

## PRESS RELEASE

### 2026 UWW Ranking Series #1

#### Hawkeye Wrestling Club

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HAWKEYE WRESTLING CLUB



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## HWC Clubmen WIN GOLD in Croatia!

**ZAGREB, Croatia** — The Hawkeyes opened the 2026 UWW Rankings Series season with decisive victories, highlighted by gold medal performances from Spencer Lee (57kg), Austin DeSanto (61kg), and Stephen Buchanan (97kg) at the first stop of the year, held February 4th & 5th in Zagreb.

Lee delivered a commanding run through the 57kg bracket, showcasing his trademark pace and control. He opened with a 4–0 quarterfinal victory over Azamat Tuskaev of Serbia before turning up the offense in the semifinals with a 10–2 technical superiority win against Japan’s Fuga Sasaki. Lee secured gold in the finals after holding a 4–0 lead when Mexico’s Roman Bravo-Young was forced to injury default, sealing Lee’s place atop the podium.

At 61kg, DeSanto put together an impressive turnaround performance on his way to gold. After dropping a tightly contested 11–11 criteria decision to Iran’s Reza Momeni in his opening match, DeSanto responded with resilience and fire. He advanced past Ali Aburumaila of Palestine by forfeit, then surged through the remainder of the field. DeSanto earned a 12–2 technical fall over Georgia’s Giorgi Goniashvili before capping his tournament with a dominant pin of India’s Aman Aman (2024 Olympic bronze medalist) in the final round after leading 8-0!

Buchanan was equally dominant in his march to the 97kg championship. He opened with a 12–1 technical fall over Canada’s Samuel Pereira, followed by a strong 14–7 quarterfinal win against India’s Vicky Vicky. In the semifinals, Buchanan continued his run with a fall in a 0:41 over Georgia’s Andro Maargishvili. He closed out the tournament with the biggest win of his young career, defeating Iran’s Hassan Yazdani by tech fall 13–3 in the finals to capture gold!! Yazdani is a 3x World Champion & Olympic Champion in his own right.

Their performances set the tone for the international season, demonstrating both the composure and scoring ability needed to succeed on the world stage.

“This is exactly how you want to start the year,” Tom Brands said. “We saw toughness, adjustments, and the ability to score points in bunches. That’s the standard at this level.”

The UWW Rankings Series continues later this winter & spring, where athletes will look to build momentum and secure critical seeding points ahead of the World Championships.