**Carter, Yates earn All-America nods, as Tech records highest finish at NCAA Wrestling Championships**

By Jimmy Robertson

Tech wrestlers Devin Carter and Pete Yates became the second and third All-Americans under head coach Kevin Dresser, as both finished in fifth place in their respective weight classes at the NCAA Wrestling Championships held March 15-17 in St. Louis.

Carter, a sophomore from Christiansburg, Va., won his first match at 133 pounds, beating Missouri’s Nathan McCormick, but fell in his second match to Steven Keith of Harvard. The sixth-seeded Carter then won four matches in the wrestleback rounds before losing to Iowa’s Tony Ramos by an 8-3 score. In the fifth-place match, the sixth-seeded Carter pinned No. 4 seed B.J. Futrell of Illinois to claim fifth. The top eight finishers receive All-America honors.

“I got upset in the second round, and obviously I shouldn’t have lost that, but sometimes wrestling back from that much of a loss and getting fifth is better than losing in the semis and ending up finishing sixth,” Carter said. “It’s tough, but I learned a lot, and I have to come back next year and finish strong.”

Yates, a redshirt junior from Conyers, Ga., got off to a horrible start, losing his first match 13-2 to Oklahoma State’s Dallas Bailey in the 165-pound class. He then won his next five matches, including an upset of No. 2 seed Shane Onufer of Wyoming by a score of 10-3. He lost 5-4 to No. 4 seed Bekzod Abdurakhmonov of Clarion, but claimed fifth place with a 13-7 victory over John Asper of Maryland – the same guy he beat for the ACC crown.

“Once I clinched All-America honors, it was big load off my shoulder,” Yates said. “If I wouldn’t have earned All-America this year, I would have thought all that hard work was for nothing because I really believe I deserve it. I knew I was good enough to be an All-American, but it’s just getting it done. There are so many things that can happen. My career here is getting short, and I only have one year left, so this means so much to me.”

Carter and Yates join Chris Diaz, who finished eighth at 141 pounds at the 2010 Championships, as the only All-Americans in Dresser’s six-year tenure.

Four other Tech wrestlers participated in the NCAA Championships. Unseeded Zach Neibert advanced to the quarterfinals at 141 pounds by beating Jake Sueflohn of Nebraska by a score of 6-5 and Nick Nelson of UVa by a count of 4-2. In the quarterfinals, he lost 15-3 to No. 2 seed Kendric Maple of Oklahoma. Then, he couldn’t get past NC State’s Darius Little, who beat him for the third time this season.

At 149 pounds, Nick Brascetta downed No. 9 seed David Hobat of Edinboro by a score of 3-1, but lost his next two matches to No. 8 seed Eric Grajales of Michigan and Northwestern’s Kaleb Friedley. At 125 pounds, redshirt sophomore Erik Spjut lost his first match, but won his second match, beating Johnni DiJulius of Ohio State by a score of 10-4. He was eliminated with a 2-1 defeat to North Dakota State’s Trent Sprenkle. Finally, at 174 pounds, sophomore Chris Moon lost both of his matches.

Behind Carter and Yates, Tech finished in a tie for 11th place at the Championships with 39 points. That marked the highest finish ever for a Tech squad. The previous high of 19th came on three occasions.

Following the season, Carter was named the ACC’s Wrestler of the Year, while Brascetta was named the league’s Freshman of the Year. Carter went 36-5 on the season and spent five weeks as the No. 1 wrestler in his weight class. Brascetta went 10-5 (22-6 counting his unattached results) and won the ACC title at 149 pounds.

Carter, Brascetta, Yates, Moon and heavyweight Chris Penny all received All-ACC honors for this past season.