

Top-10 Wrestlers to Watch at 165 pounds



M. Mesenbrink



J. Blaze



M. Caliendo



L. Lockett



M. Bianchi



W. Denny



L. Araujo



R. Downey



N. Ruiz



M. Brignola

The following is a look at WIN's Top-10 ranked wrestlers, plus other notable wrestlers, at 165 pounds before the conference/NCAA qualifying tournaments. Go to WIN-Magazine.com for an updated NCAA preview after the qualifiers.

1. Mitchell Mesenbrink, Penn State, Jr., Hartland, Wis.

Note: Maintains 100% bonus rate heading into Big Ten Championships.
Season/Career Record: 19-0/71-1
2025/Career NCAA Resume: 1st in 2025; 2nd in 2024.
Regular-Season Notes: Earned major decisions over No. 3 Michael Caliendo and No. 10 Max Brignola; scored a tech fall over No. 7 LJ Araujo; has eight falls to his credit after recording zero last season.

2. Joey Blaze, Purdue, Jr., Perrysburg, Ohio

Note: Moved up a weight class after finishing as NCAA runner-up at 157 pounds in 2025.
Season/Career Record: 18-0/59-18
2025/Career NCAA Resume: 2nd in 2025; 0-2 in 2024.
Regular-season Notes: CKLV Invite champion;

scored a victory over No. 9 Nicco Ruiz in CKLV finals; earned victories over No. 3 Michael Caliendo and No. 7 LJ Araujo.

3. Michael Caliendo, Iowa, Sr., Geneva, Ill.

Note: 3-time All-American, earning the distinction as a freshman for North Dakota State before transferring to Iowa.
Season/Career Record: 15-3/89-17
2025/Career NCAA Resume: 2nd in 2025; 4th in 2024; 7th in 2023.
Regular-Season Notes: Split matches with Oklahoma State's Ladarion Lockett; other losses came against No. 1 Mitchell Mesenbrink and No. 2 Joey Blaze; earned a major decision over No. 7 LJ Araujo.

4. LaDarion Lockett, Oklahoma State, Fr., Stillwater, Okla.

Note: U20 World silver medalist in 2024.
Season/Career Record: 13-1/13-1
2025/Career NCAA Resume: n/a
Regular-Season Notes: Started the season 13-0, earning wins over No. 3 Michael Caliendo and No. 6 Will Denny in the opening week of action at National Duals Invitational; in conference dual action, Lockett defeated No. 5 Matt Bianchi and

No. 8 Ryder Downey of Northern Iowa.

5. Matt Bianchi, Little Rock, Sr., Two Rivers, Wis.

Note: Moved up to 165 pounds after earning a seventh-place finish at 157 last season.
Season/Career Record: 17-1/71-29
2025/Career NCAA Resume: 7th in 2025; 0-2 in 2024.
Regular-Season Notes: Southern Scuffle champ; most notable win came at National Duals Invitational over Braeden Scoles of Illinois, 4-1.

6. Will Denny, NC State, Fr., Manhattan, Ill.

Note: Won 2025 Super 32 Challenge title at 157 pounds in fall of 2024.
Season/Career Record: 15-2/15-2
2025/Career NCAA Resume: n/a
Regular-Season Notes: The true freshman Denny has won 13 straight matches after suffering two losses on opening weekend at the National Duals Invitational; both losses at NDI came against fellow true freshmen in LaDarion Lockett and Virginia Tech's Ryan Burton; avenged loss to Burton on Jan. 30 with an 8-5 decision.

7. LJ Araujo, Nebraska, Fr., Bismarck, N.D.

Note: U20 World bronze medalist in 2024 while representing Brazil.
Season/Career Record: 14-6/14-6
2025/Career NCAA Resume: n/a
Regular-Season Notes: Began season on a six-match winning streak, which included a pin over No. 10 Max Brignola of Lehigh; dropped overtime decisions to No. 4 LaDarion Lockett and No. 8 Ryder Downey.

8. Ryder Downey, Northern Iowa, Jr., Indianola, Iowa

Note: Moved up to 165 pounds after competing first two seasons at 157.
Season/Career Record: 18-3/63-15
2025/Career NCAA Resume: 2-2 in 2025; R12 in 2024.
Regular-Season Notes: SIUE Cougar Clash champion; earned victories over No. 7 LJ Araujo and No. 9 Nicco Ruiz; suffered 6-4 season-opening loss to No. 6 Will Denny at NDI.

9. Nicco Ruiz, Arizona State, So., Ontario, Calif.

Note: St. John Bosco, Calif. grad, where he was coached by Ruben Valencia, the father of 2025 World champ Zahid Valencia.
Season/Career Record: 17-5/30-14
2025/Career NCAA Resume: 1-2 in 2025.
Regular-Season Notes: Split matches with



165-Pound Preview

Lehigh's No. 10 Max Brignola, avenging an early-season loss on Feb. 21 with an 8-5 TB decision; CKLV Invite runner-up.

10. Max Brignola, Lehigh, Sr., Fair Haven, N.J.

Note: Redshirted in 2024-25 and bumped up to 165 after qualifying for NCAAs in 2022 at 149 and again in 2024 at 157 pounds.
Season/Career Record: 14-4/64-31
2025/Career NCAA Resume: 0-2 in 2024; 0-2 in 2022.
Regular-Season Notes: Split matches with No. 9 Nicco Ruiz of ASU; was pinned at NDI by Nebraska's LJ Araujo; split matches with Illinois' Braeden Scoles.

Others to Watch

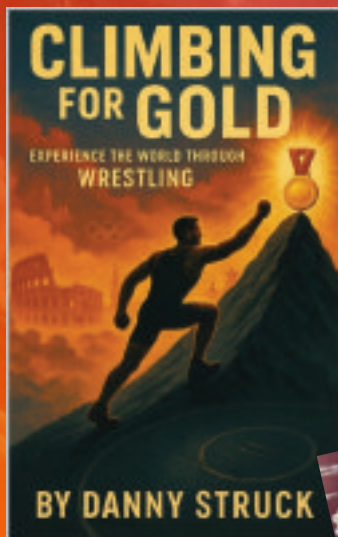
- Illinois sophomore **Braeden Scoles** reached the Blood Round at the 2025 NCAAs and has continued positive momentum into his sophomore campaign. The Wisconsin native is 14-6 with a notable victory over Lehigh's No. 10 Max Brignola.

- Ohio State fifth-year senior **Paddy Gallagher's** record stands at just 10-6, but the Buckeye veteran's losses have come against some formidable foes in No. 1 Mitchell Mesenbrink, No. 3 Michael Caliendo (in sudden victory) and No. 6 Will Denny. Gallagher has two losses to Minnesota's **Andrew Sparks**, another podium hopeful.

- Columbia's **Cesar Alvan** is riding an eight-match winning streak heading into the Ivy Championships, which includes a win over No. 9 Nicco Ruiz of ASU. ■

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2025 All-American Matches at 165 (seed in parenthesis)

- 1st - (1) Mitchell Mesenbrink (PSU) dec. (3) Michael Caliendo (Iowa), 8-2
3rd - (2) Peyton Hall (WVU) maj. (12) Christopher Minto (Nebraska), 13-5
5th - (4) Terrell Barraclough (UVU) dec. (7) Hunter Garvin (Stanford), 1-0
7th - (9) Cam Steed (Missouri) pinned (8) Cam Amine (OK State), 2:08