOLATION SEMIFINALS - Luloff dec. Moon 4-3; Franck threw Sturm, 6:32.

SEVENTH - Vaccaro dec. Healy 9-3.

FIFTH - Moon dec. Sturm 11-0.

THIRD - Luloff dec. Franck 4-2.

CHAMPIONSHIP - Koenig threw Aliakseyenka, 4:57.

184

SEMIFINALS - Sonny Alvarez (Wartburg) dec. Paul Cleary (Loras) 2-1 TB; Bradley Marten (UW-Stevens Point) dec. Ricky Crone (Augsburg) 4-3.

THIRD ROUND CONSOLATIONS - Dennis Gaul (Montclair St.) dec. David Hirt (Wheaton) 12-1; Artie Mauser (John Carroll) threw Jeff Edelstein (Ithaca), 6:34.

CONSOLATION SEMIFINALS - Gaul dec. Cleary 5-3 SV; Crone dec. Mauser 4-1.

SEVENTH - Hirt threw Edelstein, 3:47.

FIFTH - Cleary dec. Mauser 15-4.

THIRD - Crone dec. Gaul 3-2.

CHAMPIONSHIP - Marten dec. Alvarez 6-4 OT.

197

SEMIFINALS - Yan White (UW-Stevens Point) dec. Justin Torres (Olivet) 10-3; Brent Meyers (Upper Iowa) dec. Alain Djoumessi (Wartburg) 4-2.

THIRD ROUND CONSOLATIONS - Adam Kolo (UW-Eau Claire) dec. Matt Huset (Milwaukee SOE) 9-2; Robert Cuffie (SUNY-Brockport) dec. Bart George (Simpson) 9-6.

CONSOLATION SEMIFINALS - Djoumessi won by injury default over Kolo; Cuffie won by injury default over Torres.

SEVENTH - George dec. Huset 8-1.

FIFTH - Double forfeit.

THIRD - Djoumessi dec. Cuffie 3-2 TB.

CHAMPIONSHIP - Meyers dec. White 3-1 OT.

Heavyweight

SEMIFINALS - LeRoy Gardner III (Wartburg) dec. Pat Thomas (Loras) 5-3; Ryan Allen (UW-LaCrosse) dec. Jamie Salazar (Manchester) 7-4.

THIRD ROUND CONSOLATIONS - Chris Harrison (Coe) threw Jim Pennise (SUNY-Brockport), 5:53; Brian Black (Upper Iowa) dec. Michael Blair (Trinity) 4-3 TB.

CONSOLATION SEMIFINALS - Thomas threw Harrison, 5:55; Salazar dec. Black 8-6 SV.

SEVENTH - Blair dec. Pennise 4-3.

FIFTH - Harrison dec. Black 2-1 TB.

THIRD - Thomas dec. Salazar 6-4.

CHAMPIONSHIP - Gardner dec. Allen 3-2.