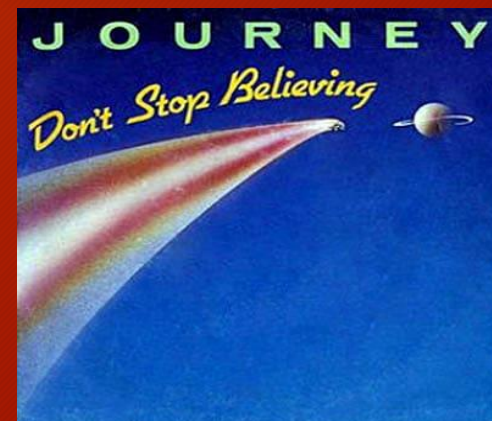


MatStats - The Moneyball of Wrestling
Episode #49
Wednesday December 3rd, 2025
3PM EST

Don't Stop Believing

The MatStats boys analyze the participation numbers of Men's NCAA Wrestling from 1981-82 to 2024-25. How the new roster cap limits on D1 will affect the numbers and the possibilities to help augment the losses from the roster cap limits.

Episode
49-1



In This Episode

Episode
49-2

Episode 49 - 12/3/25 - Don't Stop Believing

Topic	Slide #		Topic	Slide #
Why we do this	3		Roster Sizes	25
Number of 4-year colleges	6		Anomalies - Spikes/Drops	31
Business of College Sports Update	8		The Wisdom to Know the Difference	36
Topic	9		Don't Stop Believing!	43
# of NCAA Male Wrestlers	11		KevNotes	51
# of NCAA Male Wrestlers Graphs	20		Next Show	53

The MatStats Show is Here to Create a Library of Statistical Analysis for the NWCA.

Episode
49-3

- Mike Moyer, the Executive Director of the NWCA, approached the MatStats gang to create a library of statistical analysis for the NWCA.
- This is an effort to help grow the sport and educate the wrestlers, coaches, and fans.
- When MatStats was created in 2020 (book) and 2021 (monthly show), there was a serious need for statistical analysis.

Are there any disclaimers MatStats needs to let everyone know about their shows?

The Opinions Expressed on this show do not necessarily reflect any policies or opinions of the NWCA. Also, the MatStats guys do not always agree on all things discussed on their shows.

Episode
49-4

- MatStats is a subsidiary of the NWCA but is a separate entity that voices its own opinions on its statistical analysis.
 - MatStats three hosts, Gormley, Bryant, and Hazard are all equally responsible for all the good outcomes. Gormley for the bad feedback.
- Gormley writes the Power Points and selects the topics. Gormley uses the term MatStats often, but many times it is Gormley's opinion alone.
- Gormley does the stats work and then the three hosts & occasionally guests brainstorm about Gormley's findings and ideas.
 - MatStats is designed to have educated thoughts and opinions to help the world's oldest and greatest sport.
- Wrestling is all about settling disagreements. The hosts are too old to settle these disagreements on the mat.
- Sometimes we agree, sometimes we disagree. It makes the world go round.

How is MatStats different than most shows we see on TV/Internet in today's world?

MatStats is based on numbers, stats, and analyzation. It starts with facts not opinions.

**Episode
49-5**

- MatStats is a numbers show.
- Thus, the name MatStats. Not MatOpinions.
- Gorms was remiss not explaining this from the get-go. Gorms lives in a numbers world and is starting to get the feeling not everyone does lol.
- Feedback from the Tribe alumni during this show has made Gorms realize he needs to address this and try to educate people with numbers. Thank you, Dr. Powell, for one of your texts.

How many 4-year collegiate teams are there in the 3 wrestling organizations?

If you are under 60, there are more NCAA Men's teams today than there were when you graduated college. The last year we had more than 290 men's NCAA teams was 1986-87.

Episode
49-6

Category	Men	Women	Total
NCAA	290	120	410
NAIA	74	52	126
NCWA	125	81	206
Total 4-Year	489	253	742

Note - The NCWA number here does not include 9 trade/juco teams nor the 4 transitioning to the NCAA. It does include the 5 Puerto Rico schools. If we count Canada, we should count PR.

A few updates on what MatStats talked about in the 3-part series, *“On A Clear Day, You Can See College Athletics.”*

Episode
49-7

- Michigan and USC are not happy with the potential Private Equity money in the Big 10. Will they leave the conference?
- Power 4 Football coaches being fired with huge buyouts. This will be seen in the school's bottom line. PSU has been looking for 7+ weeks for a new coach. This can not help wrestling. 6 SEC schools will have new FB coaches next year. Do you still like the football playoff expansion?
- College football (therefore college sports) was held hostage by that coach in Oxford, MS. He is on the same level as the W&M AD that dropped wrestling in Gorms' mind.

Are any of the old fossils from W&M wrestling doing anything athletically in 2025?

Kelly Powell (W&M BBA '92 & MBA '96) runs the NYC Marathon in 3:36! An 8:14/mile pace.

**Episode
49-8**



William & Mary had over 40 people at the 2025 NCAA Men's D1 Championships in The City of Brotherly Love.

Pretty impressive for a school that hasn't Had NCAA wrestling in 30 years.

Needless to say, starting with our patriarch, Kevin Hazard, the group looks old & some have Frankenstein looking scars.

Kelly is the one that is beating father time.

What you did in the 70s, 80s, & 90s is ancient History. Kelly is doing it in 2025.

Episode # 49 - Topic

Episode
49-9

- What is this month's topic?
- Why is it titled' *“Don't Stop Believing”*?

What is the topic for this Episode?

The Participation numbers of Men's NCAA Wrestling

Episode
49-10

- This episode deals with the number of men's wrestlers have been in the NCAA.
- It mainly deals with the numbers from 1981-82 to 2024-25 and what the future might hold.
- The NCAA started keeping annual extensive numbers in 1981-82.
- MatStats is dealing exclusively with Men only because there is a much longer history. It also deals only with NCAA because they keep much more accurate records than other collegiate wrestling organizations.

NCAA Men's Wrestling Participation Numbers

Episode
49-11

- Gorms, this is the time of year that stats guys like you get excited to see the annual *NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Report*.
- Let's tell the viewers the good news that you have relayed to the MatStats team and the NWCA.

What are the participation number annual rankings for NCAA men?

There are more male NCAA wrestlers in 2024-25 than in any year with reliable numbers.

**Episode
49-12**

Rank NCAA Male	Year	Participants
1	2024-25	9,056
2	2023-24	8,801
3	1984-85	8,572
4	1983-84	8,417
5	1985-86	8,401
	1971-72	9,437
	1976-77	8,712

The methodology for gathering participation numbers in the NCAA changed in 1981-81.

Episode
49-13

- Directly from the NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report (1956-57 through 2024-25) Updated September 04, 2025. (Page #133)
- *“Between 1956-57 and 1981-82, participation rates were collected in five-year intervals. The data for these years was not collected in the same manner as the data from 1982 to the present and it includes recreational programs. Therefore, these data are not directly comparable to the other data in this report. This information is only meant to provide a historical view.”*

If the definition of data points changes mid-stream, we are talking apples and oranges.

Episode
49-14

- The numbers from years prior to 1981-82 could include recreational programs.
- What if we included the participation numbers from the NCWA in today's numbers? Would that not be a functional equivalent?
- The people from Gorms' & Hazard's eras are misinformed to say there were more wrestlers when I was in college. Many are most likely saying this without ever seeing these numbers.
- Gorms is once again saying this is the Camelot days of college wrestling.
- In 2024-25 there were 1,738 female NCAA wrestlers. Only 1 year prior to 2009-10 there were more than 1,738 male NCAA D2 wrestlers.

It is possible there is at least 1 year prior to 1981-82 that saw more NCAA male wrestlers than we had in 2024-25.

**Episode
49-15**

- We can not say with 100% certainty, that there are more male NCAA wrestlers in 2024-25 than ever, but we know for sure there is only one point in time 1971-72 that there might have been more NCAA male wrestlers than there are today.
- That is contingent that substantially all male wrestlers in 1971-72 were not recreational wrestlers.
- We also have no data to show there were other years in the 70's that there were a higher number than there were in 2024-25.

What are the participation number annual rankings for NCAA D1 men?

The top 5 years for male NCAA D1 wrestler participation were all in the 80's.

**Episode
49-16**

Rank NCAA D1 Male	Year	Participants
1	1985-86	4,192
2	1984-85	4,190
3	1983-84	4,050
4	1986-87	3,766
5	1981-82	3,659

D1 is an arbitrary line for wrestling talent.

- Some old timers and skeptics point to the stat that the glory years of NCAA D1 wrestling was back in the good old days.
- This is not a function of there being fewer quality wrestlers because of the D1 numbers.
- It is a function that there are more D2 teams and less D1 teams.
- Many people that wrestled D1 in the 80's would be D2 wrestlers today. That is not a reflection of their talent, it is a reflection on what division the teams are in.

What are the participation number annual rankings for NCAA D2 men?

The top 5 male NCAA D2 participation were the most recent 5 years.

**Episode
49-18**

Rank NCAA D2 Male	Year	Participants
1	2024-25	2,466
2	2023-24	2,431
3	2021-22	2,243
4	2022-23	2,205
5	2020-21	2,009

What are the participation number annual rankings for NCAA D3 men?

Episode
49-19

The top 4 years for male NCAA D3 participation is the 4 most recent years.

Rank NCAA D3 Male	Year	Participants
1	2024-25	3,792
2	2023-24	3,657
3	2022-23	3,432
4	2021-22	3,430
5	1986-87	3,279

The growth from NCAA men's wrestling participation comes from D2 & D3.

Episode
49-20

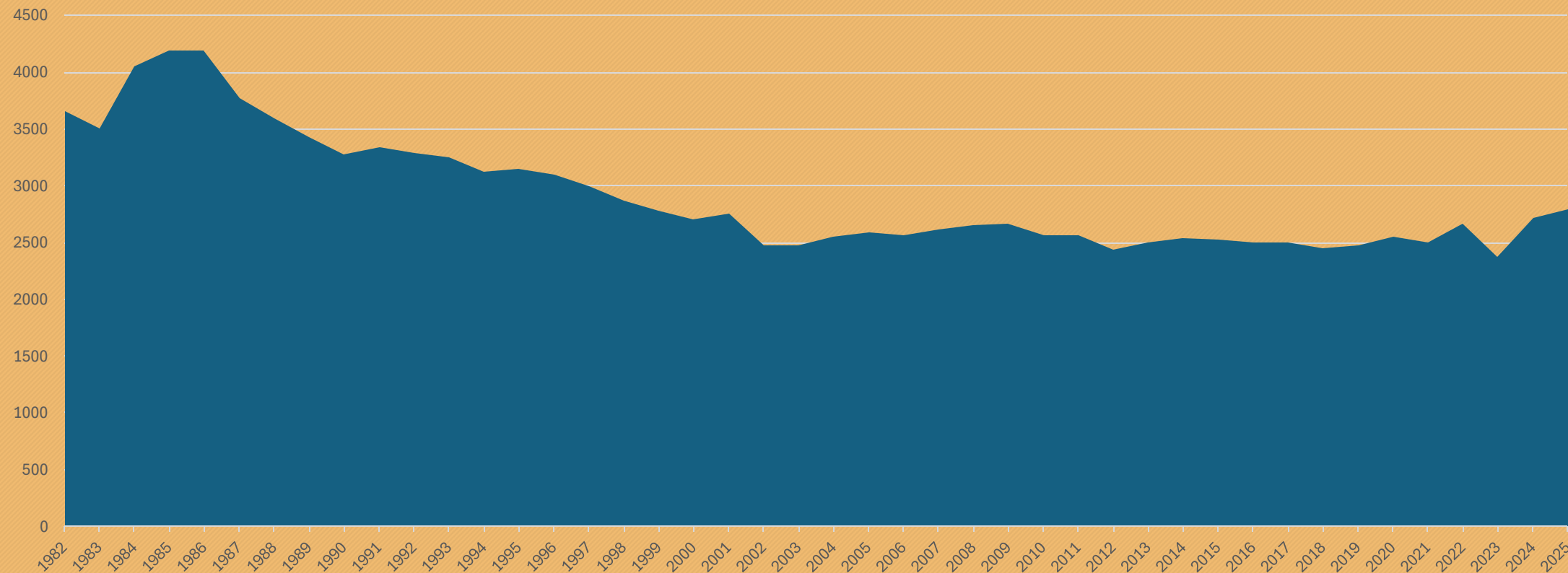
- The highest number of male NCAA wrestlers since 1981-82 was in 2024-25. Great news!
- We have seen a growth in NCAA male participation numbers, and they come from the D2 & D3 level.
- Can we see the numbers in graph form? Hazard prefers that method.

Can MatStats provide the viewers with a graph with the annual number of NCAA D1 Male wrestlers?

The number of Men’s NCAA D1 wrestlers hit its peak in the 80’s, then decreased over the years, but has stabilized this century.

Episode
49-21

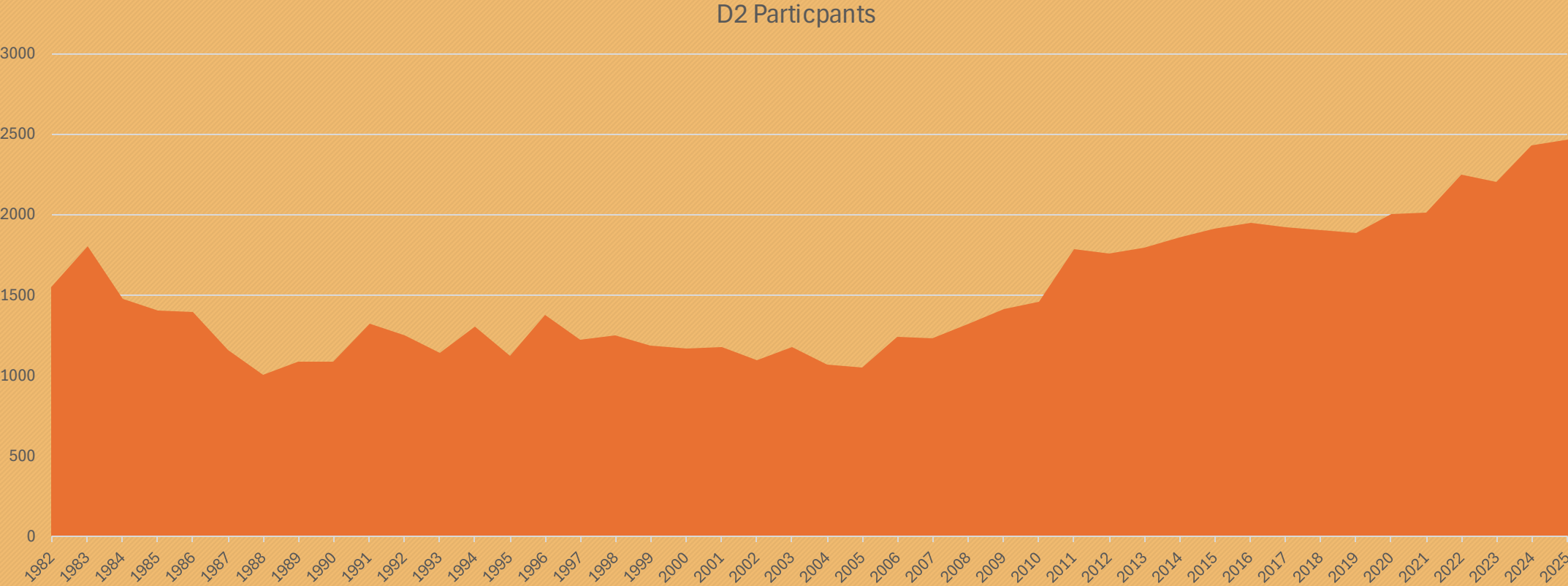
D1 Participants



Can MatStats provide the viewers with a graph with the annual number of NCAA D2 Male wrestlers?

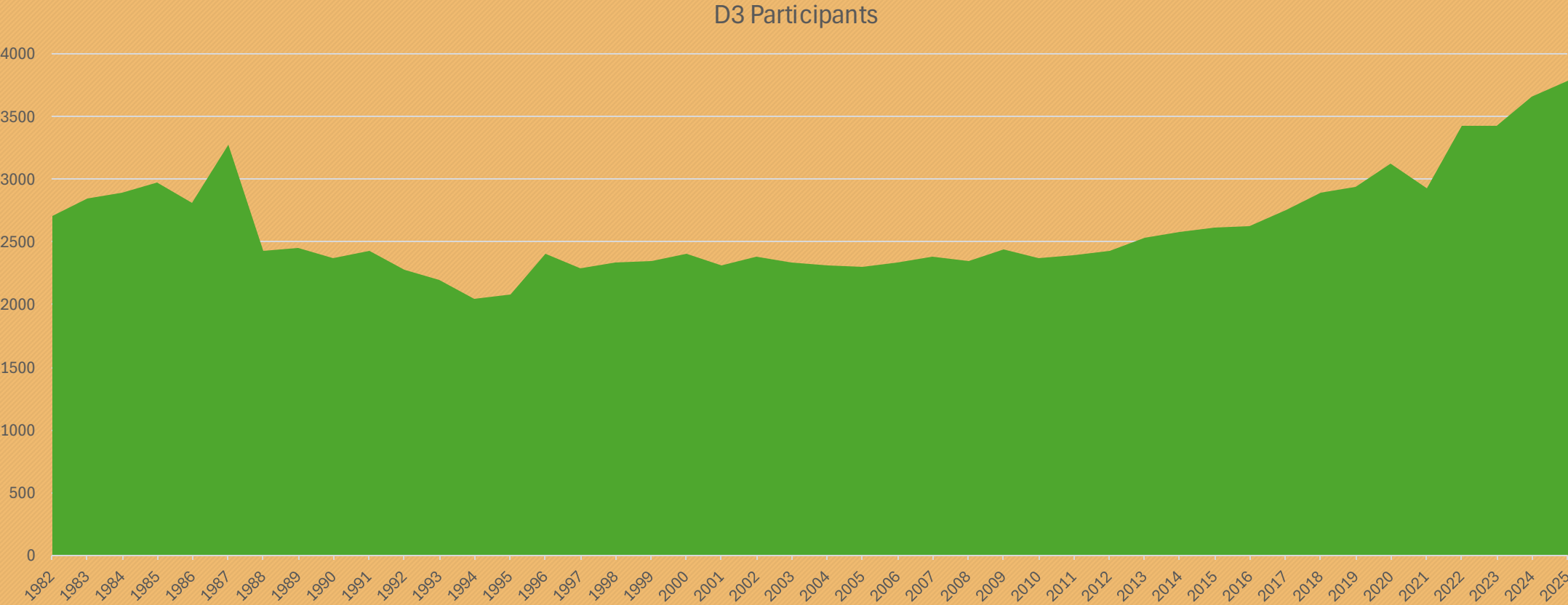
The number of men's D2 wrestlers has been growing steadily this century.

Episode
49-22



The recent growth of Men’s D3 wrestlers has resulted in there being more D3 wrestlers than D1.

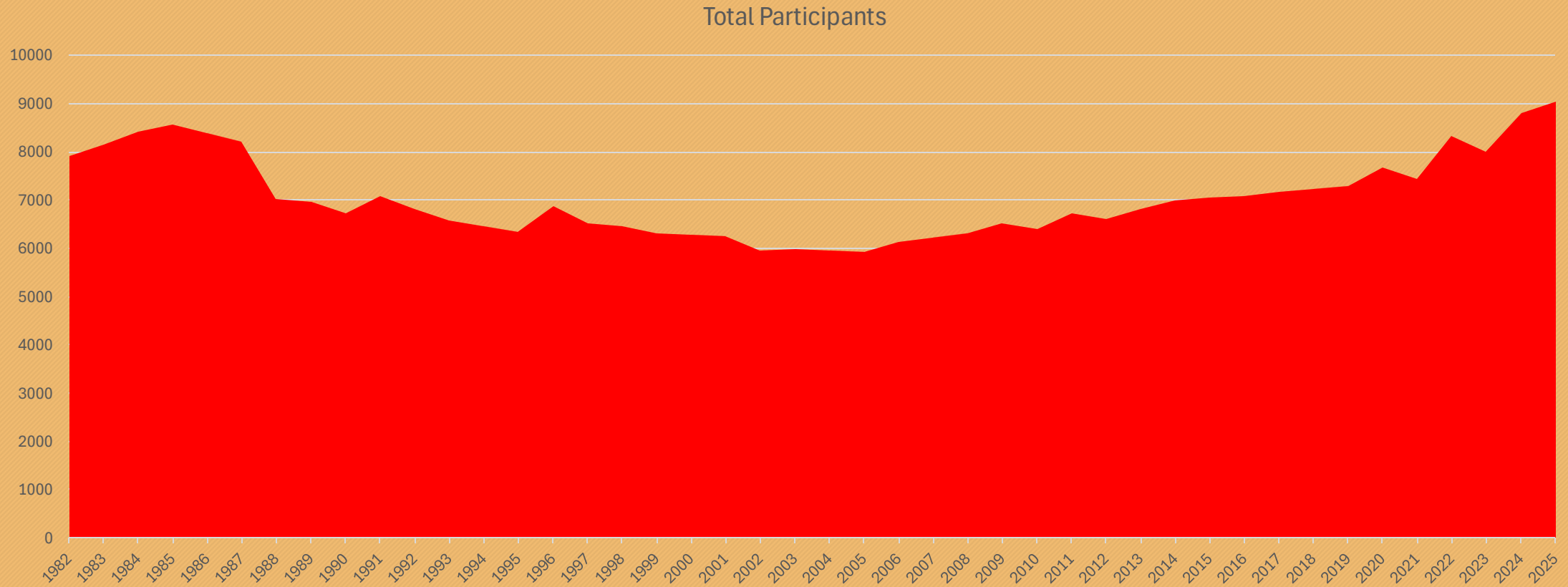
Episode
49-23



Can MatStats provide the viewers with a graph with the annual number of all NCAA Male wrestlers?

After steady growth this century, we have the most NCAA wrestlers since annual reliable numbers were kept in 1981-82.

Episode
49-24



D3 has the most wrestlers & Roster sizes growing across levels of the NCAA.

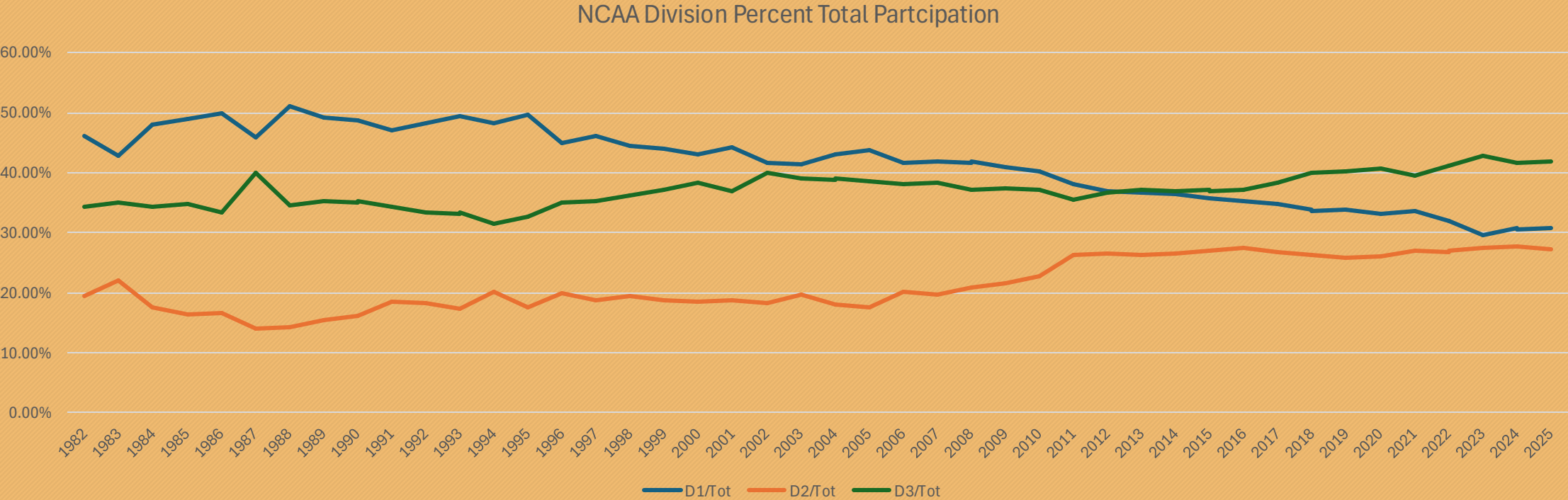
Episode
49-25

- When did D3 become the division with the most NCAA male wrestlers?
- If there are fewer men's wrestling teams now in the NCAA, why do we have more wrestlers?

Can MatStats show the viewers a line graph with the number of wrestlers in all three NCAA divisions?

Since 2013, D3 is the division with the most men's wrestlers in the NCAA.

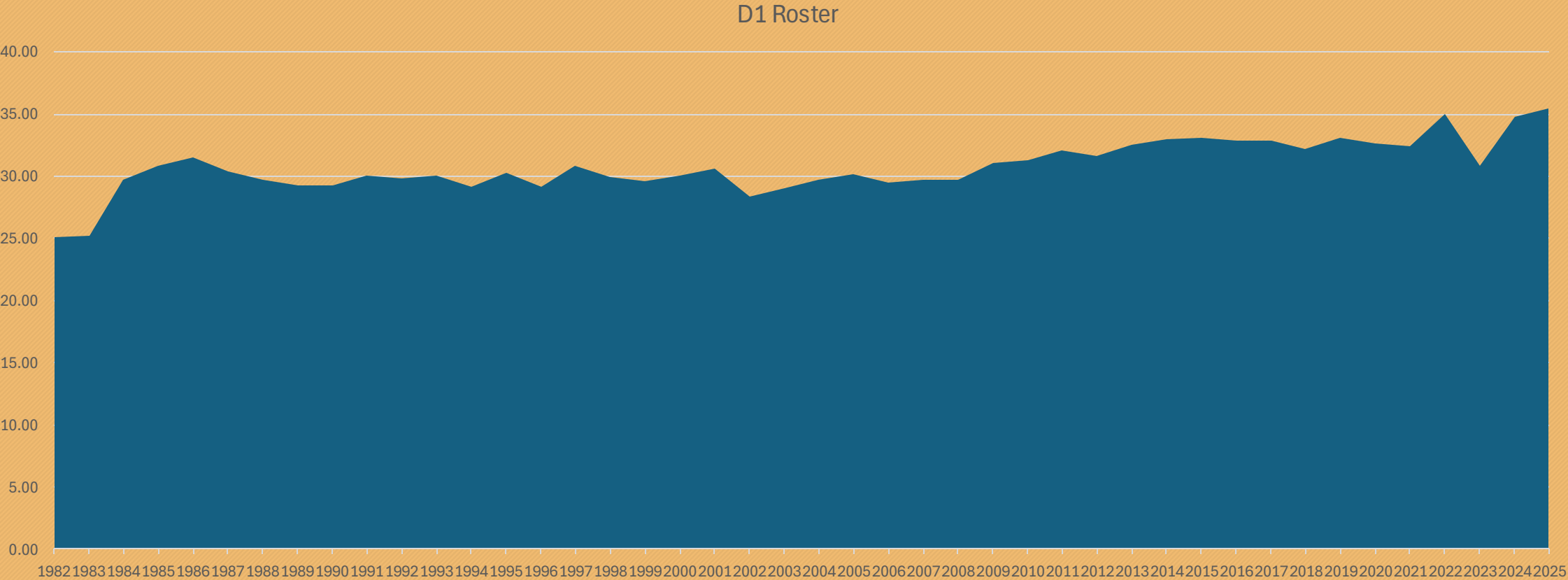
Episode
49-26



Can MatStats provide a graph with the annual roster sizes for NCAA D1 men’s wrestlers?

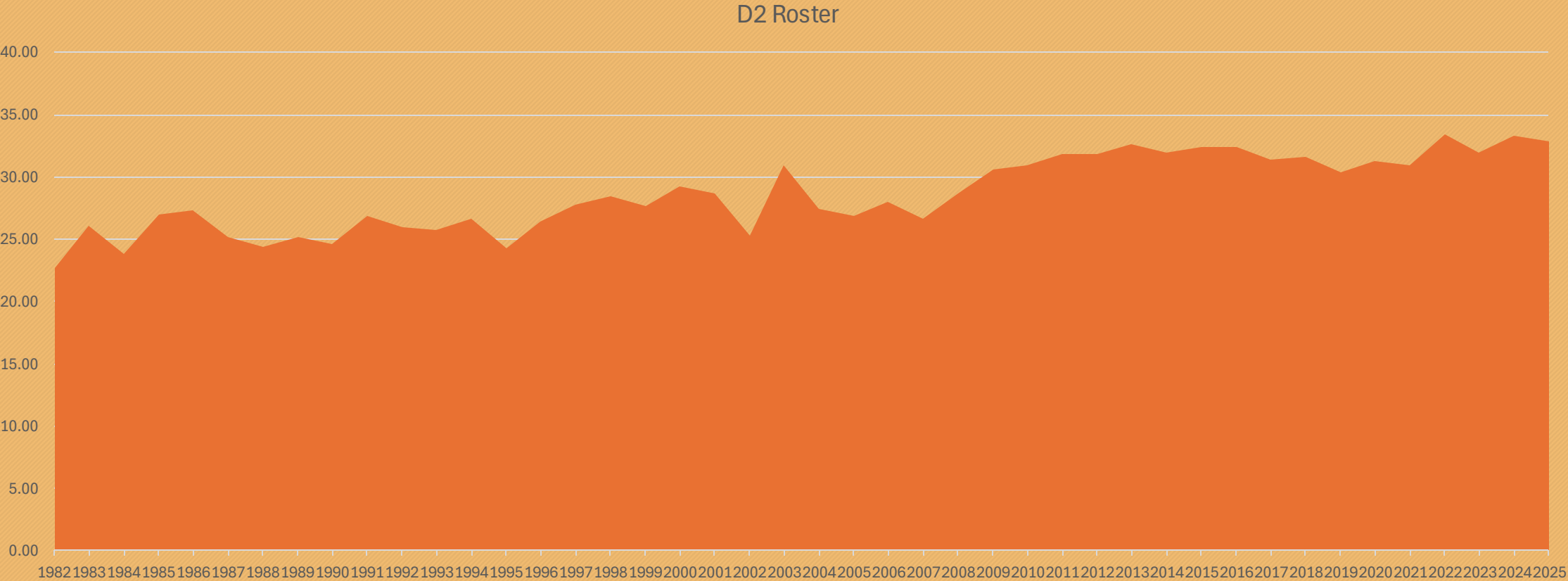
The size of NCAA Men’s D1 rosters are bigger than ever in 2024-25 (35.42).

Episode
49-27



The largest roster sizes in NCAA D2 wrestling has been 2023-24 (33.3) & 2024-25 (32.88).

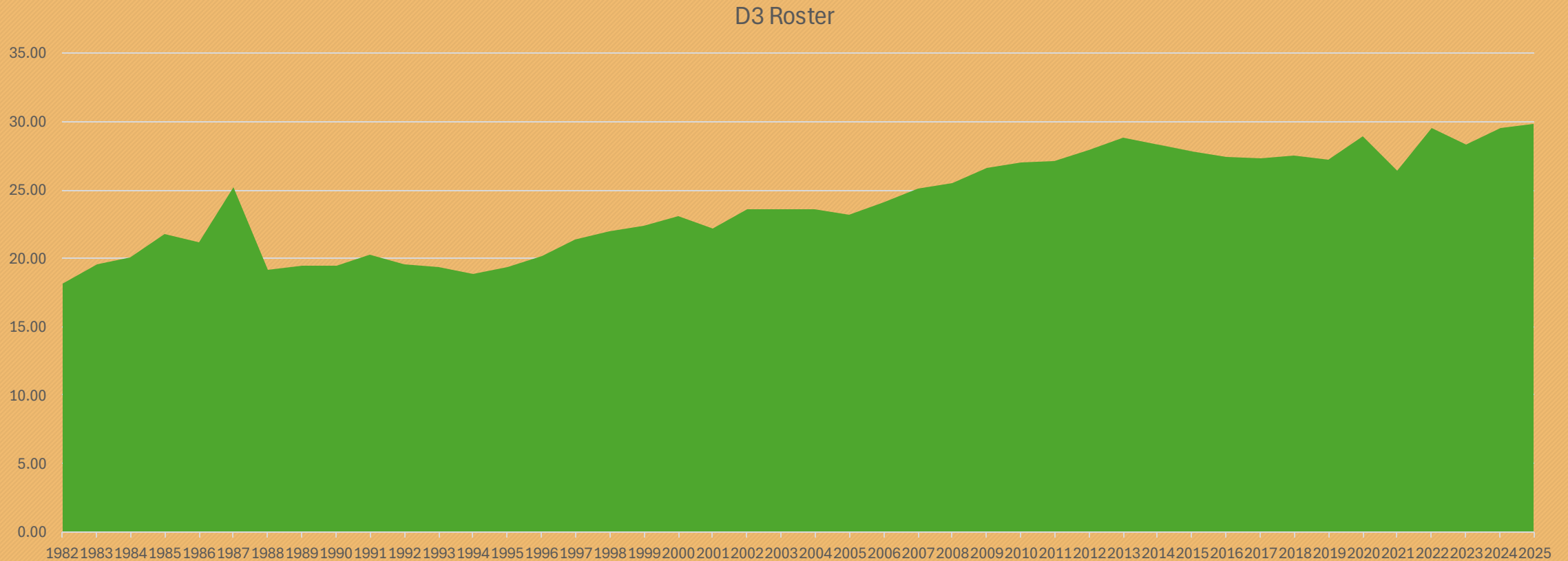
Episode
49-28



Can MatStats provide a graph with the annual roster sizes for NCAA D3 men's wrestlers?

After a serious decline in 1988, the NCAA D3 rosters have rebounded to its highest numbers in 2024-25 (32.23).

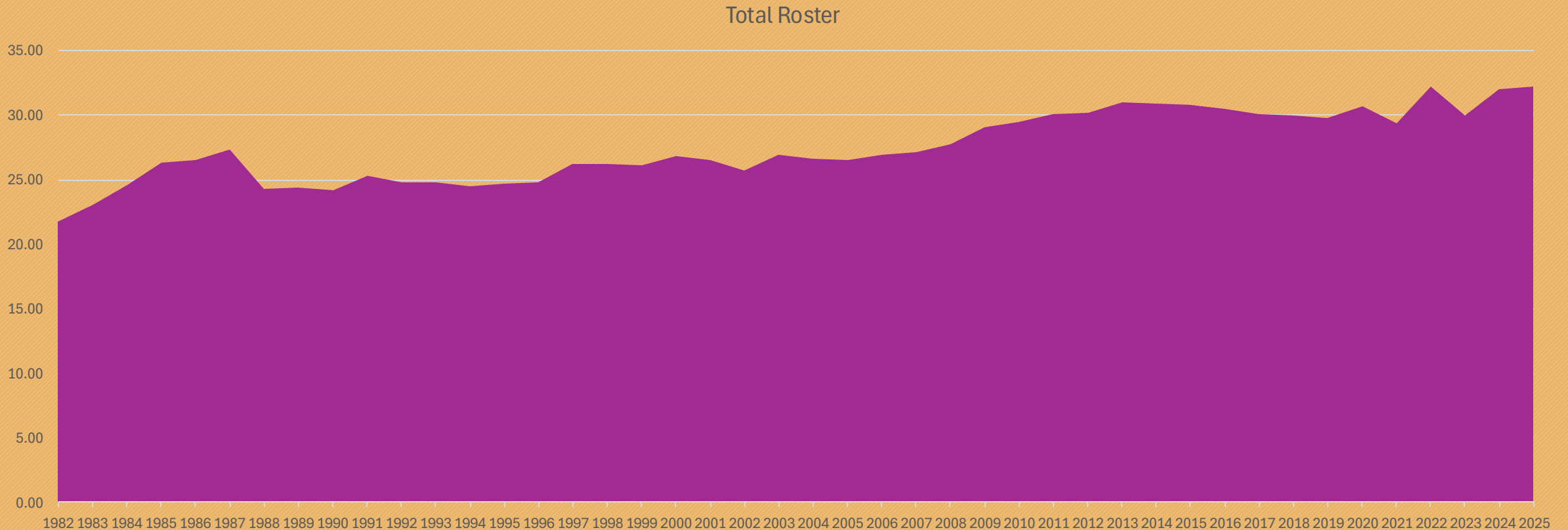
Episode
49-29



Can MatStats provide a graph with the annual roster sizes for all NCAA men's wrestlers?

NCAA men's wrestling roster sizes have increased from its low point in 1981-82 (21.8) to its peak in 2024-25 (32.23). A 48% increase.

Episode
49-30



Anomalies in past Roster Sizes

Episode
49-31

- Gorms, do you see any anomalies in the past roster size data?
 - Do we know the reason for these?
- Are any of the past anomaly's reason for concern in the future?

There are 5 noticeable spikes/drops since 1981/82 in NCAA roster sizes across the 3 divisions.

**Episode
49-32**

- **There are 5 spikes/drops in the roster sizes across the 3 NCAA divisions since 1981-82 -**
- **1) D1 Spike from 1982 to 1983.**
- **2) D3 Spike from 1986 to 1987 then drop in 1988.**
- **3) D2 Spike from 2002 to 2003 then drop in 2004.**
- **4) D1 Drop from 2022 to 2023 then back up in 2024.**
- **5) NCAA Drop in 2021 then back up in 2022.**

What are the reasons for these spikes or drops?

There is no real obvious reasons nor concern for the 4 of these spikes/drops.

Episode
49-33

- There is no real known reason for the first 4 of these anomalies nor any reason for concern.
- So, there is nothing we can learn from them.
- It is just the way numbers and trends work.
- When Kelly Powell runs a 3:36 marathon at an 8:14 pace, not all 26.2 miles are at an 8:14 pace.

Do statisticians see numbers vary like this in many data sets?

The randomness of numbers, streaks, and patterns are not unusual, they are just random.

Episode
49-34

- Some numbers and streaks are unexplainable.
- Joe DiMaggio hit in 56 straight games in 1941, but statistically he could never do that if he played a 1,000 years.
- But it happened. Don't waste time worrying about certain things.

It is no surprise in hindsight that Covid was most likely the cause for a temporary decline in roster sizes.

**Episode
49-35**

- The drop from 2019-20 to 2020-21 was most likely due to Covid.
- We see an explanation that we can all understand.
- The numbers went up following 2021, so not a big reason for concern. Nor was there anything we could do about it.

The Wisdom to Know the Difference.

Episode
49-36

- Gorms, it sounds like you are saying the Serenity Prayer -
- “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can; And the wisdom to know the
difference.”
- Can you give us an example of accepting the things we can not
change when it comes to the number of D1 NCAA men’s wrestlers?
- And the courage to change things we can?

NCAA Men's D1 Wrestling Roster Caps are real; we cannot change that.

Episode
49-37

- As we learned in Episode #46 8/27/25, "*On A Clear Day, You Can See College Athletics (Part 2)*", there is now a roster cap in NCAA Men's Wrestling of 30 wrestlers for any school that opted in to the House Settlement.
- In Gorms opinion this is buffoonery and will hurt college athletes.
- Especially since in 2024-25 the average NCAA men's wrestling size roster in D1 was 35.42 and the roster cap is 30.0.
- Walk On wrestlers will be cut. Horrible plan, but we need to accept it.

Is the decline in numbers in D1 offset by the growth of D2 & D3?

We need to change the attitude that D1 is more important, and the sport revolves around it.

**Episode
49-38**

- Too many people are under the impression that all college wrestlers are equal, but D1 wrestlers are more equal than others.
- The growth of the sport in the NCAA is coming from D2 & D3.
- There is nothing wrong with this.
- Wrestling teaches us life lessons, and we learn these by wrestling, not by being a D1 wrestler.

We will see a decrease in the number of Men's NCAA D1 wrestlers from 2024-25 to 2025-26.

**Episode
49-39**

- Gorms does not like having to say this, especially since he has been predicting for years that we will break the participation records, but it is a reality.
- We can still break participation records with a thought/belief realignment and having more and more D2 & D3 wrestlers.
- The most important part is having more wrestlers and allowing more young men and women to learn what comes with being a wrestler.

How many men will not be able to wrestle in NCAA Men's D1 because of the House Settlement?

About **298** (**10.65% of all D1 Men**) wrestlers will eventually need to be cut or never allowed on NCAA D1 men's teams. MatStats does not like anything that eliminates people from wrestling.

Episode
49-40

- In Episode #46 on slide #46-36, we learned that 55 NCAA D1 schools with men's wrestling opted in to the House Settlement.
- MatStats does not know the exact roster size for each school, but we know the arithmetic mean of roster size for men's D1 wrestling is 35.42 in 2024-25.
- So, a ballpark estimate of how many wrestlers will be cut is $(55 * 5.42) = \mathbf{298}$.
- This is **10.65%** of ALL wrestlers at 2024-25 NCAA D1 Men's wrestling participants.

How big of a number is this 298 wrestlers we might lose in NCAA D1?

298 is 10 teams with a roster of 30 or almost the same number as the 330 wrestlers we see at the Men's NCAA D1 Championships each year.

Episode
49-41

- The 298 is an estimate. We will see the real number in the Fall of 2026 with the NCAA annual report.
- If the 'grandfather' rule is in affect there might be a lower number for a very short period of time.
- Even if we use the roster size of 35.42 (2024-25) for D1 it is still like cutting 8.4 teams.
- Effectively cutting 8-10 Men's NCAA teams is 10-12% of all Men's D1 teams.

The judge that approved the House settlement signed off on the functional equivalent of dropping 8-10 NCAA D1 teams. That is 10-12% of all NCAA D1 teams.

Episode
49-42

- Gorms (and many other W&M wrestlers) are still mad as hell about the elimination of Tribe wrestling 30+ years ago.
- Gorms is not very happy with Judge Claudia Wilken who approved this nonsense in the House Settlement.
- She is on Gorms list with the former AD at W&M and that football coach formally at Ole Miss (he has accepted the job at LSU while this show was put together).

Don't Stop Believing!

Episode
49-43

- It seems like there is bad news for participation numbers heading our way for Men's NCAA D1 wrestlers.
- Is there anyway, D2 & D3 can help when this dam breaks? Don't Stop Believing!
- How many NCAA member schools are there? Can that help?

Hopefully, these wrestlers find a new home and more programs start on lower levels.

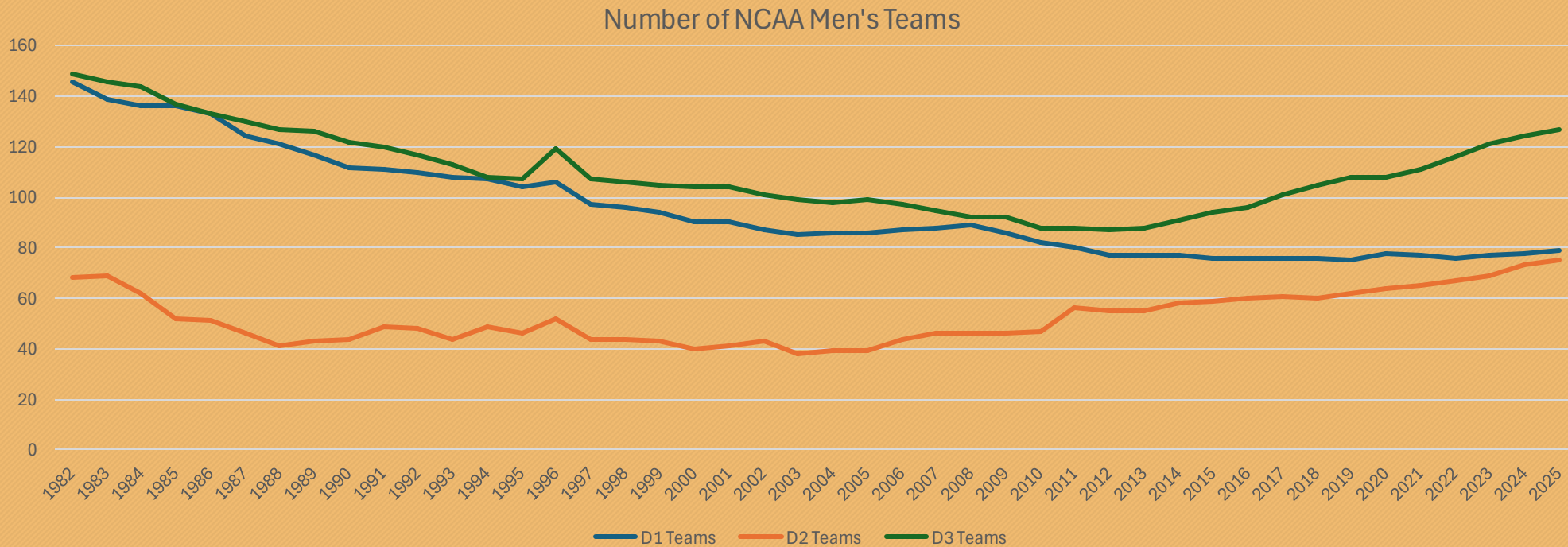
Episode
49-44

- Yes, Kevin there are possible ways to help avoid a downturn in participation numbers in NCAA men's wrestling.
- We need to look to D2, D3, & NAIA schools.
- NCWA is also in the place to help and start more NCAA and NAIA teams.
- It is the wisdom to know the difference.

Which NCAA Division has the most teams?

Since 1981-82, D3 has always had the most teams. In 2024-25 there were D3 - 127, D1 - 79, and D2 - 75 teams.

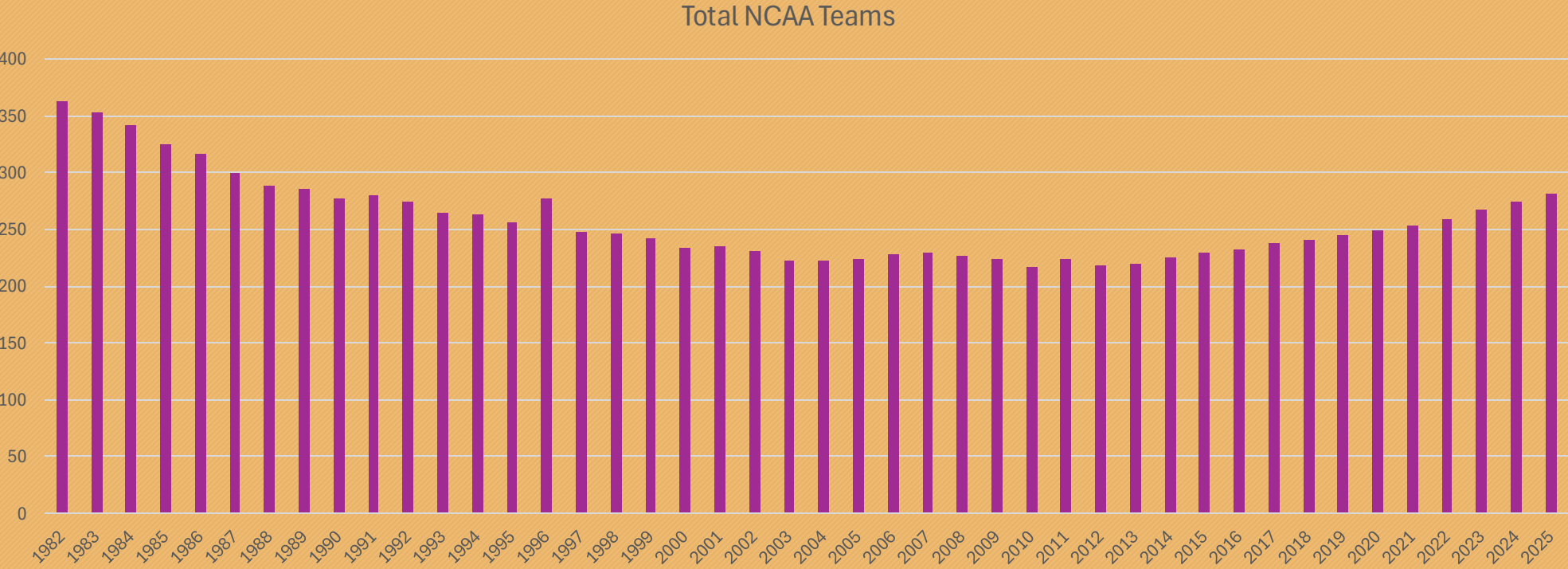
Episode
49-45



Can MatStats provide the viewers a chart on the number of total NCAA teams through the years?

We have seen a rebound in the number of NCAA men’s teams. A high point in 1981-82 of 363, a low point in 2002-23 of 222, to the current 290 teams in 2025-26.

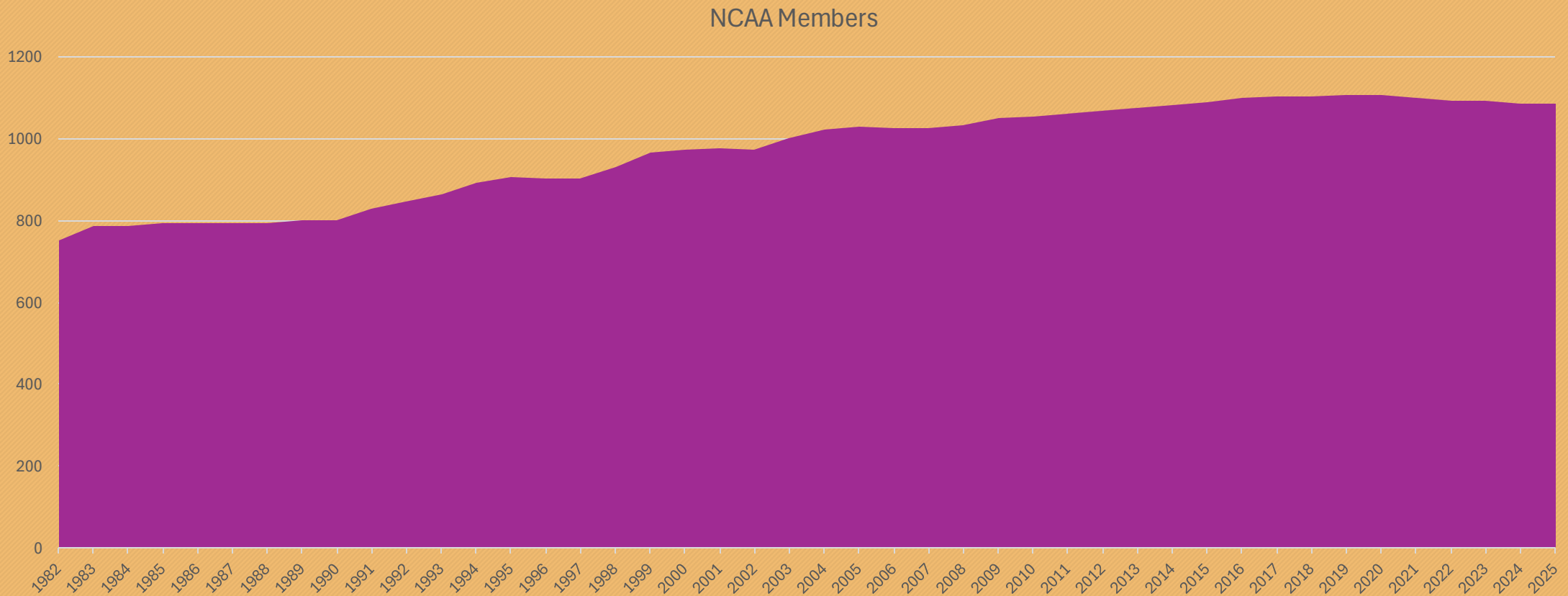
Episode
49-46



How many NCAA member schools were there in 1981-82 and in 2024-25?

The number of NCAA Member schools has increased from 753 in 1981-82 to 1085 in 2024-25. A 44% increase!

Episode
49-47



Where does the increase in NCAA membership come from?

252 of 332 member increase since 1981-82 comes from D2 & D3 (76%).

**Episode
49-48**

Year	D1 Members	D2 Members	D3 Members	Total Members
1981-82	276	192	285	753
2024-25	356	301	428	1085
Pct Change	30%	57%	50%	44%
Member Increase	80	109	143	332

Let's do a show on this. The possibility of growth with a new attitude.

**Episode
49-49**

- **Gorms, this sounds like a great topic for our next show on 12/17/25.**
- **Any way we can do one focusing on what we can do to help grow the sport in different ways?**
- **Don't Stop Believing!**

Will MatStats continue this discussion on the next show?

**Next Show will continue this conversation
on how to continue the growth
of collegiate wrestling.**

**Episode
49-50**

- Kevin, Gorms loves that idea.
- Dr Eddie McLaughlin gave Gorms an idea for a future show that can and should be integrated on what Kevin is suggesting.
- That is for another show.
- Kevin, let's hear your Kev's Notes for this show.

Episode 49 Kev's Notes #1

Episode
49-51

- 1) We are already seeing the fallout from the House v NCAA settlement in football coaches' firings and turmoil in the Big 10. 49-7
- 2) There are now more wrestlers than in any previous year that used reliable numbers. 49-12
- 3) Almost all the growth of NCAA male wrestlers has come from D2 & D3 and this trend will continue. 49-20
- 4) D3 has had the most NCAA male programs since 1982 (49-45) and the most wrestlers since 2013 (49-26).
- 5) Capping D1 wrestling rosters at 30 is going to have a large effect on the number of D1 wrestlers. It is going to be the equivalent of dropping 8-10 D1 teams (298 wrestlers). 49-37

Can MatStats give the viewers their Kev's Notes to review what we just learned on this show?

Episode 49 Kev's Notes #2

Episode
49-52

- 6) Our focus should widen to include D2 & D3 when we are thinking of NCAA college wrestling. 49-38
- 7) We also need to include women, NAIA, and NCWA teams when we think about college wrestling.
- 8) The charts in the Power Points show the trends in the number of teams and wrestlers between the different NCAA divisions. 49-26
- 9) Looking at the trends, it is pretty evident that D2 will surpass D1 with the number of wrestlers. This will happen sooner due to the roster caps in D1. 49-26 And in number of teams 49-45
- 10) Even with all the turmoil NCAA member schools have increased by 44% since 1982 (from 758 to 1085). 49-48

What is the topic next month (Wednesday 12/17/25 3PM EST)?

The next episode will explore not what wrestling can do for you, but what you can do for wrestling.

**Episode
49-53**

- **Tune In Next Month**
 - **Same Mat Time**
 - **Same Mat Channel**
- **The MatStats gang will offer suggestions on not what your sport can do for you, but what you can do for your sport. It will analyze the changes from the roster cap limits and the sponsorship of wrestling.**