Cougars rule at the NJCAA West Regional

Clackamas qualifies wrestlers for nationals in all 10 weights

Clackamas Community College’s wrestling team continued on a mission, outclassing the field at the NJCAA Western Regional Championships, held in Des Moines, WA the weekend of Feb. 12-13.

The Cougars scored 149-1/2 points, 40 more than the second place team from Southwestern Oregon Community College. It was the Cougars’ third straight regional championship, but their most dominating performance of the three.

Team scores were: Clackamas 149-1/2, SWOC 109-1/2, Highline, WA 101-1/2, Western Wyoming 85-1/2, Northwest Wyoming 83 and North Idaho 59.

CCC had all 10 of its wrestlers make it to the championship semifinals and eight Cougars advanced to the final. Clackamas qualified all 10 of its entrants for the NJCCAA National Championships, which are scheduled Feb. 26-27 in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

The Cougars had five regional champions — DeVaughn Sapien (Boise) at 125, John Leal (Chico, CA) at 157, Tommy Brewster (Park Ridge, ILL) at 174, Haszell West (Portland’s Jefferson H.S.) at 184 and John Morin (Sherwood) at 197.

Sapien was named the West Region “Outstanding Wrestler.”

Zech Breser (141, Klamath Falls), Chris Garcia (149, Fresno, CA) and Brandon Johnson (285, Lake Stevens, WA) earned regional runner-up honors. Michael Knoblauch (Fresno, CA) placed third at 133 and Brendan Harkey (Prineville) placed third at 165.

“This was a spectacular effort by our team as a whole,” said CCC coach Josh Rhoden. “We have challenged them all year to continue to get better and they have done exactly that. Each week we have improved, and these guys are getting what they have earned.

“As we all know, there is one last test this year and it will be a tough one in a very good environment. We will continue to prepare and ready ourselves to go out and fight until the end. This is a great group of guys and I am excited to watch them compete for a national championship.”

CCC takes a season record of 25-4 into the national championships.

Clackamas is ranked third — behind Northeastern Oklahoma A&M and Ellsworth, Iowa — heading into the national championships.

CCC finished second only to Iowa Central at last year’s national championships and Rhoden was named the 2015 NJCAA Wrestling Man of the Year.

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