EWING, N.J. – SUNY Cortland junior **Stef Sair (Huntington)** claimed the national title at 174 pounds and freshman **Paul LeBlanc (Morrisville/Morrisville-Eaton)** placed fourth at 141 pounds to earn All-America honors at the NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships at The College of New Jersey.

Cortland finished sixth in the final team standings out of 60 schools with 36.5 points. It’s the Red Dragons’ best showing since a sixth-place effort in 1996. Cortland has finished in the top 10 nationally seven times and has been a top-15 team 13 times.

Sair is Cortland's fourth wrestling national champion and first since two wrestlers – Troy Monks and Mike Yanosik – both won titles in 1990. Cortland’s other national champion was Rick Armstrong in 1978. Sair is now a two-time All-American; he was fourth at 174 at last season’s nationals.

Seeded first, Sair won the title with a 9-8 victory over second-seeded Scott Kauffman of eventual team champion Wartburg College of Iowa. He trailed 6-4 entering the third period, but quickly recorded an escape and took a 7-6 lead with a takedown with about 1:30 remaining. A stalling call, however, tied the match at 7-7 with 1:06 left, and Sair decided at that point to allow an escape that gave Kauffman an 8-7 lead. Sair recorded the decisive takedown with 11 seconds left and, after a reset to the center of the mat, held off an escape attempt in the final six seconds to preserve the victory.

Sair had won his first two matches on Friday and advanced to the finals with a 3-2 victory over fifth-seeded Matthias Keib of Ithaca in the semifinals. Sair finishes the season with a 27-2 record.

“IT's an honor to be a national champion,” said Sair after the title match. “Our strategy was to push a guy, push him the whole match and then maybe something will open up in the end of the match, and that’s what happened.”

LeBlanc posted two wins on Friday to earn a semifinal spot. The fourth seed, LeBlanc lost to top-seeded Dustin Hinschberger of Wartburg, 5-1, in the semifinals. Hinschberger went on to win his third straight national title. LeBlanc bounced back to defeat third-seeded Mike Gaeta of Springfield, 3-2, in the consolation bracket, but lost in the third-place match, 4-0, to Andrew LaCroix of Roger Williams. LeBlanc completes the season with a 36-4 record.

Wartburg won the team title (145.5), followed by Wisconsin-La Crosse (106), Augsburg (84.5), Luther (59.5), York of Pennsylvania (51.5), Cortland (36.5), Delaware Valley and Heidelberg (32 each), and Brockport and Simpson (30 each) in the top 10.

“We’re stepping our program up,” commented Sair. “We’ll be up there with Augsburg and Wartburg in a couple of years.”

Sair's victory gives the SUNY Cortland athletic program at least one individual national champion in each of the last 20 years, covering all sports.

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