



Sports

MINNESOTA STATE 27, NEBRASKA-OMAHA 9



Pat Christman

Freshman Travis Elg (top) turned a near loss into a win by fall in overtime Friday, helping the Minnesota State wrestling team to a 27-9 win over third-ranked Nebraska-Omaha at Bresnan Arena.

Elg the spark

Maverick freshman beats fourth-ranked 141-pounder in OT as MSU rolls past UNO

By Jim Rueda
Free Press Sports Editor

MANKATO — Minnesota State University wrestling coach Jim Makovsky is not one to hand out praise lightly, but even he admitted to being impressed with the way his team wrestled Friday night.

Fourth-ranked Minnesota State all but dismantled third-rated Nebraska-Omaha 27-9 in front of a Bresnan Arena record wrestling crowd of 1,321 people. MSU won seven of the 10 matches, including some minor upsets.

"From top to bottom I thought we wrestled really well tonight," Makovsky said. "Then again, this is about the first time we've had our full line-up together.

"I was pleased with our aggressiveness. All we have to do now is keep wrestling like this and we'll be fine."

Fifth-ranked Nick Smith put MSU on top early, decisioning Jim Ball 3-2 at 125 pounds. Third-ranked Jeff Pfaffinger followed with a 9-3 triumph over Jeff Rau.

At 141, MSU's third-ranked Travis Elg, arguably one of the top freshmen in the nation, took fourth-rated Sim Bribieseca into overtime before he caught him on his back and got a pin in 7:28.

"That really energized the crowd," Makovsky said. "Travis is a dangerous wrestler and that's exactly what I was thinking when I was recruiting him in high school."

Elg was considered a redshirt candidate for most of the open season but, when he was named the Outstanding Wrestler of the St. Cloud State Tournament, and followed that up with a strong showing in Reno, he made it almost impossible for Makovsky to keep him out of the lineup.

"My goal was to come here and make an impact right away," Elg said. "If they had decided to keep me as a redshirt I would have accepted that as the coach's decision, but I just want to go hard and help the team anyway I can."

Makovsky said he was leaning towards activating Elg after the Reno Tournament but felt it was a no-brainer when his other 141-pounder, Efrain Ayala, developed shoulder problems. As of now Elg is 11-4 on the season.

The crowd began treating the meet like a national tournament after Elg's win, voicing its pleasure and dismay at nearly every call. The 149-pound bout did not disappoint as No. 1-rated Todd Meneely of UNO took on second-ranked Jason Rhoten and escaped with a 6-5 decision.

MSU's sixth-ranked Brandon Girtz followed with an impressive 13-3 major decision at 157 before teammate Andy Pickar delivered the upset of the meet. Pickar, rated

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third, took on No. 1-ranked Ross Taplin and came through with a 7-3 decision.

"Andy wrestled a smart match against a very good wrestler," Makovsky said. "It was a great effort on his part."

Pickar wrestled Taplin four times last year and they each won twice.

"My only goal tonight was to push the action," Pickar said. "I just wanted to go after him.

"He knows the things I like to do but I know the things he likes to do, too. It works both ways."

UNO's top-ranked J.D. Naig followed with a 7-3 win at 174 before MSU senior Travis Krinkie manhandled Austin Boehm for a 22-7 tech fall in seven minutes. Krinkie, ranked sixth in the nation, raised his record to 19-8.

Second-ranked Jacob Marrs picked up UNO's last win with a 6-3 win over Ben Janike. Minnesota State third-ranked heavyweight Brady Wilson closed out the meet with a 6-2 win over seventh-rated Tony Lewis.

MSU improves to 14-3 and UNO drops to 5-5. Minnesota State returns to the mat Thursday with another North Central Conference dual at St. Cloud State.

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125—Nick Smith (MSU) dec. Jim Ball 4-2; 133—Jeff Pfaffinger (MSU) dec. Jeff Rau 9-3; 141—Travis Elg (MSU) pinned Sim Bribieseca 7:28 (OT); 149—Todd Meneely (UNO) dec. Jason Rhoten 6-5; 157—Brandon Girtz (MSU) maj. dec. Henry Wahle 13-3; 165—Andy Pickar (MSU) dec. Ross Taplin 7-3; 174—J.D. Naig (UNO) dec. Tim Matteson 7-3; 184—Travis Krinkie (MSU) tech. fall Austin Boehm 22-7 7:00; 197—Jacob Marrs (UNO) dec. Ben Janike 6-3; HWT—Brady Wilson (MSU) dec. Tony Lewis 6-2.

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