

Bowling team finishes runner-up in National Collegiate Bowling Championship

REBECCA ROBINSON

SPORTS EDITOR

The A-State bowling team competed in the NCAA Bowling Championship. The team traveled to Kansas City, Missouri and competed in the four day long competition starting on April 7 and ending on April 10. This is A-State's 13th time to compete at the NCAA bowling tournament and the second time the team placed runner-up.

The NCAA bowling tournament hosts 16 teams that are broken up into four regions, Arkansas State being in the third region. The Red Wolves opened the Championship with a sweep of Delaware state with a 1,049-845 score in traditional play. The Red Wolves then defeated North Carolina A&T which secured A-State a spot in the Regional Finals. A-State worked their way to the Final Four. A-State made the final four with No. 1 seed team McKendree, No. 2 seed Nebraska and Youngstown State. The Red Wolves eventually earned themselves the runner-up title after falling to Nebraska in the National Championship.

Head coach Justin Kostick has had the title of head coach since the 2009-2010 season. Under Kostick the team has made 11 straight NCAA Championship

appearances. The team hasn't earned runner up since 2008.

"We've kinda always been knocking on the door and always ranked one, two, three every year and just wasn't getting it done," Kostick said. "The team had a lot of resolve and a lot of what we call a 'team-find-a-way'. We kept just finding a way to win and you know unfortunately on the show, things didn't go totally our way but you know it's still a great accomplishment for the team and I'm proud of the girls. They just kept fighting the whole time. We will be back."

On the final day, April 10, the championship match was televised on ESPN at 5:30 p.m. The top four finalists have a chance to be on the show.

"The television show goes by pretty fast," Kostick said. "There's a little bit different rules for the TV show. I thought we were even a little timid in game one and I thought that it would loosen us up. We just never really got loosened up at all. It goes by pretty fast."

A majority of members on the team will be staying for another year giving them another opportunity to come back and work together.

"We have everybody coming back except Taylor and Lauren (Bunting)," Kostick said. "So we got a lot of people coming back. We'll just go back to



PHOTOS COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

The Arkansas State bowling team finished runner-ups at the National Collegiate Bowling Championship for the first time since 2008.

the drawing board of the same thing we did this past season. A lot of drill work, working on games, trying to get people's physical game even better."

The team will prepare to be at the championship again next year.

"I think the team should have a lot of confidence in getting there and now that we've made the show it's a good learning

experience and I think that if we make the show next time a lot of the same mistakes won't happen again," Kostick said.

Senior Taylor Davis earned All-Tournament Team honors as well as being named to the NCTA All-Region team. Davis had an overall average of 205.7 this season.

"I'm definitely happy for

them. Taylor's made it three straight years in a row. Taylor's one of the best shot makers in all of college bowling," Kostick said.

Sophomore Faith Welch is joining her teammate in being named to the NCTA All-Region team. Both Welch and Davis were announced to be on the first team. "Faith was a kid that had a

lot of raw talent, and I made a lot of changes in her game so she didn't play much her freshman year," Kostick said. "This year she was a vital part of the team because of all the changes that were made. She's gotten really good, very athletic."

This tournament closed out the team's spring season of competing.

Rugby team gets ready to take on Life for the second time

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The Arkansas State rugby team took on Life, one of the best teams in the nation, Saturday. The Red Wolves played well but ultimately slowed down in the second half. The Red Wolves ended up losing 35-25. The Red Wolves will play against Life again at Marietta, Georgia on April 24.

"We had a really good game. The first half we played really good, the second half we slowed up a bit in the last 20 minutes and we didn't get to win," A-State rugby player Jalen Farmer Saint Charles said. "Overall we played well and had a good game. We got a couple things we got to fix and then we have to play them again in two weeks."

A freshman, Saint Charles started for the second time this season at the game on Saturday. This was the first time he played the whole 80 minutes.

"It's really cool. I want to go out there and just play my best and help give the seniors a good send off," Saint Charles said. I definitely was a bit nervous, played well and had a good game, I'm excited to just keep getting better."

At the beginning of the year the A-State team started without a coach and had to lead themselves. The seniors and captains guided team practices. Tj Van Rensburg took on the role as vice-captain along with their head captain George Sharpe. The other seniors, like Dale Hartmann, also pitched in



PHOTOS COURTESY OF A-STATE ATHLETICS

The Rugby team has a second chance to play life on April 24. The game Saturday ended in a 35-25 loss.

with helping with training and practices. The seniors acted as both leaders and players on the team causing difficulty in sharpening fine details of game play.

"It was very hard to look from the outside in because we're players and we're training. So, you can't see all the small details that need to be worked on because you are focusing on your own job," Rensburg said. "Now with a coach we can work on all those small details."

With a coach leading the team the seniors can now focus on practicing and being just an athlete instead of team leaders.

"Having a coach really helped," Rensburg said. "We didn't have a coach our first game and we still played well. Having a coach definitely ramped up practices with a lot more intensity, a lot more precision with how we played and I

think we've gotten a lot better."

The impact Jake Mizell has had on the team in the few weeks he has been the head coach has made a difference for the team.

"The new coach is good, I love him. He's been good for us. He's made us a lot fitter," Daniel Raath said. "With a coach it just helps and acts as a guideline. The players can now focus on playing instead of coaching and playing."

The team is now focusing on getting ready to play their second match against Life. The team reviewed Saturday's game footage on Monday to see where they needed to adjust and make improvements.

"We are now just focusing on the next game," Rensburg said. "So that our minds are not stuck to 'aw we lost' 'aw we can't beat them because we lost'. We are literally just focus-

ing on the next game as it's a new game and as if we've never played them a previous time."

One of the important aspects of getting ready to play Life again is boosting morale and making sure the team is ready.

"He (Mizell) always brings the energy. He wakes us up honestly and gets us going," Charles said. "It was definitely the push we needed to really step up to the next level to be able to play teams like Life and like Lindenwood that are at the top of the rankings."

Arkansas State's game against Life will be their last game of the spring season.

"This year we don't have any players that are star players," Rensburg said. "We have a very well rounded team where we work hard and play for each other and instead of teammates it's more like a family."

Upcoming events:

Thursday:

- The women's tennis team will play a game against Troy in Peachtree City, Georgia at 9 a.m.

Friday:

- The A-State track team hosts a meet in Jonesboro.

The baseball team will play a home game against UT Arlington at 6 p.m.

Saturday:

- The second day of the track meet begins.

- The baseball team will play their second game against UT Arlington at 6 p.m.

Sunday:

- The women's golf team will play at the Sun Belt Conference Championship at Daytona Beach, Florida.

- The baseball team will play their third game against UT Arlington at 1 p.m.

Monday:

- The second day of the Sun Belt Conference Championship for women's golf starts.

Tuesday:

- The third day of the Sun Belt Conference Championship for women's golf starts.

- The baseball team will play at Central Arkansas at 6 p.m.