By Russ Pankonin
The Imperial Republican

University of Nebraska-Kearney wrestler Taylor May of Imperial earned All-American honors with his fifth place finish in the NCAA Division II championships held last weekend in Houston, Texas.

This marks the second time in his career that he's earned All-American status.

His first came as a freshman when he finished eighth in the national tournament.

He missed much of last season due to an injury and came back from a broken collarbone suffered early in the season this year.

May finishes the year with a 35-13 record.

He earned his trip to nationals with a championship at 165 in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference tournament held in Kearney earlier this month.

At the tournament, May won his first match with a 10-5 decision and backed that up with a 10-1 decision to move him into the semifinals match Saturday morning.

There, he faced Aaron Denson of UN-Omaha. They had met twice before this season, with each taking a win.

With the score tied late in the third quarter, May said he went in for a shot and the pair got into a scramble. Denson gained an advantage and got a pin with two seconds left in the match.

Being so close to the championship match, May admitted the loss was nothing short of devastating. He said the loss affected him in his next consolation match in a quest for third.

May gave up a 7-5 decision in a similar situation as the semifinal loss.

With the score tied late in the third period, May again went for a shot. Following a scramble, May's opponent got a takedown in the final 10 seconds of the match to send May to the 5th/6th place match.

There, May closed out the year with a 5-3 decision to finish fifth.

Looking forward

Being so close but falling just short after so much hard work this season, the disappointment clouds the impact of May's achievement right now.

With a shot at a championship so close this year, May said he'll likely return to give it another shot next year.

May cut a significant amount of weight to wrestle at 165. While cutting the weight was tough, May said he got to where he could manage it later in the season.

While he doesn't relish the thought of wrestling at 165 next year, he said he'll wrestle where-ever it will best help the team. He said that could be anywhere from 165, 174 or 184.

As a team, UN-K finished fourth after winning the championship last year. The title stayed in Nebraska though as UN-O finished first in the national meet.