

Wrestling: Ohio State Finishes Fourth At NCAA Championships, Sammy Sasso Lands Runner Up



Ohio State's wrestling season came to a close Saturday with a strong team finish at the national championships.

Gathering 70.5 points, the Buckeyes finished fourth behind repeat national champion Penn State (137.5) Iowa (82.5) and Cornell (76.5). OSU had five wrestlers reach All-American status with a finish of eighth or better, as Sammy Sasso posted the best finish of all of them as the runner-up at 149 pounds.

Sasso, entering as the second seed in his weight class, cruised his way to the quarterfinals before winning a tight 2-1 battle against Northwestern's Yahya Thomas to advance to the semis. There he met third-seeded Kyle Parco of Arizona State in what was expected to be a hotly-contested bout.

It wasn't. Sasso smashed Parco via major decision 14-2 and advanced to the championship match. There he met three-time national champion Yianni Diakomihalis, and despite a strong fight, Sasso took silver after a 4-2 loss.

Kaleb Romero fell in the quarterfinals at 184 pounds to eventual national champion Aaron Brooks, but went on a rampage in wrestlebacks, winning three straight matches and knocking off fourth-seeded Trey Munoz of Oregon State to reach the third-place match. There he met second-seeded Trent Hidlay of North Carolina State.

Romero was considered the underdog as the fifth seed in the weight class, but managed to pull out a 3-1 win in sudden victory after scoring a takedown to end the match.

In a look to the future, Ohio State freshman Jesse Mendez managed to make a run into sixth place at 133 pounds. That after starting as the No. 13 seed in the bracket. His run included wins over seeds 11, 10 and 6, with the latter of those being a revenge match against Virginia Tech's Sam Latona, who beat Mendez during the regular season.

Mendez lost in the consolation semis and ensuing fifth-place match, but the freshman's run remains impressive.

At 174 pounds Ethan Smith got upset early by the 11th-seeded wrestler in the bracket but rattled off

three consecutive victories in wrestlebacks to work his way into the seventh-place match. He closed his tournament in dominant fashion, handing Missouri's Peyton Mocco a 12-2 defeat by major decision.

Dylan D'Emilio rounded out the list of All-Americans for Ohio State, taking eighth place at 141 pounds.