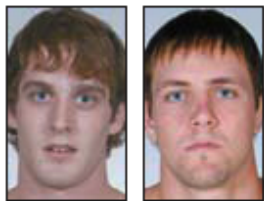




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Sports



MSU's Nick Smith (left) and Travis Krinkie were both double winners Friday at the NCAA Division II National Championships in Findlay, Ohio.

Six MSU wrestlers alive at nationals

Smith, Koons have strong showings

FINDLAY, OHIO — The Minnesota State University wrestling team is in fourth place at the NCAA Division II National Championships after the opening day of competition.

Six of nine Maverick qualifiers survived the first day and, in doing so, locked up All-American honors for themselves. Two-time defending national champion Nebraska-Omaha holds a commanding lead in the team race, 10.5 points ahead of second-place Nebraska-Kearney.

At 125 pounds, sophomore Nick Smith was the most pleasant surprise for MSU. He advanced to the quarterfinals with a slim 3-1 win over Mike Compton of Ashland. Once there, he took on Daniel Clausing of Limestone and put a five-point move on him in the first period to finish with a 6-4 win. Smith faces Cody Garcia of Nebraska-Omaha today in the semifinal round.

"Smith beat out two kids that pinned him earlier in the tournament so that was nice to see," MSU coach Jim Makovsky said. "When you bring nine guys to the tournament like we did you have to expect some will stumble but you also have to hope

MAVERICKS: Bitz eliminated from national tourney

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somebody else will pick them up. Smith picked us up today."

Returning finalist Travis Krinkie began his quest for a third All-American honor in impressive fashion, earning a 10-7 win at 174 pounds. In the quarterfinals he scored three first-period takedowns en route to a 15-4 major decision over Hudson Harrison of Mercyhurst. He will face Michael Jackson of Indianapolis for a chance at the finals today.

Second-ranked John Koons narrowly missed a technical fall in his opening round match, earning a 15-1 major decision instead over Joshua Vialondo of Adams State. In the quarterfinals, Koons yielded the opening takedown to Nathan Jones of Carson-Newman but nothing more.

Koons earned an escape to end the first period down 2-1 and nabbed takedowns in both the second and third periods to win 7-4 with a riding time advantage. Koons advances to

the semifinals where he will face Tanner Linsacum of Nebraska-Kearney.

Still alive in today's wrestlebacks for MSU are junior Jeff Pfaffinger at 133 pounds, senior Zach Stevens at 141 and second-ranked Andy Pickar at 165.

Senior Mathias Bitz (157) nearly advanced to today's competition but came up short. The third-place finisher from last season lost 5-0 to Scott Cleve of Adams State in Round 1, rebounded with a 6-4 triumph over William Tedder of

Mercyhurst and then was eliminated with 2-0 loss to Stephen Humphrey of Carson-Newman.

"The biggest negative for us was Bitz not making it through," Makovsky said. "He's one of our hardest-working kids, and he's a leader on our team."

Also getting eliminated for MSU Friday were Brandon Girtz (149 pounds) and Waseca native Ben Janike (215).

The second round of competition begins at 10 a.m. today.