By Nick Phillips
Sports Editor

The UNCP wrestling team tallied two victories over nationally ranked teams in the NWCA/NCII Keen National Duals on Jan. 8 and 9 en route to a 3-2 overall finish in the tournament.

The 13th-ranked Braves took down No. 9 Central Oklahoma and No. 7 Minnesota State-Mankato, as well as Minnesota State-Moorhead, over the two day tournament in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Central Oklahoma
UNCP wasted no time making a statement, as the Braves defeated ninth-ranked Central Oklahoma 24-13 in the opening round.

In the next two matches, Central Oklahoma took a major decision victory at 184 pounds and a decision victory in the 197-pound matchup to pull closer before UNCP’s James De La Riva closed the match out with a decision victory in his 285-pound matchup to give the Braves the win.

St. Cloud State
Nationally ranked No. 2 St. Cloud State turned away any chances of another UNCP upset by tallying six individual victories in the Braves’ 9-27 quarterfinal loss.

UNCP, which snipped a six-match winning streak with the loss, jumped out of the gates strong, winning two of the first three matchups before St. Cloud State took six of the final seven matchups for the victory.

Weakley opened with a two-point, decision victory at 125-pounds before St. Cloud State answered with its own decision win at 133 pounds.

Easton earned a 5-3 decision victory at 141 pounds before St. Cloud State took over.

Back-to-back wins at 141- and 157-pounds gave St. Cloud State the lead for good in the matchup, although Williams struck in and took a 7-6 decision victory at 165-pounds for the Braves.

The final four matchups all went in St. Cloud State’s direction, as a tech fall victory, two decision wins and a major decision win all posted to St. Cloud State’s side of the scoreboard.

Minnesota State-Moorhead
The Braves remained alive in the tournament in a up-and-down matchup against Minnesota State-Moorhead, winning 20-14 as De La Riva earned a decision victory in the second overtime to advance UNCP.

Weakley took a 5-4 decision victory in the 125-pound matchup to push the Braves out front early, before the back-and-fourth battle ensued.

Four matches ended in major decision victories, while the other five matchups all went into overtime to settle things.

Thurston followed up Weakley with a major decision win at 133-pounds before Minnesota State-Moorhead took its own major decision win in the 141-pound matchup.

Parker-Risk tallied a decision win at 149 pounds, followed up by back-to-back major decision victories for each team.

Minnesota State-Moorhead earned the win in the 157-pound matchup before Williams equaled out the points with his victory at 165 pounds.

Two more wins by Minnesota State-Moorhead at 174- and 184 pounds made things interesting, but UNCP finished the match off with the Braves’ fifth win of the season.

Shane Nolan earned a three-point decision win at 197 pounds before De La Riva went to overtime before earning a takedown in the second sudden victory period to prevent the contest from ending in a tied score.

Minnesota State-Mankato
UNCP moved into the second day of the tournament to face off against Minnesota State-Mankato, finishing off Minnesota State-Mankato 19-13 for the Braves’ fifth win over a nationally ranked opponent this season.

Weakley Weakley stayed unbeaten as he opened the matchup with a decision win at 125-pounds, followed by a Thurston decision victory at 133-pounds as the Braves jumped out to an early lead.

Minnesota State-Mankato took a major decision win at 141-pounds before Parker-Risk won his 149-pound matchup by a 6-0 decision.

Another Minnesota State-Mankato win came before Nolan’s major decision put the match out of reach, making the 285-pound Minnesota State-Mankato win worthless.

Central Oklahoma
In a back-and-fourth battle, the Braves could not end their trip with a win over the team that started the day ranked No. 7.

UNCP began the matchup with wins in three of the first four matches, as Weakley, Thurston and Parker-Risk notched vicotries.

However, Central Oklahoma won five of the final six matches, with only Williams at 165-pounds giving the Braves points.

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