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COLLEGE HOCKEY, PAGE C4

Early exit for
Gustavus women

Sports

Putman, Elg, Abbott, Wilson place in top eight

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CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

— The seasons for four Minnesota State University wrestlers came to an end at the NCAA Division II National Championships Saturday but, for each of them, it was more like the beginning.

The beginning of next season.

The Mavericks' John Putman (133 pounds), Tavis Elg (141), Tommy Abbott (149) and Brady Wilson (heavyweight) each earned All-America honors by placing in the top eight at the U.S. Cellular Center.

Abbott was the only one of the group to end the season with a win. He turned in a fifth-place performance, defeating Colby Robinson of Central Oklahoma 6-1 in his final bout.

He was happy with the victory, but not so happy with his placing.

"I would have liked to have done better up here but this is definitely something to build on," the freshman Abbott said. "This gives me the motivation to come back here next year and win a national championship."

Abbott, who has been wrestling at the national level since he became a teenager, said he wasn't in awe during the national tournament but was a bit surprised by the skill level of some of his opponents.

"I wasn't nervous about

being her for the first time," he said. "I've been in national tournaments since eighth grade. Don't get me wrong, I was nervous before my matches, but I get nervous before all my matches.

"I guess the competition was a little stronger than I thought it would be. I came up here thinking I would win a national championship but I got majored in the quarterfinals by a pretty tough kid I never even heard of. That opened my eyes a little bit."

Wilson, a sophomore, had the highest finish among the group with a fourth-place effort. After losing in the semifinals, Wilson came back to defeat Jesse Laber of the University of Mary 3-1 before dropping a 4-3 decision to Cy Wainwright of Newberry College in the third-place match.

Putman, a junior, will also be back next season after placing sixth. He lost to Tim Elliott of Central Oklahoma 9-0 in his final match.

The sophomore Elg did the same, dropping a 6-4 decision to James Annon of Fort Hayes State to finish sixth.

The four MSU wrestlers, along with junior 174-pounder Tim Matheson, who qualified for nationals but did not place, had a combined 125 victories this season. The quintet should form the nucleus of the 2008-09 Mavericks.