

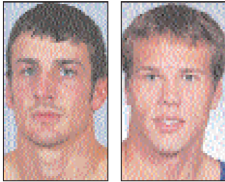


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# Sports

NCAA Division II  
wrestling  
championships



Jason Rhoten    Andy Pickar

## Rhoten, Pickar claim national crowns

Mavericks miss  
out on team title  
by one-half point

By Jim Rueda  
Free Press Sports Editor

**CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA** — For nearly five months, Minnesota State University's Jason Rhoten and Andy Pickar had fed off each other in the practice room and on the wrestling mat.

That feeding frenzy culminated Saturday night when both seniors won NCAA Division II championships.

The duo did the best to bring MSU its first team title since 1965, but that effort came up short when Nebraska-Kearney sneaked by the Mavericks 108.5-108 for the team championship at the U.S. Cellular Center.

"They all gave a good effort," Makovsky said of his wrestlers. "I can't fault our guys for what they brought to the mat this weekend.

"I told them it was probably going to come down to character and Kearney

## WRESTLING: Smith falls in finals

Continued from Page C1

showed a lot of it this weekend. They had a couple of guys lose first-round matches and come back to score big points for them."

As for Rhoten and Pickar, the individual titles capped stellar careers for both wrestlers. Rhoten, wrestling at 157 pounds, downed Muhammad Abdur-Rahman of Ashland (Ohio) 6-2 in the semifinals and then slipped past two-time defending national champion Antonio Guerra of the University of Findlay (Ohio) 3-2 in the finals.

Rhoten had been to the tournament three times previously and finished fourth, third and second. Saturday's championship was the next logical progression.

"When I left the other tournaments I always felt incomplete," he said. "I felt as if I hadn't finished the job. Now it feels right.

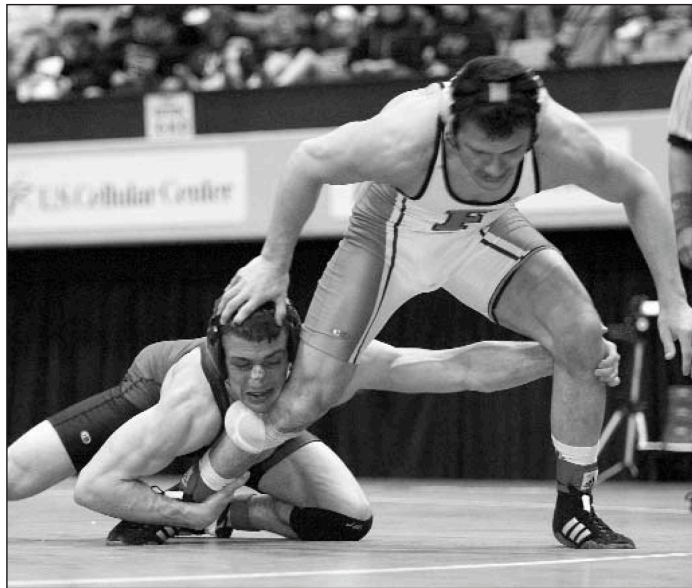
"It's extra special winning one the same time as Pick. He's not just my teammate, he's my practice partner."

The 165-pound Pickar agreed: "Having Jason go out in front me and knock off a two-time defending national champion was an inspiration. You couldn't ask for a better guy in the wrestling room. The whole team did a great job this year."

Pickar earned his title with an 8-3 semifinal win over Kyle Keane of Pittsburgh-Johnstown and an 8-2 championship win over Hudson Harrison of Mercyhurst College of Pennsylvania.

Makovsky said being able to train with each other was definitely a factor in their championship runs.

"They pushed each other



Bridget Fowler

Minnesota State University senior Jason Rhoten won a national championship in the final bout of his career Saturday, defeating Antonio Guerra of Findlay University (Ohio) 3-2 at 157 pounds.

so hard in practice," he said. "Not only that, they set the example for everybody else in the room, too. They've been a big part of our program for a long time and we're going to miss them."

Rhoten ends the year 41-2 and leaves as the school's all-time wins leader with 137. The four-time All-American from Kasson-Mantorville High School was also a three-time Academic All-American.

Pickar concludes his final campaign with a 23-3 record and a career mark of 73-17. The Brainerd native was a three-time All-American.

MSU's other finalist Saturday was 125-pound senior Nick Smith. He defeated Tyler Mumbulo of Upper

Iowa University 12-9 in the semifinals and then dropped an 8-2 decision to defending national champion Cody Garcia of Nebraska-Omaha.

For Smith, Saturday's outcome at 125 pounds was bittersweet.

"Yeah, I know that I've had a good season and I know that finishing second is respectable, but it's not what I wanted to walk away with.

"I went out to wrestle hard for seven minutes and I did that, but he had great position. Every time I felt like I was getting into my style, he'd step out of it and get into even better position."

Smith ends his final season with a 23-6 record and a

career record of 89-40. The native of Yankton, S.D., was a two-time All-American, a four-time national qualifier and a three-time Academic All-American.

MSU's finish marked the third time in school history that the team has finished second in the nation. The Mavericks were also runners-up in 1967 under head coach Rummy Macias and 1994 under Makovsky.

For all the MSU results from Saturday's final day of the national championships, see Sunday's print edition. For complete tournament results, log on to <http://upperiowaathletics.cstv.com> and click on the NCAA Division II Wrestling Championships logo.